



FIRSTWORDS

ANNUAL PANCAKE SUPPER

By Becky Tucker & Hunter Brown

It's that time of the year for our Annual Pancake Supper! On Saturday, February 28, we will once again be hosting the Pancake Supper which allows us to raise money for missions. This event will again be a joint effort combining children and youth. The children will continue to serve as wait staff and clean tables, while the youth will be cooking and serving the food.

We are looking forward to this joint venture with the children and youth as it is another way our church seeks to develop relationships among those of different ages, as well as support missions.

Tickets will be available beginning Wednesday, February 4. We hope you will make plans to join us on Saturday, February 28 as we come together as a church family along with friends for this wonderful event!



Dear FBC Family,

A few years ago, my doctoral program mentor, Scot McKnight, wrote a book called *The Fellowship of Differents*. He wrote at the time, "The church is God's world-changing social experiment of bringing unlike and different to the table to share life with one another in a new kind of family. When this happens, we show the world what love, justice, peace, reconciliation, and life together are designed by God to be. The church is God's show-and-tell for the world to see how God wants us to live as a family."

One of the reasons we began the year with the Household of God series and reenforced that idea at Community Weekend was that I believe the church is still the hope of the world if it stays centered on Jesus' kingdom vision. In a world retreating to tribalism and reacting to fear based politics, the church's message of God's Grace stands juxtaposed to the rage baiting culture we currently dwell.

We have an opportunity in the mid-21st century to display God's love, justice, peace, reconciliation, and what life together centered on Jesus really looks like. We can show the world what it means to love our neighbor and our enemy. We can show the world how forgiveness, rather than vengeance, is the way to peace. We can work towards justice for those whom society overlooks and be ambassadors of reconciliation.

One of the prayers I often pray at night is, we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life might rest in God's eternal changelessness. There are a lot of changes, disruptions, and distractions in our lives today. God does not change and His mercy is new every morning. While some of our methods might change at church, our message is still the same, summed up by John 3:16 – God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. Whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. Let us be filled with that love and allow that love to spill over into Abilene, the Big Country, and throughout the world.

Grace and Peace,

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



FBC Foundation:

THE PAST HELPING THE FUTURE

The FBC Foundation's primary purpose has always been to provide support for the programs and ministries of First Baptist Church. The foundation was established in 1989 and in 1994 the board structure was changed to include the five trustees of the church serving as permanent members of the board and 6 members to be nominated by the committee on committees to serve 3-year rotating terms. This board has the ability to use the earnings from the undesignated gifts to fund grant requests from the missions and ministries of the church.

In 2025, the Foundation was able to provide funding for several different types of requests. The Preschool Ministry needed to upgrade the cribs in the nursery which no longer met the current health and safety codes. The TV Ministry lost some equipment which prevented the services from being able to be produced utilizing all the current equipment. So, through a grant, upgrades were made to the broadcast equipment, and the problems were solved which allowed those who are not able to come to the church to still be a part of the weekly worship services. FBC is a congregation who likes to gather around the table for fellowship and good food, so new grills were purchased with a grant by the foundation. The Christmas Lights were partially funded by the foundation and thousands of people were able to enjoy the season. The Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment received a grant allowing them to see clients who might not otherwise be able to get help because of their current financial situation.

Since 1989, the foundation has provided over \$2 million in grants and has helped with the infrastructure of the buildings, capital needs within the church, and various mission and ministry requests.

First Baptist Church Foundation

There are many ways to give to the First Baptist Church Foundation.

ENDOWMENT FUNDS

An endowment fund is a gift set aside as a permanent fund invested to generate income for the church or specific ministries of the church. By designating gifts as endowment, donors specify that the principal of the gift will never be spent, but the income earned by that principal will be paid out to the ministry on a regular basis. This provides a steady source of income for the ministry to count on in the future. As the principal of the fund grows over the years, the income flowing to the ministry will increase.

Donors can create endowment funds by making outright gifts or by establishing trusts that will pass assets to the church or specific ministries of the church in the future. Donors can also set up endowment funds through their wills.

