



FIRSTWORDS

PRAYER PARTNER SUNDAY **SEPTEMBER 13, 2026**

A continued priority for our church is to deepen relationships between generations. At FBC we believe strengthening intergenerational relationships helps the faith of all ages and gives witness to God's continued work in the world. We are planning to celebrate God's work in each generation on the morning of Sunday, September 13. On that Sunday we are asking the partnering classes to meet together for at least 15 minutes getting to know each other and spending time praying with each other.

We realize this effort might feel a little awkward for some, but we believe it is healthy for our church. This is an important moment for different generations, from the oldest to the youngest, to interact, engage, and ultimately know each other.

As we prepare for September 13, please pray for each generation and join us as we encourage each other through fellowship and prayer.

***"The Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5***

Dear FBC Family,

What a summer we had here at First Baptist, Abilene! Whether it was community-building nights like Wednesday Fun Nights @ the FLC, or celebrating the retirement of our beloved C.V. Blake, or serving our community through VBS, youth missions and City Light, or groups using the FLC, or our children's and youth camps, or our incredible attendance and giving during the summer, or the seven baptisms we witnessed, God was on the move!

I do not think it was a coincidence that we had such an incredible summer because we chose to pray together about God's will being done this summer. If I have learned anything in pastoring churches, it is that God responds to prayer. Maybe not in the ways we always imagine. Yet when God responds, it is always a gift to be received. That is how I will remember the summer of 2026 – a gift received from God.

On August 16, about 140 of us gathered to talk about where God was speaking to us in our prayer times this summer. We have now compiled that data and will be studying it closely during our staff retreat, which will be during the release of this letter. Please continue to pray for us as we analyze and pray through the data. We are trusting God with our next steps.

Our staff retreat's theme is "Your will be done in Abilene as it is in Heaven." Our summer sermon series and prayer campaign were, of course, called "Your Kingdom Come," so this is the natural follow-up to that prayer campaign and sermon series. Pray that God opens the eyes of our hearts. Pray for continued wisdom and discernment. Pray that God will empower us to give legs to our prayers.

Grateful to you and grateful to be here.

Grace and Peace,

RAY P. MILLER, DMIN
Pastor, FBC Abilene, Tx



The Sisters' Table



When We Pray, Great Things Happen
At our Sister's Table in August, we talked about the power of prayer and how prayer is more than asking God for things—it's about having a relationship with Him. We learned to use CATS—Confession, Adoration, Thanksgiving, and Speaking to God—as a simple way to remember how to pray. James 5:16 reminds us that when a believing person prays, great things happen. Prayer should never be our last resort; it should be our first step! After our devotional, we made bedazzled cross keychains and enjoyed fellowship with 28 women in attendance.

Now that is an answer to prayer!



Healing Hearts

September 2026 begins the 15th year of ministry for Healing Hearts Ministry. The mission of this “prayer shawl” ministry is to meet the prayer needs of members of First Baptist Church by making gifts such as shawls, throws, prayer cloths, angels, and “no-sew” fleece blankets as tangible reminders that prayer has been said for the recipient. We also make scarves and hats for our City Light neighbors. The people who make these gifts pray over them while they are making them, and the group prays over each gift or greeting card before it is prepared for delivery. When possible, we also gift people in our community and abroad, who are connected to our church family in some way, when they are going through significant health issues or have experienced great loss. Since the inception of this ministry in September of 2012, we have taken care of 5,492 prayer needs.

We currently have 18 active members in our group. If you are interested in being a part of this ministry, we would love to have you visit one of our meetings to see if this is where God would lead you for service. You don't have to knit or crochet to serve in this ministry. We have members who serve as “couriers” by delivering the gifts for us. Previously, we had some ladies who helped document this ministry by creating beautiful scrapbooks for us. We are also very happy to help you learn to “knit” a hat using a loom. We can teach you to make a “no-sew” fleece blanket, as well. If you are not interested in any of these ways to serve in Healing Hearts Ministry, we still would appreciate your prayers for those of us who are serving in this ministry.

We generally have our “business meetings” on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month. During these meetings we talk about the current prayer needs, pray over the prayer gifts or cards, and prepare them for delivery or mailing. On the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, we have a “Knit-Along” where we get together to work on our projects or learn a new skill. All our meetings are in Room 6 of University Place from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.**When there are 5 Thursdays in a month, we sometimes adjust our schedule. I send out “Reminder” emails about each meeting.

