

THE JOURNEY (TOGETHER) OF LENT

The season of Lent (the 40 days before Easter not counting Sundays) was not something I grew up observing. It was not a part of the story told in the church in which I grew up, and the only thing I really knew about it in my earliest years was that it was a season which caused a change in the food offered in the school cafeteria (a change I later learned was because of some Catholic practices around the season of Lent). It was not until I started occasionally attending a local Methodist church that I heard any rationale or story behind Lent, Holy Week, or Advent. Now, I find these practices important to my own faith and a helpful tool in the building and sustaining of a community life together.

When we engage together in the season of Lent, a season of penitence and preparation in remembrance of Jesus' 40 days of temptation in the wilderness, we observe a common practice as a body of believers. So much of our lives are lived as individuals or individual family units that we don't often participate in aspects of life which bond us together in the way that a participation in Lenten practices and attention to this season can. Taking up a spiritual practice during this season – whether that is the usual “giving up” something for Lent, adding a disciple like prayer or reading scripture, or simply committing to the daily scripture

readings provided by our church – places us together on a journey which helps us remember the reality that we are always actually journeying together.

Additionally, by seeing this season as a journey, a progression, that leads us from the ashes of Ash Wednesday (February 14 at 6 p.m. in the sanctuary) to Holy Week and ultimately to Easter Sunday helps us to remember that we and others are always on a journey from one season of our life to another. The recognition of this journey helps us to become less judgmental as we remember that we are all not finished and all are at different places on their journey. Together, we are being saved by God's grace from who we would be otherwise – and all of us are at different places in our journey.

Finally, observing a season of Lent helps to make our experience of Easter all the more palpable. By remembering with intentionality the journey of Christ and the suffering of Christ, we come with hearts prepared to see the gravity and power of the Easter resurrection.

By journeying through a period of darkness, we are then able to more appreciate the light of Christ breaking forth into the world.

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Maybe you grew up practicing Lent and other seasons of the church. Maybe you have observed them for the past several years. Or maybe, you've never taken the time to ponder and take seriously this season in the life of the church. This year, regardless of what has been done in your life before, I hope you will join me and others on a Lenten journey. Let us walk together in love and with the trust that God is able and willing to take us from where we are today to where God wants us to be, one step of grace at a time.

Love,

Brandon

BRANDON HUDSON
Senior Pastor



MISSIONS IN MACEDONIA



Jeff Lee recently received the Mother Teresa Humanitarian Award given by the Citizens Association of Mother Teresa for his faithful service to the community showing honesty, integrity, and responsibility. He was nominated by Dusko from the Food Bank of Macedonia.



On Friday, January 4, Shemeka received her college diploma in the mail at City Light! Beth and Trevor entered the dining room singing Pomp and Circumstance to celebrate her accomplishment as she opened her diploma. Shemeka, your perseverance is truly commendable. Your accomplishment, a testament to faith and resilience. Navigating transitional living situations is undoubtedly challenging, and sticking to a goal becomes even more difficult in less-than-ideal living conditions. Congratulations on your college graduation! Your strength is truly inspiring, and we are incredibly proud of you.

DISCIPLE NOW 2024

Disciple Now is almost here! This fun-filled weekend for our youth ministry includes many opportunities for fellowship, games, food, and laughter. Most importantly, DNow is all about our students growing in their faith and callings. Every year, I hope each student deepens their love for God and for their neighbors by spending time during this intense weekend in spiritual formation and fellowship. Please be in prayer for our students so they might hear God's heart, mind, and intent for them this weekend. Also, be in prayer for our volunteers, host homes, and small group leaders as their work goes toward this important event in the life of our student ministry. Thank you all for your willingness to serve.

This year's Disciple Now will be **February 9-11, 2024**. The cost is \$50 per student to cover the cost of meals, game supplies, and a cool t-shirt. Forms for sign-up are scattered throughout the church. While the deadline to ensure proper t-shirt size was January 31, anyone grades 6th-12th are still encouraged to register for DNow up to the end of registration. Registration/Check-in will be from 6-7 p.m. on Friday, February 9, on the youth floor. Students, make sure to bring all your luggage with you during this time! On Sunday, February 11, there will be a parent/student breakfast from 9-10:15 a.m. to wrap-up our time together. We hope you can join us!

Our theme for this year is Overflow and our main verse is Romans 15:13. Our students will learn what it means to overflow with hope, joy, peace, and love in all parts of their lives. As we live out our lives for Christ, may we overflow by God's Spirit in all that we do.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may

OVERFLOW

with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."



HUNTER BROWN
Pastor for Youth

THE WEDNESDAY THING SPRING '24

I want to tell you how excited I am to introduce to you the lineup for the spring semester of The Wednesday Thing. The theme will be Aging: It Takes Awhile. You know we are all aging. I used to be in my 20's. Suddenly I'm 66. Here is a quick preview of the programs.