GIFTS BY WILL

For most people, a will is an economical and effective way to pass assets to loved ones. A will also allows donors to direct some of their assets to support charitable causes. Donors may choose to make charitable gifts of specific pieces of property or amounts of money, or donors may give a percentage of their total estate to the church or specific ministries of the church. Furthermore, donors may indicate that their gifts are to be used for the organization's immediate needs, or they may designate the gifts to be held as endowments to provide sources of income for the ministries into the future.

GIFTS OF NON-CASH ASSETS

Donors may increase their giving potential while maximizing tax benefits through gifts of non-cash assets, such as retirement plans, tangible property, life insurance or virtual currency. When non-cash assets are contributed to a charitable organization, often the full fair market value of the asset is tax-deductible and capital gains tax are not incurred upon its sale.

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS

One of the fastest-growing and most flexible giving vehicles, a donor-advised fund (DAF) is a charitable giving account that is sponsored by a public charity, like HighGround Advisors, and funded by a donor's tax-deductible contributions of cash, stock, mutual funds or other assets. Contributions to a DAF have the potential to grow tax-free over time, and donors retain the right to recommend grants from the DAF to eligible charities of their choice.

A DAF is an excellent vehicle for donors who wish to maximize their charitable impact, give in a tax-advantageous way, and streamline the administration of their donations.

As you consider what your legacy will be, keep in mind these giving strategies.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES

With a qualified charitable gift annuity, a donor contributes assets to the church or specific ministries of the church in exchange for fixed annuity payments for life. The amount of the annuity is based upon the age of the income beneficiary or beneficiaries. The donor also receives a current charitable income tax deduction.

CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUSTS

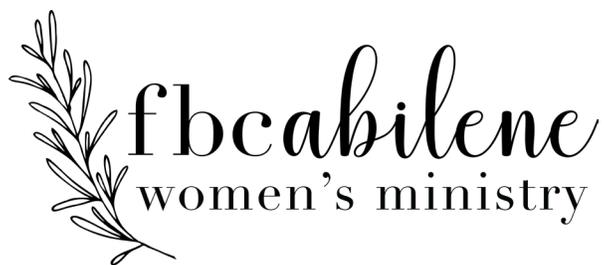
Charitable remainder trusts provide an excellent opportunity for individuals to give to the church or specific ministries of the church while retaining an income stream. A donor contributes assets to the trust, and the trust makes annual distributions to the donor for life or a fixed term. At the end of the trust term, remaining assets pass to the named ministry beneficiary. Remainder trusts can be funded with almost any asset and provide donors with an income tax-deductible donation in the year the gift is made.

CHARITABLE LEAD TRUSTS

With a charitable lead trust, the donation provides an immediate income stream to the church or specific ministries of the church. The donor contributes assets to a trust which makes annual distributions to a named ministry beneficiary for the donor's life or a fixed term of years. After the trust's term, the remaining trust assets are returned to the donor or passed to the donor's family members. Lead trusts can be funded with almost any asset. Depending on the remainder beneficiary, donors receive either a gift or charitable income tax deduction.

If you have questions about the foundation, please contact Jeanne Jowers or Mike Greenfield in the church offices.

HighGround Advisors is proud to manage the endowment of First Baptist Church Foundation. Since 1930, HighGround has played a unique role in enabling churches and ministries to carry out their missions through endowment management and charitable gift planning services. For additional information regarding gift planning strategies, please visit www.highgroundadvisors.org/gift-planning.



We are ready for a wonderful new year within the Women's Ministry here at FBC. We will have a mixture of fun events as well as worshipful times.

We will be hosting a BUNCO night on Tuesday, February 10, at University Place. We will start at 7 p.m. and end around 9 p.m. Come prepared to laugh a lot, eat some wonderful snacks, and hopefully win some prizes!