If you are interested in being a part of Healing Hearts Ministry, or have any questions, feel free to call Cherry Curry (325-864-1897). We will have our next meeting on Thursday, September 17. We would love for you to come and see if this ministry is where God may be leading you.

Thank you, First Baptist Church for supporting this important ministry.

CHERRY CURRY

Director of Healing Hearts Ministry

2026 FBC UNIFIED MISSIONS OFFERING

TRANSFORMING ABUNDANCE THROUGH CHRIST

JOHN 15:5

GOAL: \$75,000 AMOUNT COLLECTED: \$12,415

We need you to pray and give to this unified missions effort of our church!

Four different offerings combined into One Unified Missions Offering

1. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions – 60%

Supports the long-term presence of CBF field personnel serving in the United States and around the world. It helps to promote and provide: salaries, insurance and children's education for nearly 60 field personnel serving on the mission field; leadership, ministry, and development of the local church among the least evangelized; Bible translations and digital resources to reach international refugees, immigrants, and students; justice/reconciliation for the most marginalized and works to end extreme poverty through development; and transforming communities to restore natural environments.

2. Texas Baptist World Hunger – 15%

The Texas Baptist Hunger Offering unites the body of Christ to end hunger and poverty and promote holistic transformation in the name of Jesus through over 100 hunger relief and development ministries across Texas and around the world. It also supports projects across the world that feed the hungry and help the hungry help themselves in the context of holistic Christian ministry.

3. Abilene Community Transformation – 15%

Provides resources for responding to specific ministry opportunities and needs right here in Abilene. These resources help to transform families, neighborhoods, and ministry partners within the Big Country.

4. Baptist World Aid – 10%

Since 1920, Baptist World Aid has networked Baptists around the world to alleviate poverty and hunger, respond when disasters strike, and support sustainable community development projects around the globe. This is the compassionate arm of the Baptist World Alliance and provides help for persons in need globally through disaster relief, alleviation of hunger, medical assistance to those affected by HIV/AIDS, and community development.

Counselor Spotlight:

SONJA BESSANT



We are excited to welcome Sonja Bessant, LCSW, to the Ministry of Counseling & Enrichment! She joined MOCE in June 2026 and brings a heart for children, families, and serving our community.

For the past three years, Sonja has provided online counseling to families involved in the CPS system. She also serves as a full-time school social worker with Abilene ISD, where she has seen firsthand the positive impact MOCE has on individuals and families in our community.

Sonja has a special passion for working with children; from toddlers through young adults. She believes that children are inherently good and sometimes “good kids are simply carrying big struggles.” She enjoys helping children feel understood, find their voice, and develop the tools they need to navigate life’s challenges. She also values partnering with families as they support their children.

“What a privilege it is to walk alongside an individual or family during a challenging moment, season, or year,” she shares. “It is humbling and an honor to be invited into someone’s life and to play a small part in their story.”

Serving at MOCE is meaningful to Sonja because she values being part of a faith-based organization where counseling can be grounded in faith and the hope found in God. She believes therapy is not about “fixing” something that is wrong, but about understanding ourselves, recognizing our strengths, and learning how to overcome challenges and move forward.

Outside of counseling, Sonja enjoys spending time with her husband, three adult daughters, son-in-law, and teenage son. She loves being outdoors, staying active, serving in her church’s youth ministry, and participating in community nonprofit organizations. One of her favorite reminders comes from Helen Keller: **“Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.”** She believes God calls us to be overcomers, as Romans 8:37 reminds us: **“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”**

We are thankful to have Sonja Bessant as part of the MOCE team and look forward to the ways God will use her gifts to serve children, families, and our community.

CALLED TO serve

FBC Abilene's history is built on a committee-led structure that works hand-in-hand with our wonderful staff. Each committee fulfills essential duties, meets regularly, and helps care for FBC's ministries, finances, bylaws, and facilities. We are so grateful to our committee members for sharing their time, expertise, strategic thinking, organizational skills, and leadership. Their commitment is invaluable to the vitality of our church.

Every year, the Committee on Committees looks for 35 church members, who have been a member of FBC for at least six months, to fill open spots on our committees. We would love to know where you feel called to serve! You can share your interests using the form below, which you can access by scanning the QR code, in Sunday School, or stopping by the church office.

Sharing your interest helps us understand your interests, though it doesn't guarantee a spot. The committee works carefully to build balanced teams with a variety of ages, backgrounds, and perspectives. As a friendly reminder, church bylaws specify that current standing committee members may only serve on one committee at a time.

We hope you will prayerfully consider where you might be willing to serve here at FBC.