FEBRUARY 7 – Glenn Dromgoole, owner of Texas Star Trading Company and the author of 30 books, will give a talk titled, "Just Happy to be Here: Words to Encourage, Enlighten, and Entertain."

FEBRUARY 14 – Ash Wednesday,
No Wednesday Thing

FEBRUARY 21 – Dr. Tom Copeland, Professor of Psychology and Counseling, will speak to us about The Psychology of Aging. Tom is a deacon and also a teacher in the Journey Sunday School Class.

FEBRUARY 28 – Larry Link will be here to talk about Views of Aging—Chronological, Functional, Psychological, and Social. Larry was on staff at FBC Abilene from 1972-1978 as Youth Minister and later Young Adult Minister. Larry has spent his ministry with Baby Boomers. He will present that day at 4:00 and 6:00 p.m.

MARCH 6 – Teresa Baucom (yes, she is kin to Lon) is employed by Hamil Family Funeral Home. She will be here to visit with us about Planning Your Funeral. This is one of those things we will be glad we did.

MARCH 20 – Jermaine Watkins will speak on the topic of The Physiology of Aging. Jermaine has served in the United States Army and retired from the United States Air Force. He is a Licensed Trainer and works at West Texas Rehab.

APRIL 3 – Joe Hancock, Vice President and General Counsel for HighGround Advisors, formerly The Baptist Foundation of Texas, will be here to visit with us about End of Life Giving and Before, Pathways to Stewardship Beyond Giving. We have wanted to have Joe come for quite a while. He will also be available for individual appointments.

APRIL 10 – Chuck Rodgers, Vice President of Development for West Texas Rehab Foundation, will come to share about From Loss to Living and Moving Forward. Chuck and Cindy had been married for 30 years before her death in April of 2017. You might remember him as the Area Director of Young Life in Abilene for many years.

APRIL 17 & 24 – Pastor Brandon Hudson will speak to us about The Spiritual Side of Aging.

The Wednesday Thing meets each week at 4:00 p.m. in the chapel.

PANCAKE SUPPER

By Becky Tucker & Hunter Brown

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!

What a wonderful night we had at our annual Pancake Supper. This year was extra special as it had been 4 years since we hosted this event. One of the ways that made this event extra special was by including our youth.

On Wednesday nights, we have been talking about sharing the love of Christ with others. One of the ways we can show love is by serving others with joyful hearts. There were many wonderful opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ during the supper as the children waited on tables, got extra servings for those who wanted more, cleaned up trash, as well as just offering to help others. Our youth were able to demonstrate this love by cooking and serving our food as well as pitching in wherever needed. Both children and youth not only showed love to others, but did a fabulous job as they served and cooked!

Many of our children had never been able to participate in one of our pancake suppers so there was much excitement, as well as some anxiousness, when it was announced we would be having the supper. As the supper went on, almost all the anxiousness subsided and everyone is looking forward to next year's event.

We are blessed and so very thankful to have so many who helped make this event happen: whether it was cooking, serving, keeping the pans full of batter, cleaning up, buying tickets, eating, or giving donations. A special THANK YOU goes to Debra Clemmer, Mike Greenfield, Jennifer Miller, Britney Tucker, and Susie Vandever for helping in early preparation for this event.

We collected over **\$3,600** and that money will go towards future Youth Mission Trips. We look forward to working with our missions' office in planning future events and to hopefully making this an annual way to raise funds.

Thank you for being a church who allows our children and youth to put what they are learning into action. We are very blessed!



WOMEN'S RETREAT 2024

We are getting so close to our Annual FBC Women's Retreat on February 23 – 24!!! Only three weeks out and our planning team is active and excited about the way God is going to work in each participant. We hope you have made plans to attend. The retreat will have a completely new format. We have lengthened the weekend, as was requested by many through the evaluation forms, and we will have breakout sessions within the weekend. The entire event will be here in our own building. Our theme is Breathe, and it's hard to imagine that any of us do not need to take time to focus on slowing down and taking some good deep breaths.

Here are some of the great things you can look forward to at our upcoming Women's Retreat:

- **Worship Sessions**—much like those of our Women's Nights of Praise complete with songs, testimonies, prayer, and Scripture reading.
- **Keynote Speaker**—This year, our speaker is one of our very own, Jill Hudson. Many of you may know Jill, but this will be a wonderful way to get to know her even better.
- **Workshops**—led by women on a variety of topics like yoga, painting, culinary arts, prayer walking, and artistic Bible note taking.
- **Missions Activity**—one that will directly benefit the Abilene community.
- **Fellowship Meals**—we will have four opportunities to have delicious meals together as we have extended our time to conclude Saturday evening.