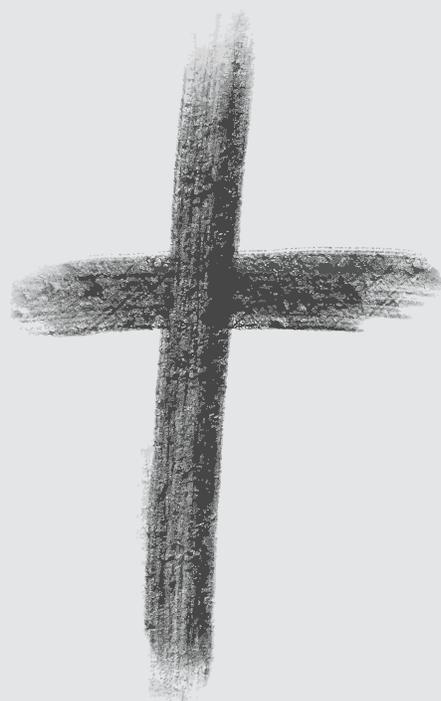
On Friday, March 27 we will come together for a very multi-generational night as we are asking ALL ages to come for GIRLS ONLY: Movie Night. Our plans are to meet at 6:30 p.m. in the high school room to watch "Parent Trap." We will have drinks and snacks available. This will be another wonderful way to come together as the family of Christ.

Our final event of this spring semester will be a Night of Praise on Thursday, April 16. We will meet in the Chapel at 7 p.m. where we will pray together, sing together, and hear testimonies from some of our very own.

Hope you will make plans to join us at one, or all of the events, and be blessed!

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE FEBRUARY 18 6:15 P.M.

One of the most meaningful services we hold each year is the Ash Wednesday Service. This service marks the beginning of Lent, when we take time to seriously reflect on our own sinfulness and prepare for the redemptive act Jesus provides for us at Easter. The palm fronds from last year's Palm Sunday service are burnt and the mark of the cross is placed on the forehead of the participants as they hear the profound words, "**Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**" A few years ago, Todd Wilson, Pastor for Worship and Music wrote the following and it was worth repeating.



ASH WEDNESDAY:

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

If you grew up in the Baptist (and I mean Southern Baptist) church like me, you probably did not observe certain events within the church year, like: Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Pentecost, and even Advent. I had rarely, if ever, considered the meaning of these richly symbolic days and how their acknowledgment and practice might impact me personally. One such, is the observance of Ash Wednesday, also known as the Day of Ashes. First, a few facts about Ash Wednesday:

- It is a service which marks the beginning of a penitential season of Lent which last 40 days, not counting Sundays, leading up to Easter and was used in the early church as a time for those who had come to faith in Christ and spent this time in reflection and repentance in preparation for their baptism, which occurred on Easter Sunday
- It is a solemn service which includes ashes made of the palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday service
- While the service is solemn, it is also marked with hope, after all, "Lent" means "springtime" in which we celebrate the springtime of the soul, a time for preparation, planting, and growth (Manual on the Liturgy, p. 307)

- Ashes not only suggest judgement and God's condemnation of our sin, frailty, our total dependence on God for life, humiliation, and repentance, but also cleansing and renewal (Manual on the Liturgy, p. 307).

This year, Ash Wednesday is February 18 and our service has elements of solemnity, and repentance, but also forgiveness and hope. The imposition of ashes is voluntary and serves as a symbol and reminder to us of the words spoken over us, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, from dust you came, to dust you shall return."

So, what does it mean to me? It means I need to be reminded of my sin, my frailty, and need for forgiveness. It reminds me that my salvation came at a great cost and I cannot look lightly upon the sacrifice which paid for that salvation. It reminds me that God's love for me, and all of humanity, can be best seen and known when I look at it through the cross and the empty tomb.



TODD WILSON
Pastor for Worship
& Music

Counselor Spotlight:

MANDI GORETSKA



I joined MOCE (Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment) in 2022 after a career that began in social work. I was inspired early on by a social worker who made a lasting impact in my life, which led me to pursue work in a variety of social service settings. After many years in the field, the encouragement of friends, family, and colleagues led me to take the next step of earning my master's degree and providing counseling. I am deeply grateful for that encouragement and for the work I am able to do today.

