

FIRST words

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

LIVING IN A DIGITAL AGE

by Jennifer Woodard



“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations...” Matthew 24:14

In today's communication climate, it is absolutely necessary for the Church to establish a presence in the digital world. As you know, social media sites have become the main point of reference to gather information and to form relationships and community. So, how are we as a church embracing the communication shift in regards to spreading the gospel?

First, we are on social media sites including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and we update them regularly. Social media might be the first place people find our church or hear about Jesus.

A recent study of Millennials revealed that 58% of them believe digital platforms have made sharing their faith easier. The same study showed more than 50% of respondents who were recently told about Jesus, heard the gospel from friends on Facebook (14% mentioned other social media platforms).

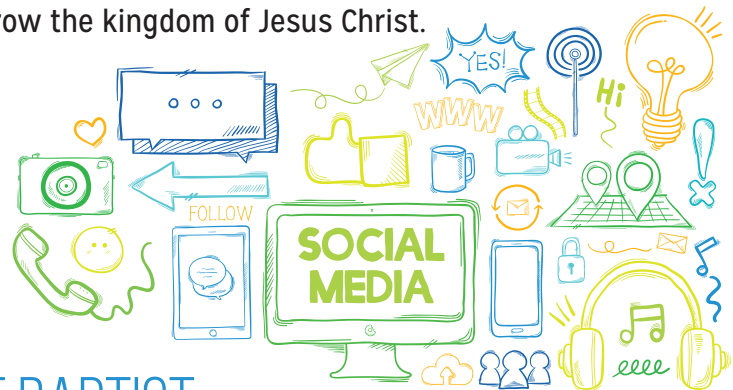
Contrary to what you might think, using social media does not take all of the personal communication experience away. People share things they have found, not only on their own social page, but in texts and personal messages to friends. When one of our First Words posts or music posts directly impacts something going on in the life of a friend, it can be shared to them personally from social media.

There are no physical boundaries with social media. We are called to go to all the earth to preach the gospel. Jesus can be shared with someone on the other side of the world in an instant.

Second, live streaming our service is a huge step in our commitment to embrace the digital shift. Our morning worship service can be watched from any phone, tablet, or computer in the world. You can view our service live on our website, our Facebook page, and on our app. YES! We have an app. There you can find the latest church news, previous sermons, monthly newsletters, the newest books offered in the library, read blog posts, or you can give through our online giving portal.

We want to create movement in our digital followers from simply engaging, to building connections. We want our followers to connect with our church, its people, its ministries, and to serve others through our many different ministry options.

You can join us on our digital journey by liking and following us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Share the posts which encourage you or you think will encourage others via your own page or a personal message. Share the posts announcing our live feed for those unable to be with us on Sunday morning. Download our app on your mobile device. Together we can use these forms of digital communication to spread the gospel and grow the kingdom of Jesus Christ.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Welcome to the month of February, even though it occurs in the bleak mid-winter – brrr! Perhaps not your favorite month, especially if you were born on the 29th. At one time, February had only twenty-three days. It is the most misspelled month than any other month. The month was named for the Latin word meaning “*purification*.” I guess after the stress of December and the excesses of the New Year, we need some purification.

In spite of its puritan name and being stuck between January and spring break in March, February is not without distinction. The month includes the Super Bowl, America’s holiday to party – so much for purification. There is the drama of Ground Hog Day. We observe President’s Day. And of course, who could forget we celebrate love on Valentine’s Day or you better not.... Someone even calculated the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta during February.

Let us return to the meaning of February, the month of *purification*. Doesn’t sound very exciting. I’ll take the Super Bowl. Yet, what if we used this month as a purifying path to become free from anything which debases, adulterates, or contaminates who God created us to be. As Richard Foster says, “*And there is no slavery to compare to the slavery of ingrained habits of sin.*” February becomes a season to explore the inward life which is so often neglected. Don’t be turned off by the word, “*purify*.” Soren Kierkegaard said, “*Purity of heart is to will one thing.*” What is your one thing that gives your life focus?

