

FIRSTwords

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

ASH WEDNESDAY: What It Means to Me

by Todd Wilson

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 26 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.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

We can live as if everything is a “life or death issue.” We know in our heads everything isn’t, but those rational moments often escape us. We just attach ultimacy to things which in 10 years, or even in 10 minutes, will really not matter. Plus, as we live with this “life or death” mentality, we miss so many moments filled with treasures. Do you know what I mean? Sweating about what people think, my team losing, everything being good enough, or stewing over those mistakes we make every day. This is not to say some of the things we get worked up about are unimportant, but everything is not life or death.

The Psalms call us to discern the way we approach our days: “...for they quickly pass and fly away... Teach us to number our days that we might gain a heart of wisdom.” Time slips by like an ever-flowing river. The heart of wisdom cries out, we don’t have forever. The Apostle Paul offered his counsel: “Don’t live like the foolish but the wise; making the most of every opportunity.” We cannot enjoy the gifts of each moment if we exhaust ourselves thinking everything is life or death. But... some things are.... It is having the wisdom to know the difference.

Sports fans and the world have mourned the tragic death of Kobe Bryant who died in a helicopter crash last Sunday. It is expected that such a devastating tragedy involving a famous person would be major news. However, Jim Denison noted “our culture focuses on the celebrity” and is slow to tell the remarkable stories of others who died. We can also forget there were other tragedies on Sunday which cut short young and gifted lives and left grieving families. We can hear again, “O Lord, teach me to number my days.”

I want to go back for a moment. Denison mentions an article Kobe Bryant wrote for *Newsweek* three months after 9/11 when he was only 24 years old. Kobe wrote about what he had learned in the fall of the Twin Towers: “I’ve learned also that you can’t take things for granted. You know how we always say ‘See you later’? One thing

I’ve realized from September 11 is that you can’t ever say that for sure. Things change in the blink of an eye. People go to work and don’t come back. One minute they’re living and the next minute they’re not. And, it doesn’t matter who you are.... We never know when our time here will be over, so we all need to make the most of every minute we have.”

When that helicopter lifted up from John Wayne Airport Sunday morning, Kobe had no idea he had only thirty-seven minutes left on this earth. But I hope he made the most of his minutes like he said – I hope we will. Realizing the brevity of life with its risks is not to frighten us or scare us from stepping onto a plane or crossing the street. Wisdom isn’t about expecting the worst. Wisdom teaches us life is a gift. It calls us to make the most of our moments.

There are things that are “life and death,” but not nearly as much as we think. We lose precious moments sweating the small stuff. Moses calls the people as they prepare to enter the Promised Land “To choose life so that you and your children may live.... For the Lord is your life.”

In this year, let us seek 2020 vision to discern wisely what ARE the “life and death” issues we face and what leads to life. Let us look to invest our lives in God’s Kingdom work of transforming our community. Let us make the most of opportunities to use our gifts and serve. Let us move beyond selfishness and greed as we grow in generosity. Let us see in the time we have been given, God wants to make a difference through us. Let us live out our mission so there will be no regrets. Let us choose life and how He came to give us “life more abundantly.”

Don’t sweat the small stuff,

Phil

GENERATIONS SUNDAY: FEBRUARY 9, 2020

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. This year, we are planning to celebrate God's work in each generation on the morning of Sunday, February 9. On that Sunday, we will have a church-wide breakfast and spend approximately 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 9, 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*



The 3rd class has begun for the City Light Culinary Academy!

Please continue to pray for this ministry and these students: Eugene, Tam, Caroline, Melissa, Demetrius, Margaret, and Angel.

As part of this job training program, Chef Kay continues to help and work with previous students as they continue to grow in their training and life skills.

If you know anyone who would be interested in this program, please contact Kayleen Mills at City Light at 325-673-6686, x 103 for more information regarding the next scheduled class.



THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!