It is an honor to walk alongside clients on their counseling journeys, regardless of the challenges they bring. My primary focus is working with adults who have experienced trauma, as well as those navigating significant life transitions. These may include college and early adulthood, marriage and parenting, midlife changes, aging, and end-of-life decisions. These seasons often surface unresolved wounds, grief, and loss, making compassionate and supportive counseling especially meaningful.

One thing I wish more people understood is that seeking counseling does not mean something is wrong with you or that you are broken. Counseling is often seen as a last resort, rather than a proactive form of self-care. In reality, counseling is about growth, healing, and learning to navigate both the normal stresses of life and the impact of trauma.

Serving at MOCE is important to me because this ministry recognizes that mental health care is not separate from Christ's work in the world. MOCE values compassion, humility, truth, and service, and it is a gift to offer my professional skills within a community that lives out those values. I am also grateful to be part of a work family who supports one another as we care for our clients.

Outside of the counseling room, I practice self-care through reading, daily walks, and spending time with my family. One of my favorite joys is watching our son play golf and show steers at livestock shows.

It is truly an honor to be part of MOCE and to walk alongside others in ways that reflect Christ's love, compassion, and care.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SPIRITUAL FORMATION CLASSES

HABITS OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms

FEBRUARY 11

Estate Planning led by Katie Gore

FEBRUARY 18

Ash Wednesday Service in the Sanctuary

FEBRUARY 25

Session 1: Waking Up to Habits of the Household
Foundational Habits, Habits Around Waking, Habits Around Bedtime

MARCH 4

Session 2: Habits for Mealtimes and Family Devotions
Meals in Scripture, Habits for Mealtimes, Family Devotions

MARCH 18

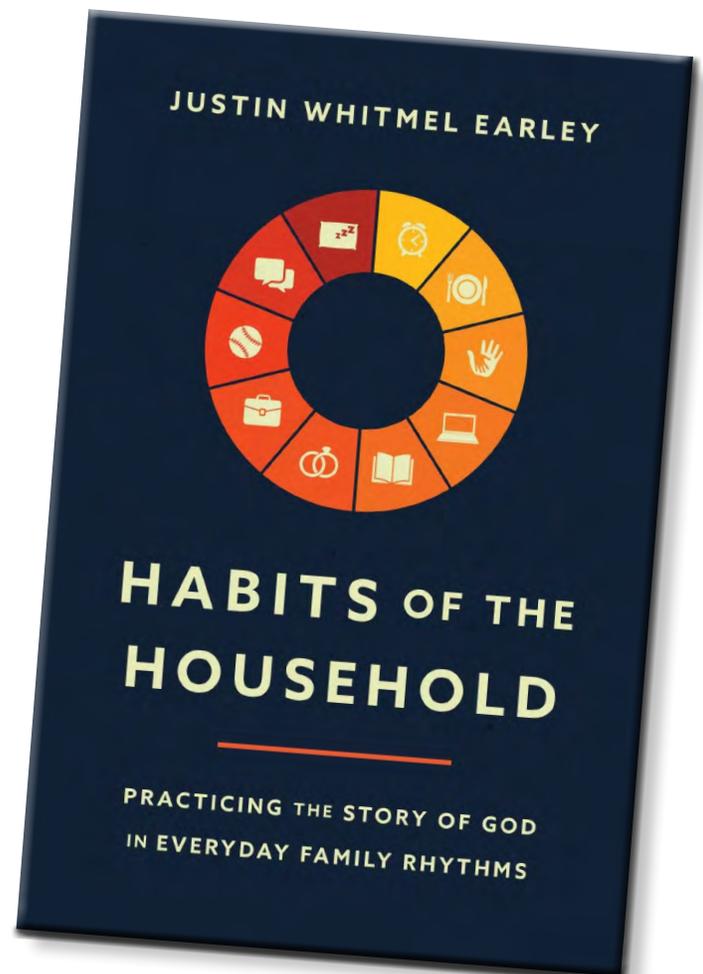
Session 3: Habits for Screentime and Formation
The Basics of Formation, Formation and Screens,
The Joy of Play

MARCH 25

Session 4: Habits for Using Discipline as
Discipleship
A Deeper Look at Discipleship, A Deeper Look at
Discipline, The Importance of Conversation