It is our hope that each woman of FBC will mark her calendar right now to make time and space for this important time of fellowship, worship, and sacred space. You are important to our community and you need time to retreat and breathe. Just a thought, if Jesus retreated, we should too!

COLLEGE SKI RETREAT

The college ministry had a great time at Glorieta for our annual ski retreat!
Lots of fun and good conversations.





Moving Day!

A big shout out to the amazing team of friends and volunteers who filled our parking lot on January 5 with trucks and enthusiasm. Your efforts in loading and unloading boxes and furniture made the move possible, and we're incredibly thankful for your support! While it's bittersweet to leave the old building behind, we're excited for the new beginnings and the memories we'll create together at 1441 N. 4th Street. We are grateful to call the Hope Center our home, an amazing place filled with warmth and positivity. Thank you for being a part of our journey.



Anticipation!

Witnessing the joy and anticipation on our neighbors' faces as they entered City Light for the first time was truly overwhelming. The expressions, and even tears, on some cheeks reflected the profound impact of this community hub, offering a new source of hope and connection for everyone involved.



You've Got Mail!

City Light offers a convenient mail service for receiving essential items like food stamps, Social Security checks, and personal mail. City Light's mail service offers a crucial avenue for individuals without a fixed address to receive important mail, ensuring they can access essential resources and stay connected.



2024 MINISTRY BUDGET PROCESS

Several years ago, we changed the way we did the ministry budget for the church. For many years, the budget committee would present the next year's budget to the church in October and then in November, the church would vote on the new budget for the coming year. The major flaw in that system was that lack of information about how the previous year would end, while still adopting a new budget which could be more than what the previous receipts were. So, the change in timing was made to allow the committee to actually see what came in for the previous year, then make any adjustments to the new budget before taking it to the church. This is very helpful on one hand, but does cause a bit of uncertainty for the month of January as we have not adopted a new budget, but ministry still goes on. Once we vote on the new budget, typically the second week of February, then we have an action plan in place and things settle down.

Well, January is now over and the new budget is not quite finished, so it has not been voted on yet. The delay or confusing issue for the budget committee has to do with how we finished 2023 in regards to actual budget receipts and the budget increases due to property insurance more than doubling in cost. So, the budget committee personally visited all adult Sunday school classes this past weekend, and will be doing the same again on Sunday. Their message is

simple. Based on the giving chart and the totals for last year, as a church, we either need to step up, or we must step back.

The committee is not in favor of stepping back, but they also are realistic enough to know that pushing forward a budget which would only cause more shortfall in the future is not helpful.

So, if stepping back is not the best choice, then stepping up is.

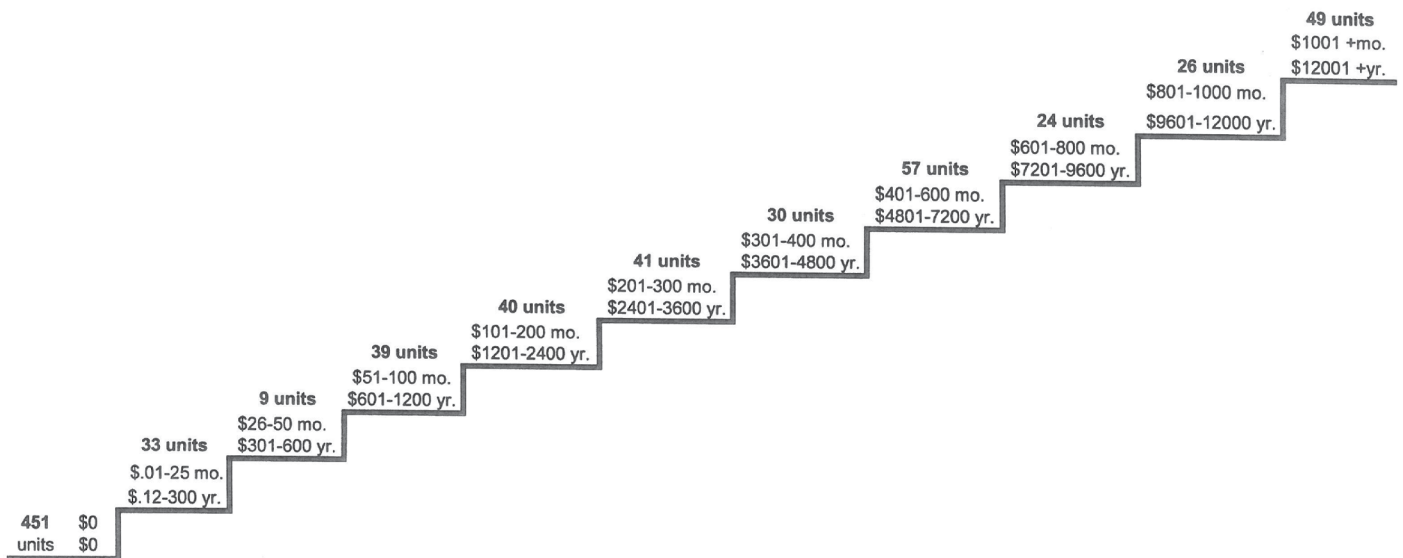
According to the chart, which is based on actual giving to the ministry budget in 2023, 451 family units did not participate in the financial life of the church. Yes, some of those are folks we have not seen in years, but many of them are people who participate in many other areas of the church, just not the financial one. There are many others who do give, but have not moved to the point in their spiritual journey where they are fully ready to trust God to provide all of their needs, and because of that trust, they believe in and practice the Biblical concept of tithing (giving back to God 1/10 of what He has entrusted to them). This truly is a spiritual problem much more than it is a financial problem.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH • ABILENE