- Committee on Committees



SCAN HERE
for Committee Interest Form

City Light:

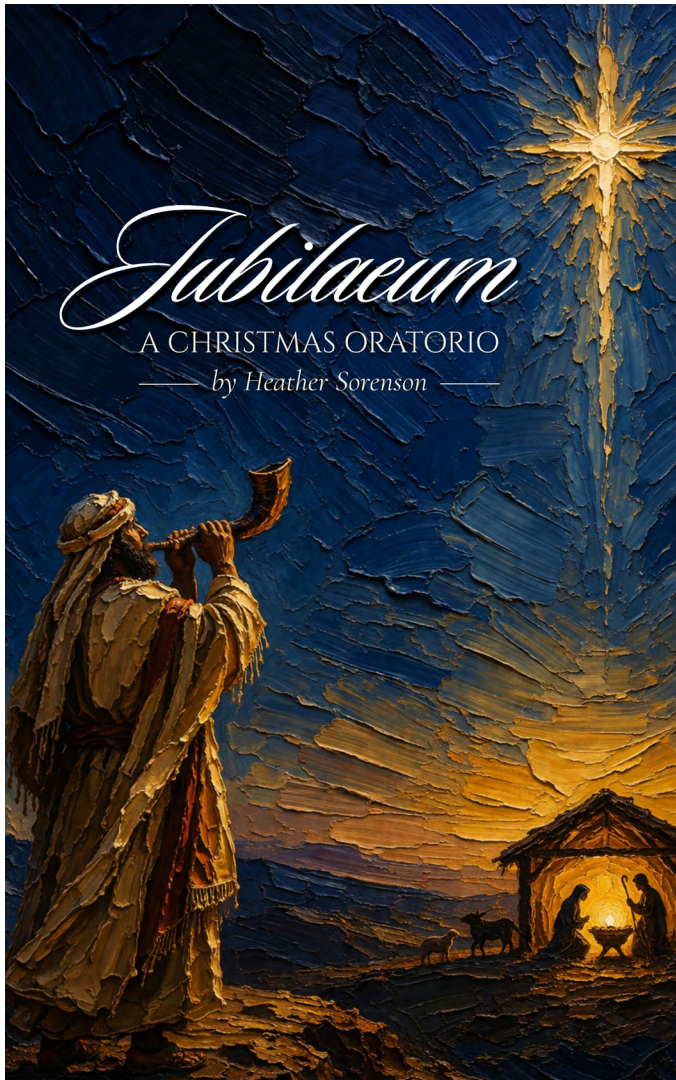
A PLACE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

City Light is blessed with a beautiful building which offers many welcoming spaces, including a conference room, offices, front lobby, dining room, and commercial kitchen. Throughout the past year, numerous agencies, ministries, and community groups have used different areas of our building for meetings, programs, training, and fellowship. We are grateful that City Light can be a place where people come together to serve and strengthen our community.

- **Abilene-Callahan Baptist Association**
- **Abilene Fire Department**
- **Abilene Housing Authority**
- **Abilene Independent School District (AISD)**
- **Abilene Police Department**
- **Abilene Social Ministries**
- **Adult Protective Services**
- **Ambulance Service of Abilene**
- **Betty Hardwick Center**
- **Community Foundation of Abilene**
- **FBC Women's Ministry Mahjong group**
- **FBC Youth**
- **First Baptist Church Deacons**
- **First Presbyterian Food Pantry**
- **Goodwill**
- **Hendrick Health**
- **Hope Haven**
- **Houses for Healing**
- **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**
- **Men of Nehemiah**
- **Passport Camps**
- **Pastor Darwin Samaritan's Touch Homeless Services**
- **Texas Veterans Commission**
- **Texas Workforce Commission**
- **The Nomad Social Enterprises**
- **The Sister's Table**
- **Veterans Affairs Services**
- **West Texas Council of Governments**
- **West Texas Homeless Network**

SAVE THE DATE

for Sunday, December 6
the Sancturay Choir will
present



Rehearsals begin Sunday,
September 13, at 6 p.m.

Serve

AT FBC ABILENE

UPCOMING MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

CAMBODIA
October 22– 31, 2026



A small team is being formed to encourage and work alongside David and Lauren Bass serving in Cambodia. The dates for this project are October 22–31. Cost and details will be out soon. Begin praying about how God might be calling you to join this small team of 6 to 8 people. Our purpose will be to do anything that best encourages their ministry. If you have any questions, contact John Moore (john.moore@fbcabilene.org) or Ashley Adams (ashley.adams@fbcabilene.org).