APRIL 8

Session 5: Habits to Help You Imagine the Future
Reflecting on the Future, Reflecting on Marriage,
Reflecting on Work



FOUR FBC MISSION SERVICE

FBC Abilene & Habitat for Humanity Spring 2026

FBC Abilene has the opportunity to partner with Habitat for Humanity to begin a house build on North 8th street this spring. A leadership team is being formed to help guide this project and we need your help. If you are interested in helping this leadership team or to sign up for future building times, please call the missions' office (325-675-8186). Watch for more details and exact dates about this volunteer opportunity which puts God's love into action supporting our community with hope through affordable housing!



Mexico City May 30-June 5, 2026

This trip is an opportunity to serve alongside CBF Latin American Strategy with a hands-on experience that deepens our understanding of cross-cultural ministry. There will be three different teams: Medical Team, Service Project, and Children's Ministry. Begin praying about how God might be calling you to join this small team of 8 to 9 people. More details to follow.



OPPORTUNITIES COMING IN 2026

FBC Friendship House Children's Backyard Bible Club

June 22-25, 2026

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

A team is needed to help with a Children's Backyard Bible Club for the College Heights neighborhood at the FBC Friendship House on Orange Street. David and Ashley Adams will be leading the 3rd Annual Children's Backyard Bible Club and they need your help! Come join this team and be the Gospel in action to our neighbors. More details and meeting times will be out soon.

North Macedonia September 4-13, 2026

A small team is being formed to encourage and work alongside Alicia and Jeff Lee serving in Skopje, North Macedonia. The tentative dates for this project are September 4-13. Costs, details, and final dates will be out soon. Begin praying about how God might be calling you to join this small team of 8 to 9 people. You can follow Jeff Lee on Facebook and Instagram to see the work they are doing on the farms and other ministries. Alicia and Jeff support and help with Poraka (Adult Group Home), Skopje Food Bank, Macedonia Orphanage, Vineyards, Children's Home (Immanuel), Cultural Immersion International Church, and a few others. Our purpose will be to do anything that best encourages their ministry.

Please begin to pray how you can be involved in any or all of these opportunities and watch for more details coming soon.

If you have questions or would like to be put on the list for any of these opportunities, please contact the missions' office (325-675-8186).

Ministry Spotlight:

CITY LIGHT

Community Ministries

SUNDAY BREAKFAST: 635

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST: 621

COMMUNITY LUNCH: 2,201

PRODUCE: 406

VOLUNTEER HOURS: 404

SHOWERS: 156

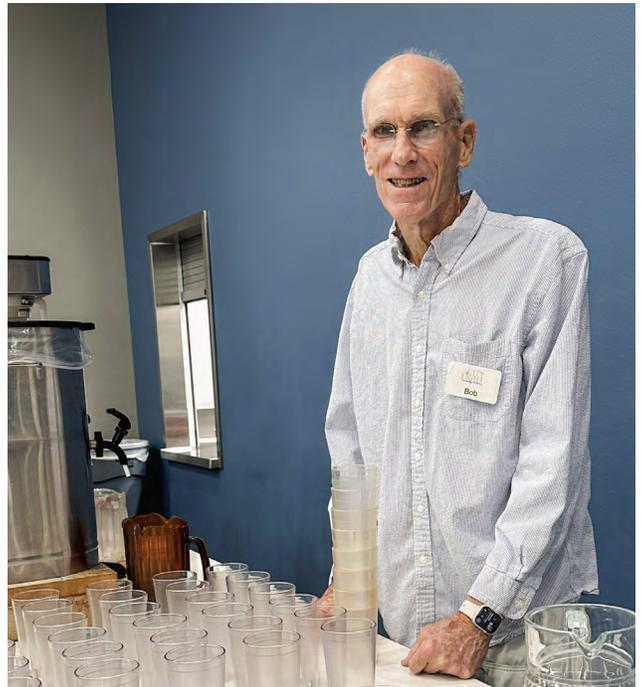
CLOTHING ITEMS: 346

CALLS AND VOICEMAILS: 370

MAIL CHECKS: 271

FRONT DESK WALK-INS: 1,938

DINING ROOM WALK-INS: 2,207



**City Light will be hosting
a Volunteer Training
Meeting on Tuesday,
February 24,
from 1:00–2:30 p.m.
Dessert will be served!**

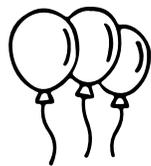
If you've been thinking about volunteering but aren't sure when to start, this is the perfect time. Come learn more about what we do, explore the different areas to serve, and see where your gifts might fit best.