A BREAKDOWN OF OUR CONGREGATION'S GIVING PATTERNS

2023 based on giving from Jan 1 - Dec 31



As of Dec 31, we had 799 family units in the church computer system. This graph is broken down into monthly or yearly giving patterns by family unit.

What would it take for you and your family to "step up" in giving?

So, this next year, we will continue to teach the Biblical concept of tithing. We will showcase all of the ministries God has entrusted to us and what those ministries require for them to continue. We will share practical ways you can be financially fit and how you can plan for the future. We will listen to God as to where He wants to take us and how we are to get there.

MIKE GREENFIELD
Pastor for Administration
& Spiritual Development



MINISTRY ASSISTANT FOR WORSHIP AND MUSIC

We are currently looking to hire a new Ministry Assistant for Worship and Music. This part-time position will be filled by a qualified candidate who meets these necessary skills:

- Experience as an administrative assistant
- Computer skills with data entry records maintenance, desktop publications, electronic communications and proficiency in Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and a willingness to learn proprietary software specific to the Worship and Music ministry
- Working knowledge of music and the ability to read music, and
- Strong, detail oriented organizational skills.
- Normal weekly work hours are scheduled for 29 hours and are broken down as follows: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday (6 hours/day), Wednesday (8 hours) and Sunday (3 hours).

A job description is available upon request. Please direct inquiries to Todd Wilson (325-675-8119) or todd.wilson@fbcabilene.org.



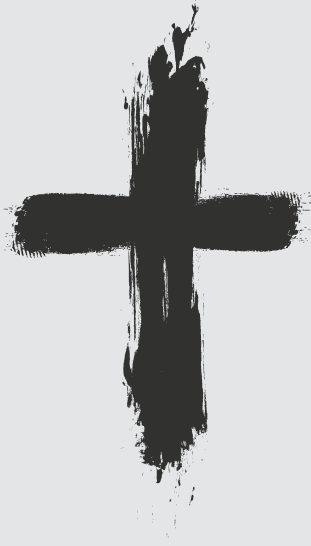
REQUIEM

HEATHER SORENSON

On Good Friday, March 29, the Sanctuary Choir, Orchestra, soloists, and special guest composer Heather Sorenson, will present a service of remembrance and hope.

Commissioned by First United Methodist Church, Gainesville, Florida for those who lost their lives as a result of COVID, this is a reminder of the hope we have in Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life.

You are invited to join the choir at 6 p.m. for rehearsals beginning Sunday night, January 21 and continuing through March 24.



ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14, 2024
at 6 p.m.
FBC Sanctuary

Let us engage together
in the season of Lent,
a season of penitence
and preparation in
remembrance of Jesus'
40 days of temptation in
the wilderness, we observe
a common practice as a
body of believers.

FEBRUARY

- 4** Mexico City Mission Trip Interest Meeting
Personnel Committee Meeting
Recreation Board Meeting
- 7** Women's Ministry Meeting
- 9-11** Disciple Now Weekend
- 14** Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
Ash Wednesday Service
- 18** Missions Committee Meeting
- 20** CLCM Board Meeting
Finance Committee Meeting
Deacons' Meeting
- 23-24** Women's Retreat
Youth CUE Winter Festival
- 25** Lord's Supper
- 29-3/3** Men's Ski Trip

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

February 1, 25 years

C. V. BLAKE

Pastor for Adults

February 14, 2 years

KIRSTIN SHAFFER

Evening Receptionist, MOCE

February 17, 24 years

DEBRA CLEMMER

M. A. to Pastor for Administration

February 18, 11 years

ERIN FAHRLENDER

Insurance Specialist, MOCE

February 18, 5 years

JOE FRUSH

Director for Pastoral Care

February 20, 1 year

SUSIE VANDEVER

M. A. to Senior Pastor



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Abilene, TX**

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STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

January 2024

<u>Budget</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Required	\$ 220,060	\$ 220,060
Given	\$ 240,161	\$ 240,161

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



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