Foster said, “*Superficiality is the curse of our age.*” The obsession with instant gratification or satisfaction is primarily a spiritual problem. The spiritual discipline of purification calls us to move beyond surface living into the depths where God calls. Donald Coggan writes: “I go through life as a transient on his way to eternity, made in the image of God but with that image debased, needing to be taught how to meditate, to worship, to think.”

I offer an introduction or crash course on the spiritual disciplines which provide a path to look inward, grow deeper, and live outwardly with freedom. This journey is not about developing willpower to resist temptation, but an inner transformation which comes as a gift of grace we receive. The suggested disciplines are not exhaustive. If you are interested in going deeper; checkout, buy, or download Richard J. Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline*.

Here are some February disciplines which will help liberate us. **Meditation** invites us to slow down and become friends with Jesus as we hear His words, “*My peace I give you.*” We release the frustration and fear. Prayer ushers us into communion with God. **Prayer** is the central avenue God uses to transform us. We begin to think God’s thoughts and want what God wants. Study helps us replace old destructive habits with life-giving habits. **Simplicity** calls to survey the “things” to which we look for meaning. Often, the “things” we crave, we neither need nor really enjoy. Simplicity seeks *first* God’s kingdom. **Submission** is self-denial which frees us from having to get our own way. Our happiness is not based on getting what we want. The way to self-fulfillment is through self-denial. **Service** is not a list of things we have to do. It is a way of living. Service becomes the way to the grace of humility.

Whether you practice these particular disciplines or not, I pray you will see the month of February in a new way. We know through Jesus Christ we have been made pure: “*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*” The celebration of the disciplines and the February journey of purification is the path of growing deeper, knowing the love of God more intimately, and discovering the life you always wanted.

Happy February,

Phil



SUPER *Generations* SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2019

It may be "Super Bowl Sunday," but we will have our own Super Sunday as we gather together to celebrate the many generations we have here at FBC.

A continued priority for our church is to deepen relationships between generations. We believe strengthening intergenerational relationships helps grow the faith of all ages and gives witness to God's continued work in the world. The staff and Growing Authentic Community team are planning to celebrate God's work in each generation on the morning of Sunday, February 3. On Sunday, we will have a church-wide breakfast and fifteen minutes of Sunday school praying with our prayer partner classes. This morning will be similar to what we did with our prayer partner classes in September, with the added bonus of breakfast! This is an important moment for different generations to participate together in what we hope will be a meaningful time for each of us and the entire community of FBC.

As we prepare for February 3, please pray for each generation and join us as we encourage each other through fellowship, prayer, and worship.

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

MINISTRY TO ADULTS— A WAY OF THINKING

by C.V. Blake

On February 1, 1999 Shelly, the kids, and I moved to Abilene. I came to work as the Pastor to Youth which included sixth graders, twelfth graders, and all the grades in between. Five years later, I began work with adults on the 3rd Floor. This ministry included 20 somethings, who were nearly married and newly married, empty nesters, and all the adults in between. In December, my role expanded to include Sr. Adults. This new role now includes Gen X, Baby Boomers, Builders, and the GI Generation. Evan Harris, a ninth grader when we came, has told me that he and I have grown up together over the last twenty years. Some would dispute any assertion that either of us has grown up. I would like to tell you about an approach to Ministry to Adults we are pursuing. You will hear much more in the coming months.

PASTOR/DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE— The Senior Adult Search Committee is working to fill this position. In short, this person will help develop ministries to all adults who are in care facilities, nursing homes, or homebound. Please continue to pray for the search committee and the person who will be leading in this ministry. Follow this link to see the job description for this exciting new position <https://fbcabilene.org/files/new-pastor-for-pastoral-care-2018.pdf>.

DISCIPLESHIP— If we know anything about ministry at FBC Abilene, we know Sunday school plays a huge role in our ministry identity and mobility. Someone has said Sunday school is “the church mobilized to do ministry.” I believe this to be true. We will be working hard to strengthen this vital aspect of discipleship. Other aspects of discipleship will include weekly programming, summer programming, home groups, and grandparenting initiatives to name a few.