The best way to learn is from our veteran volunteers who will be there to share their experience and answer questions. We would love to welcome new volunteers and have you be a part of what's happening at City Light!

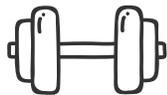
Ministry Spotlight:



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.



35
PARTY
PACKAGES



210
FITNESS
CENTER USE



13
FITNESS
CLASSES



172
SERENITY
HOUSE
INDIVIDUALS



10
FULL BUILDING
RENTALS



218
WALK-INS



18
SPECIAL NEEDS
GROUPS



3
SCHOOL
GROUPS



**SKATING RINK WAS CLOSED FOR ABOUT 2 WEEKS
WHILE IT WAS BEING RE-FINISHED (LOOKS GREAT!)**



God's Little Ones
DAY★CARE



TEACHERS OF THE MONTH

The Teacher of the Month for December was Elva Hufford. She has been with GLO since 2023 and works with the 3–4-year-olds. Elva and her husband, Chris, have four children. She always goes above and beyond when given a task and is quick to fill in wherever needed.

The Teacher of the Month for January was Brianna Lederman. She is a dedicated educator who loves her job and enjoys working with children ages 3–4-years-old. Brianna has recently completed her Child Development Associate (CDA) credential to further expand her knowledge and skills in early childhood education.



GLO EVENTS

Our Pre-K class recently visited First Financial Bank on January 22. During this field trip, the children learned about the importance of saving money. Each child received a piggy bank from First Financial Bank.



Join the Nomad for a fun and laughter filled evening on Friday, February 13, at City Light Community Ministries, 1441 N. 4th Street starting at 6:00 p.m., benefiting the Plates for a Purpose Program.

Couples will have the chance to compete for prizes and show just how well, or how little they really know each other. Expect surprises, playful competition, and plenty of laughs!

The Nomad is rolling out a feast of scrumptious nibbles like: Mini Beef Wellington, Lobster Medallions, and a smorgasbord of mouthwatering delights. Chef Keith is stirring up handcrafted beverages; and for all you sweet-toothed romantics, a treasure trove of Valentine confections awaits!



**Tickets are only \$65 each or 2 for \$120.
Seating is limited, so reserve your seat today!**

For more information, please contact Ashley Adams
(325-675-8186 or ashley.adam@fbcabilene.org).

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

February 1, 27 years

C. V. BLAKE

Pastor for Adults

February 3, 1 year

VELMA VIRGEN

MOCE Insurance Specialist

February 17, 26 years

DEBRA CLEMMER

M. A. to Pastor for Administration

February 18, 7 years

JOE FRUSH

Director for Pastoral Care

February 20, 3 years

SUSIE VANDEVER

M. A. to Senior Pastor

February 27, 3 years

RICKEY MEREDITH

Sous Chef @ CLCM

FEBRUARY

- 10** Ladies' Ministry BUNCO Night
- 11** Buildings/Grounds Committee Meeting
- Deacon Nominating Committee Meeting
- 13-15** DiscipleNow Weekend
- 13** CLCM Valentine's Dinner
- 15** Missions' Committee Meeting
- 17** CLCM Board
- Finance Committee Meeting
- Deacons' Meeting
- 18** Ash Wednesday Service
- 19** Men's Ministry Brown Bag Lunch
- 22** Lord's Supper
- Deacon Nominating Committee Meeting
- 23** MOCE Board Meeting
- 24** GLO Board Meeting
- 28** Pancake Supper

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

January 2026

Budget	January	Year-to-Date
Required	\$197,000	\$197,000
Given	\$142,913	\$142,913

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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