By Becky Tucker

What a wonderful night we had at our annual Pancake Supper. On Wednesday nights during J.A.M.- Jesus And Me, we have talked about serving the Lord with gladness as it says in the Psalms. The children had many wonderful opportunities to demonstrate serving with gladness during the supper. Each year, this night is a highlight not only for our children, but for so many who look forward to eating all the pancakes and bacon they want! I am so thankful for all those who helped make this event happen, whether it was cooking, serving, cleaning up, buying tickets, eating, or giving donations. A special THANK YOU goes to Mike Greenfield, Debra Clemmer, Jennifer Miller, & Britney Tucker for helping in early preparation for this event. I also would like to thank Debbie Langford, aka "Mrs. Manners," as she teaches the children each year about serving with an attitude of gladness. The money we received will go to our Give Hope campaign and we will be announcing the amount we raised on Sunday morning, February 2. Thank you for being a church who allows our children to put their learning into action. We are very blessed!



COMMUNICATIONS

by Mike Greenfield

When I work with couples during premarital counseling, the biggest subject I try to emphasize the most is communication. I explain that open communication will help them avoid most of the problems which will arise in their marriage. I also believe that communication is also extremely vital for a church to function well. If folks do not know what is going on, they cannot be involved. So, we try really hard to keep everyone informed about what is happening here at the church. We use a variety of means and are working on even more.

Because of the increasing cost of paper and stamps, we have tried to email as many items as possible in order to reduce the expense to the budget. However, did you know that we average a 32% open rate on the emails we send out to the entire church? That means that two-thirds of the email addresses we send to do not open the email we send. Now, I know we all get a ton of "junk" mail in our inboxes, but I also know what we send and it is not junk! So, next week when First Reminders comes to your inbox, take a moment to read through the entire email and know what is going on at FBC.

We do still print many things, like the bulletin we use each Sunday morning. Dr. Christopher puts lots of thought into the takeaway section which is designed for you to use during the coming week as you continue to think through the scripture passage from Sunday. The age group ministries print a small half-sheet flyer with information about upcoming events and you can obtain those in your Sunday school classes.

The website is a great way to stay connected. You will find information about every area of the church as well as the links to be able to stream the morning services. Speaking of streaming, we stream the morning service live each week, but it is also archived so you can watch previous services as well. We also try to stream funerals and special services like the past deacon ordination.

So, if you are not informed about what is going on here at FBC, let us know what we can do better. We want everyone to be in the know!

FIRST BAPTIST PHONE LIST

Main Phone Number - 673-5031

Fax Number - 675-8189

Direct Dial Number - 675-8 + following extension

Dr. Christopher	103
Courtney Edwards	103
C. V. Blake	113
Jeannie Wesley	107
Matthew Broyles	115
Melissa Mundy	108
Joe Frush	104
Jeannie Wesley	107
Mike Greenfield	117
Debra Clemmer	116
John Moore	114
Melinda Norris	112
Candy Rains	192
Jennifer Miller	105
Becky Tucker	106
Jennifer Miller	105
Todd Wilson	119
Merri Roberts	118
Clairissa Tucker	138
Austen Winfrey	161
Melissa Mundy	108
Church Receptionist	
Suzanne Shaw	100
Church Librarian	
Heather Henderson	130
Finance	
Jeanne Jowers	109
David Curry	110
Prayerworks	672-7729
First Friends	
Christy Biebighauser	129
Maintenance	
Eric Couvion	124
FLC	675-8144
Mike Brady	143
Kim Cummings	144
City Light Community Ministries	673-6686
Maura dela Cruz	673-6686 x102
GLO	
Allie Workman	162
Marilyn Henderson	125
Counseling	672-9999
Steve Queen	
Paul Irby	
Laura Taff	
Erin Fahrlander	
Tina Hoffman	



ACTING IN *love*

SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS FOR 2020

God can use you to change the world by being willing to serve Him and go wherever He calls! First Baptist Abilene is working on opportunities for you to respond to His call in the following areas for 2020! Begin praying about how God can use you on a short-term mission project. Continue to watch for more details as these projects are finalized and for other additional opportunities for service.