EDUCATION— I like to think of this aspect of ministry as “A Way of Thinking about Growing Older.” This idea rings true for forty somethings as well as eighty somethings. An old friend of mine, Don Rice, once told me an important skill to cultivate and implement is the ability to anticipate. Anticipation is different than predicting the future. It is looking toward the future and building for what may come. Certainly this has implications as we prepare for life events such as empty nest, retirement, and later years of life.

MINISTRY— Helping adults find a place in ministry is one of the things a church can do best. Whether it is serving on a team which helps change light bulbs or a team which serves communion to homebound members, we will help you find a place. Speaking of PLACE, we have a ministry which can help you discover aspects of your personality, spiritual giftedness, and passions helping to guide you to your best PLACE for ministry. Contact Susan Preston at prestosh9@gmail.com.

FUN— We are going to have fun. There is nothing to announce now, but there will be announcements soon.

None of this can happen without ministry teams. If you are interested in planning, serving, and going, contact Jeannie Wesley (jeannie.wesley@fbcabilene.org) or C.V. Blake (cv.blake@fbcabilene.org).



FEBRUARY WORSHIP

Signs of the Savior for the Struggling, Stressed, and Seekers

We like signs, don't we? The Gospel of John uses the term "sign" to describe the miracles of Jesus. These signs are like an open window which allows us to see in.... They are not complete. They are not exhaustive. The signs are like God wiggling His toe from underneath a porch saying, "Find me, I'm here." Yet, many missed or stumbled over them. Others trusted more in the signs, than the Savior they revealed. This month, we will continue our series through the signs which give us a glimpse that Jesus came from the Father to give us abundant life. In all of these signs, we encounter ordinary people who are stressed, suffering, struggling, or seeking for something to fill the emptiness, but encountered the power of Jesus.

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| February 3 | The Sign of God's Abundance | John 6:1-15 |
| February 10 | The Sign in the Storm | John 6:16-24 |
| February 17 | The Sign of Seeing Through Blindness | John 9:1-12 |
| February 24 | The Sign of Shaking Off the Rags | John 11:32-44 |

Family SKI TRIP



MARCH 8-13 | GLORIETA, NM
\$40 per person + skiing
cv.blake@fbcabilene.org - 325-675-8104
FOR MORE INFORMATION

MENS SKI TRIP

FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 3
GLORIETA, NM
\$40 per person + skiing

FOR MORE INFORMATION
325-675-8104
cv.blake@fbcabilene.org



ACTING IN *love*

SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS FOR 2019

God can use you to change the world by being willing to serve Him and go wherever He calls. FBC Abilene is working to answer the call to "Go" in the following areas for 2019. Begin praying about how God can use you on a short-term mission project. Continue to watch for more details as these projects are beginning to organize and additional opportunities of service. Contact the missions' office or John Moore at john.moore@fbcabilene.org if you have interest or questions. We are doing our

best to minimize the cost of each trip. Your gifts to the church budget help to lower the cost for each trip as our church budget covers many costs which are not passed on to each participant. Early sign up will reduce the travel cost and your total cost of the mission project. You can sign up now through the missions' office. Space is limited for each project. The very first step is to reserve your place on each team and then move to securing a valid passport (if needed)...so if you have questions, please contact the missions' office.

The 2019 tentative dates for short term projects are:

JUNE 7-16 | Skopje, Macedonia

To support, encourage, and walk alongside CBF missionaries, Alicia and Jeff Lee and their work in Skopje. The tentative price range is \$2,400 to \$2,800, depending on cost of airfare.

JULY 14-20 | McAllen, Texas- Team 1

4th Annual Family Mission Trip

Would you be willing to participate in the 4th Family Mission Trip along the Texas border? FBC has an opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center just outside of McAllen, Texas. This flexible and family mission trip will begin work on a new Buckner home and will have opportunities to work in the Buckner warehouse, building bed frames, sorting clothes, leading VBS, block parties and sport camps. Would you be willing to turn your family vacation or part of it into furthering the cause of Buckner in this important area of our state? FBC is seeking to find a core group of people in the month of February to try and see if we can make this happen again! For more questions, call John Moore in the missions' office. The price range for this mission trip will be the cost of transportation, lodging, and meals for each family.