TAKING THE BUS TO BETTER SERVE

What better way to learn about public transportation than to experience it ourselves? John Moore challenged the City Light staff to navigate the public bus system from the stop near the old City Light building to the mall and back. If we succeeded, he would treat us to lunch! Along the way, we had to change buses, learn the best routes and stop times, and make sure we were waiting on time. Since buses stop only once an hour, missing one means waiting another hour.



During our trip, we encountered many neighbors we see daily at City Light. They were surprised and happy to see us and had plenty of questions about why we were riding the bus. We explained that we wanted to better understand the system so we could help others learn to use public transportation. Our round trip took 3 ½ hours, including an hour for lunch.

We also learned that beginning October 1, the price of a day bus pass will increase from \$3.75 to \$4.50. This added cost will be difficult for many of our neighbors. If you or your family would like to donate day bus passes to City Light, it would be a true blessing to those we serve.

BETH YOUNG

FBC ABILENE

women's ministry

As we start a new church year within the Women's Ministry here at FBC, we can reflect on some great events we have already hosted this year and share several opportunities to gather this school year with a mixture of fun events, as well as worshipful times.

We hosted a BUNCO night on Tuesday, August 25, at University Place and had a wonderful time yacking it up, eating, and laughing together!

This summer, we hosted three nights of Mahjong in the City Light Dining Room. This group of 40+ women had so much fun they wanted to continue meeting on a monthly basis. We will begin having monthly gatherings on the 1st Thursday of each month, beginning September 3. If you have a desire to learn to play Mahjong or you already know how to play, come and join us on the 1st Thursday of each month from 6–8 p.m. in the City Light Dining Room (1441 N. 4th). It helps us in our planning to know if you are coming so we can make sure we have enough game sets. Please contact Susie (325-675-8103 or susie.vandever@fbcabilene.org) and let her know if you are coming.

Tuesday, October 6, we will host a Night of Praise & Worship in the chapel. We will meet from 6:30–8 p.m., where we will pray together, sing together, and hear testimonies from our own.

We will once again host our annual retreat on Friday & Saturday, February 26 & 27. We will come together here at the

church for this gathering. Our speaker will be Kate Henderson and our theme will be "Surrender." Be looking for more information on this wonderful and life-refreshing event.

We will host another BUNCO night on Tuesday, April 13, at University Place from 6:30–8:30 p.m. This is always a fun night! Whether you play BUNCO or have never played, come and join us. This is probably one of the easiest things you will ever play!

We do hope you will make plans to join us at one, or all the events. These events are wonderful ways to build new friendships and/or strengthen existing relationships. We also think you will be blessed!

SAVE THESE DATES

- **1st Thursdays of each month - Mahjong**
- **October 6 - Night of Praise & Worship**
- **February 26–27 - Women's Retreat**
- **April 13 - BUNCO**



Ministry Spotlight:

CITY LIGHT

Community Ministries

SUNDAY BREAKFAST: 757

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST: 670

COMMUNITY LUNCH: 2,390

PRODUCE: 899

VOLUNTEER HOURS: 804

SHOWERS: 245

CLOTHING ITEMS: 554

CALLS AND VOICEMAILS: 378

MAIL CHECKS: 304

FRONT DESK WALK-INS: 3,477

DINING ROOM WALK-INS: 2,663



BLESSED FAMILIES FUN TIME!

THURSDAY, OCT. 1, 2026

4:30–6:30 P.M.

FBC FAMILY LIFE CENTER

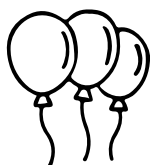
Children/students with special needs and their families are invited to a FREE time of fun! A parent, guardian, or caregiver must accompany the child. Activities are adapted.

Blessed family event is for children with special needs, and their families.

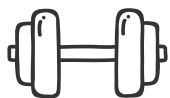
Adapted activities to include: bowling, skating, art, games in the gym, pizza, therapy dogs, music and dancing, and face painting .

Parent, guardian, or caregiver must accompany child/student, family to the event.