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. Also, the earlier you sign up, reduces the travel cost and your total cost of the mission project.

The first step is to contact Melinda Norris in the Mission Office at 325-675-8112 or melinda.norris@fbcabilene.org to reserve your place on the trips you are interested in or to find out more information.

THE 2020 TENTATIVE DATES FOR SHORT TERM PROJECTS ARE...

MAY 15-23:

SKOPJE, MACEDONIA

To support, encourage, and walk alongside CBF missionaries Alicia & Jeff Lee and their work in Skopje. This trip is for college students and young adults before summer begins! The tentative price will range from \$2,400 - \$2,800 depending on cost of airfare. Opportunities to help reduce the cost for students is available.

Space is limited!



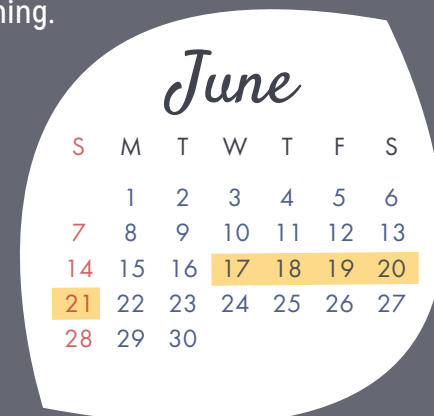
JUNE 17-21:

SAN ANTONIO

BAPTIST UNIVERSITY OF THE AMERICAS

Painting and Fun! We will be partnering with BUA in helping with some housing which is in need of paint! If you are a skilled painter...great! If not... it may be time to learn a new skill! We will paint during the day and visit some fun San Antonio sites in the evening.

Contact the Missions' Office if you are interested in this opportunity.



JULY 9 -18:

MCALLEN, TEXAS

5th ANNUAL FAMILY MISSION TRIP

This will be the 5th Family Mission Trip along the Texas border! Once again, FBC has an opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center just outside of McAllen, Texas. This flexible and family friendly mission trip will begin work on a new Buckner home. We will need some experienced help on the home build and some willing hands. There will be many other opportunities during this time for families to help at the Hope Center in McAllen such as leading a Vacation Bible School during the week. The date you arrive and leave is up to you. Would you be willing to turn your family vacation, or part of your vacation, into furthering the cause of Buckner in this important area of our state? The price range for this mission trip will be the cost of transportation, lodging, and meals for each family. Call the Missions' Office for more information.



July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FALL 2020:

PHUKET, THAILAND

Our ministry trip to support CBF friends Mary and Hunter was a great success in 2019 and we will be returning in the fall of 2020 to continue to support their ministry. Building relationships, encouraging new developments, teaching English classes, and cultural exchange will help to guide our efforts in Thailand. Plans are in the beginning stages and people are needed, so contact the Missions' Office if you feel God leading you to serve in this ministry effort.



STAY *connected*



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, ABILENE, TX

#fbcabilene



@fbcabilene



STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

February 1, 21 years

C. V. Blake

Pastor for Adults

February 2, 1 year

Letisia Salcedo

Custodian

February 17, 20 years

Debra Clemmer

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

February 18, 7 years

Erin Fahlender

*Ministry of Counseling
Insurance Specialist*

February 18, 1 year

Joe Frush

Director for Pastoral Care

EVENT CALENDAR:

FEBRUARY

- 31-2 High School Disciple Now
- 1 Organ Recital
- 6 Healing Hearts Meeting
- 7 Gaither Vocal Band Concert
- 7-8 Women's Retreat
- 9 Personnel Committee
- 11 Rockin' Moms
- 12 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 16 Missions Committee
- 17 GLO Day Care Closed
- 18 Finance Committee
Deacons' Meeting
- 20 Healing Hearts Meeting
- 20-24 Over 50 Men's Ski Retreat/Glorieta
- 26 Ash Wednesday Service

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

January 2020

Budget	January	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 339,569	\$ 339,569
Given	\$ 413,859	\$ 413,861

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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