JULY 21-27 | McAllen, Texas- Team 2

Team 2 will focus on the new house build and continue where team 1 left off and go as far as they possibly can during that week. Home building skills are a plus, but we also need those with no experience and are willing to serve. Maybe God is calling you to learn a new skill!

FALL 2019 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

A ministry trip to support CBF friends, Mary and Hunter, is being developed for the fall of 2019! Would God be calling you to join in with this vision and ministry trip? Building relationships, encouraging new developments, English classes, and cultural exchange will help to guide our efforts in Thailand. Plans are in the beginning stages and people are needed! Contact John Moore if you feel God leading you to serve in this new ministry effort.

DiscipleNow 2019

F E B R U A R Y 1 5 - 1 7

DiscipleNow will be February 15-17 this year. As in years past, we are asking for volunteers to help with this important weekend. Some of the ways you can be involved are: to serve a meal at lunch or dinner on Saturday, donating snacks, providing financial assistance for students to attend, or any other way you may feel led. This is a great weekend for students to grow in spiritual formation and we are looking forward to seeing how God is going to work among them!

If you are interested in helping in any way, contact Kelsey Higbee at 817-233-3564 or kelsey.higbee@fbcabilene.org.

STAFF UPDATES

by Mike Greenfield

We want to welcome Courtney Edwards to the office staff as she begins her work as Ministry Assistant to the Senior Pastor. Courtney and her husband, Mark, have been active here at First Baptist for many years. Courtney has done a variety of different jobs in the past and brings a warmth and friendly face to this position. Next time you are in the office, drop by and welcome her.

City Light has hired someone to fill the new position of Director of Operations/Chef Trainer, which is a part of the strategy City Light is utilizing to help make a difference. Kayleen Mills started work on January 28 and will be at City Light during the week.

Christmas in New York 2020

Singers and non-singers alike are invited to join the Sanctuary Choir as we travel to New York City for a bucket-list event. Friday, November 20, 2020 we will assemble at the Crown Plaza Hotel on Times Square where we will stay and prepare for the concert. Sunday, November 22, we will join with the worshipers at Brooklyn Tabernacle for morning worship. Monday evening we will stand on the historic stage at Carnegie Hall as a part of a 300-voice choir with guest artists, Steve Green, Voices of Lee, and Marcia Wilder as we present the world premiere of "THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS". Following this memorable night of worship, some will return to celebrate Thanksgiving with family in Texas, while others will remain for the extension which includes the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, followed by a traditional thanksgiving dinner, before returning home on Friday, November 27. If this interests you in any way, contact the office of Worship and Music and we will send you all the necessary information. Registration begins with an exciting launch, Sunday night, February 17, at 6:00 p.m. in the Music Suite.



It is time once again for the 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 Sunday School Departments, the church office, or in the boxes located at the church entrances. Funds are preferred.

FBC FOUNDATION Grant Request Forms Are Available

Forms are available in the office.
Deadline to return the form is noon,
Friday, February 8.

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

February 1, 20 years

C. V. Blake

Pastor for Adults

February 17, 19 years

Debra Clemmer

*M. A. to Pastor for Administration
and Spiritual Development*

February 18, 6 years

Erin Fahrlender

*Insurance Specialist
Counseling & Family Enrichment*

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

January 2019

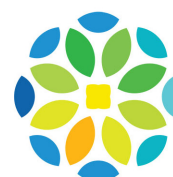
| Budget | January | Year-to-Date |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Required | \$359,657 | \$359,657 |
| Given | \$352,619 | \$352,619 |

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

EVENT CALENDAR:

FEBRUARY

- 3 Generation Sunday
- 7 Foundation Board
- 10 The Gaither Vocal Band Concert
Personnel Committee
- 12 Rockin' Moms
- 13 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 14 Valentine's Day Comedy Night
- 15-17 Disciple Now
- 17 Missions Committee
2020 Christmas
@ Carnegie Launch
- 19 Finance Committee
Ordination for Colton Gragg
Deacons' Meeting
- 20 GLO Board Meeting
- 22-23 Women's Retreat
- 22-24 Youth CUE @ Baylor
- 24 Lord's Supper
- 28-3/3 Men's Ski Trip/Glorieta



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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