Ministry Spotlight: FLC



116
PARTY
PACKAGES



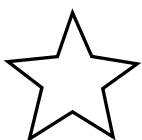
1,108
FITNESS
CENTER USE



36
FITNESS
CLASSES



931
SERENITY
HOUSE
INDIVIDUALS



29
FULL BUILDING
RENTALS



2,300
WALK-INS



94
SPECIAL NEEDS
GROUPS

EVENTS:

- Several summer camps brought kids throughout the summer
- GLO brought over summer camp kids to play most days
- Dyess Exceptional Families held an event each month
- Church in Houston stayed the night on their way back from a mission trip
- Summer fun nights & 2 other church events



The Family Life Center opened in 1981. Our mission is to provide family-oriented activities for the church membership & surrounding communities in a Christian atmosphere at an affordable price. Our facility accommodates a variety of groups such as businesses, churches, day care/day camps, private home schools, public schools, individuals with special needs, universities, military, family reunions, residential treatment centers, exercise groups and Fellowship of Christian Athletes to list a few. We host birthday parties, bridal showers, wedding receptions and Family Fun Nights. In addition, we have a full fitness center with lockers, showers and sauna amenities. For those who simply want a place to walk, out of the weather, our track or gym is free to the public.

JUNE, JULY & AUGUST 2026



thank you, FIRST BAPTIST!

As another school year begins, we are reminded of the incredible ways our church family can make a difference in the lives of children and teachers in our community.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who purchased school supplies for Martinez Elementary! Because of your generosity, we were able to provide supplies for all 30 teachers and their students.

What may seem like a simple box of pencils, a package of paper, or a set of classroom supplies can make a tremendous difference to a teacher who is preparing a classroom and to a child who is ready to learn. Your generosity helps ensure that our teachers have the resources they need and the students can begin the school year feeling prepared and supported.

More importantly, your gifts are a tangible reminder to the teachers, students, and families of Martinez Elementary that their community cares about them.

Thank you once again for showing what it means to love our neighbors and serve our community. We are grateful for a congregation who gives so generously and looks for opportunities to be the hands and feet of Christ.

Thank you, First Baptist, for helping make a difference—one classroom, one teacher, and one student at a time!



prayer works

Prayerworks is one of several prayer ministries at First Baptist. It was established in 1994 by a small group of devoted prayer warriors and was supported by the church members and staff. Its mission is to pray for the church staff, members, events, missions, programs, as well as for requests dropped into the prayer boxes at our church, City Light, Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment, Family Life Center, and GLO. Other requests come from emails to the church website and calls to Prayerworks, 325-672-PRAY (7729).

Since it would be impossible to cover all these areas at one sitting, everything is organized in such a way that each person picks up where the last person stopped, or as one is led. The intercessor can send Prayergram postcards of encouragement. All requests are kept confidential.

The intercessors commit to come to the Prayer Room (next to the church office) once a week for thirty minutes or an hour.

If you feel led to participate in this ministry, please call the church office for further information. You will be blessed beyond measure, as you see God's power working in our church, community, and individual lives.



The temperatures may not make it feel like it is time for us to be planning for Trunk or Treat, but whether we are having fall weather or not, it is time for our annual event. We will be enjoying Trunk or Treat whether it is warm or cold on Wednesday, October 28, from 5:30–7 p.m. in the south parking lot. We are planning to have at least 24 trunks with games and candy, fun train rides, as well as serving a free hot dog dinner!

This is always a fun night as we see the cars which are decorated so cute, as well as the many costumes that both children and adults wear!

In order for this event to happen, we need people to volunteer to bring their vehicles, candy, and/or cookies/cupcakes/cakes. If you would like to help in any way, please call Keathley at 325-675-8192 or Becky at 325-675-8106.

We hope you will join us for this wonderful community event.

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

September 2, 1 year

KEATHLEY ROAN

Director of Preschool

September 15, 1 year

ASHLEY ADAMS

Ministry Assistant to Pastor for Missions

September 30, 7 years

MATTHEW FAHRLENDER

Custodian

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

August 2026

<u>Budget</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Required	\$268,100	\$2,239,800
Given	\$211,167	\$2,153,562

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

SEPTEMBER

- 7** Church Offices Closed – Labor Day
- 9** Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
- 10** Healing Hearts Knit Along
- 13** Prayer Partner Sunday
Personnel Committee Meeting
- 15** CLCM Board Meeting
Finance Committee Meeting
Deacons' Meeting
- 17** Men's Ministry Brown bag Lunch
Healing Hearts Meeting
- 18–20** College Fall Retreat
- 20** Lord's Supper
Missions' Committee Meeting
- 21** MOCE Board Meeting
- 22** GLO Board Meeting
- 24** Healing Hearts Knit Along
- 24** Women's Ministry Mahjong
for Dyess Spouses
- 27** FBC Night at the Zoo



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE