

# FIRST WORDS

*“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.” -  
Philippians 2:2 (NIV)*

Paul often encouraged the 1st century church to work together in unity and love in the midst of their anxieties, difficulties, and struggling to figure out the implications of a life centered on Jesus. 2,000 years later, we still witness just how important it is for a community to serve one another humbly in love and grace. This year, our community at FBC Abilene went through a lot together as a church family, but the story of Jesus is a story of hope. As we continue to focus our spirits on God’s heart, mind, and intent for all of creation, we know that it is important for us to pause in a time of reflection and connection not only to grow as individuals, but to deepen our relationship in this community of faith.

## COMMUNITY WEEKEND SCHEDULE

### Saturday, February 1

- 3:00 p.m. - Worship
- 3:30 p.m. - Breakout Session 1
- 4:25 p.m. - Breakout Session 2
- 5:30 p.m. - Dinner
- 6:15 p.m. - Worship

### Sunday, February 2

- 9:00 a.m. - Intergenerational Breakfast
- 10:30 a.m. - Worship
- 5:30 p.m. - Worship
- 6:45 p.m. - Coffee, Cookies, & Conversation Meet

# 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.

Last year, the budget committee made a decision to not cut the budget, but rather focus on asking for each of us to seriously consider stepping up and fully understand and practice the Biblical concept of tithing. The committee knew it was a big ask, but felt that cutting back was not what God wanted for us to do. Then in October of 2024, things were

looking pretty bleak as far as budget giving and budget expenses. The alarms were not sounded, but the finger was on the button.

And then we were blessed with two significant stock gifts which all but erased the problem and in fact put us ahead and allowed us to finish the year with the largest budget collection in the history of the church. These gifts, along with the sale of a property, allowed the church to not only meet budget requirements, but to cover deficits in our Mission Action programs and provide the fund balance needed to start the new year. God is Good.

However, the committee also had to acknowledge that this occurred because of one person's giving, not the entire church. So, they asked for some help from the Center for Healthy Churches and were given this advice, for the next 2-3 years, First Baptist Church, Abilene would be wise to try considering:

- **Making the 2025 Budget equal to the 2024 expenses**

- **Develop a 2-3 year plan on how to plan for future inflationary expenses by reducing other budgetary needs**

- **Develop a 2-3 year plan to reduce the overall personnel budget**

- **Develop a strategy which prioritizes our local congregational missions over missions beyond the church**

So, the 2025 Ministry Budget has been prepared, emailed to the deacons for their review, and discussion by the church is set for Wednesday, February 5 at 5:30 p.m. in the chapel. Final vote on the budget will then take place at the end of the worship service on Sunday, February 9. The budget reflects the suggestions made by the Center for Healthy Churches and is less than last year's budget. It contains increases in utilities, health insurance, and no salary increases. There are decreases in Property and Casualty insurance, 15% reduction in all programming areas, and reductions in all mission dollars outside of FBC.

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 listen to God as to where He wants to take us and how we are to get there.

## HIRING

### **FULL-TIME CUSTODIAN:**

FBC is looking to hire a full-time custodian. If interested or know of someone who might be, please contact Eric Couvion (325-675-8124 or [eric.couvion@fbcabilene.org](mailto:eric.couvion@fbcabilene.org))

### **FULL/PART-TIME RECEPTIONIST:**

The Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment is seeking to find a full/part-time receptionist. This position includes: answering phones, checking clients in and out, scheduling appointments, and fielding general inquiries about Ministry of Counseling.

If interested or know of someone who might be, please contact Mike Greenfield ([mike.greenfield@fbcabilene.org](mailto:mike.greenfield@fbcabilene.org) or 325-675-8116).

## KEEP SHINING GOD'S LIGHT

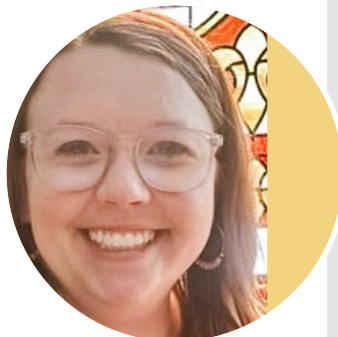
Dear FBC Abilene Church Family,  
It has been my greatest honor to serve our neighbors in Abilene alongside you these past 3 ½ years. You took a chance on me as a Master Social Work intern in 2021 and then hired me as the Director of Community Ministries in 2022. You have encouraged me to live into my God-given calling as a social worker and have helped me persevere when times were tough. You have been the hands and feet of Jesus to me through encouraging conversations, sacrificially volunteering your time, and trusting me to steward your financial resources. Seeing your love, dedication, and kindness towards our neighbors has meant so much to me.

My family and I are moving to Amarillo in February for my husband to be the pastor of Coulter Road Baptist Church. I covet your prayers for us during this time of transition. I will always treasure the opportunity you gave me to carry on the legacy of love to our neighbors that so many of you paved the way for me to follow. I offer my sincerest gratitude to the staff, board, volunteers, deacons, and other groups who have made my time as Director so transformational and meaningful for me.

May you keep shining God's light of hope and love to our neighbors.

Blessings to each of you,

**STEPHANIE STEWART**  
Director of City Light  
Community Ministries



*Let nothing upset you:*

*Let nothing frighten you.*

*Everything is changing:*

*God alone is changeless.*

*Patience attains the goal.*

*Who has God lacks nothing:*

*God alone fills all our needs.*

*-Teresa of Avila*

The blessing John Moore gives every Sunday morning at City Light. This is my prayer for each of you as well.



# Grateful Goodbye

## to Kayleen Mills and Stephanie Stewart

It is with both gratitude and bittersweet hearts that we share the news of Kayleen Mills and Stephanie Stewart transitioning out of their roles at City Light at the end of January. Over the past years, they have faithfully poured their time, talents, and hearts into serving this ministry, and their impact will be felt for years to come.

Kayleen and Stephanie have shown God's love in profound ways, touching the lives of our neighbors with compassion, kindness, and the light of Christ. Their dedication to sharing God's life and grace with others has been an inspiration to all of us. We all have been well fed, loved deeply, challenged spiritually, and eternally different because of how they have shared their lives with us.

As they prepare to step into new ministries, we ask you to join us in praying for them. May God bless and guide them in their new endeavors as they continue to serve Him faithfully. Though they will be greatly missed here at City Light, we are excited to see how God will use them in this next chapter of their journeys.

Kayleen and Stephanie, thank you for everything you have done and for the love you've shared with all of us. You will always have a place in the City Light family.



# FBC ABILENE

*Acting in Love*

## SHORT-TERM MISSION OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2025/2026

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 2025 and possibly 2026. Begin praying about how God can use you in one of these short-term mission opportunities. Continue to watch for more details as these projects are beginning to organize and additional opportunities of service become available. Contact Beth Young or John Moore in the missions' office ([beth.young@fbcabilene.org](mailto:beth.young@fbcabilene.org) or [john.moore@fbcabilene.org](mailto: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 ministry 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 on to securing a valid passport (if needed). Don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions about how God is calling you to serve in one of these areas.

**JUNE 6 –15, 2025**

**SKOPJE, NORTH  
MACEDONIA**

To support, encourage, and walk alongside CBF missionaries Alicia & Jeff Lee and their work happening in Skopje. The tentative price will range from \$2,400 - \$2,800 depending on the cost of airfare.

**JUNE 16–19, 2025**

**FBC FRIENDSHIP HOUSE  
BACKYARD BIBLE CLUB  
9:00 TO 11:00 A.M.**

A team is needed to help do a Children's Backyard Bible Club for the College Heights neighborhood at the FBC Friendship House on Orange Street. Gina and Trevor Allen will be leading the community outreach, and they need your help! Come join this team and be the Gospel in action to our neighbors. The price for this project is a big heart that loves telling the gospel to kids.

## **AUGUST 5-12, 2025**

### **MEXICO CITY, MEXICO**

FBC is going back to Mexico City to work with Eduk Children's ministries, and we need your help. This project will have a medical, children's ministry, and light construction emphasis. The price for this mission trip will be in the \$800 to \$1,000 range.

## **FALL 2025/SPRING 2026**

### **PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA**

Maybe God is calling you to Phnom Pen, Cambodia. David and Lauren Bass have been serving in Cambodia since 2015 working with Cambodian pastors, church leaders, and the Phnom Penh Bible School. Teaching, library help, building relationships, English classes, and cultural exchange could be areas of focus for a mission trip. Can we get a team together to go? Begin praying now for a possible team to develop.



## **JULY 10-15/16, 2025**

### **CONSTRUCTION MISSION TRIP TO MCALLEN, TEXAS**

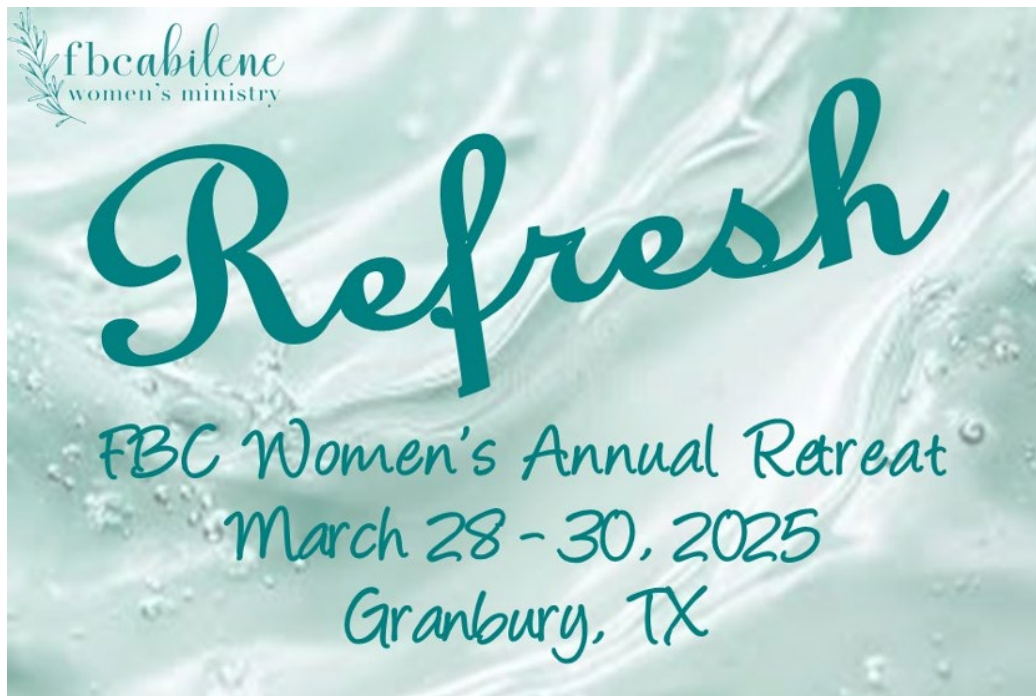
FBC has another opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center by starting a home project. This flexible mission trip will start a new Buckner home for a family involved at the Hope Center. We need volunteers with no, some, or major construction experience and people comfortable working on the ground and on a roof (major need). We have great construction leadership in place who can teach any of us how we can safely build this house together. The price for this mission trip is \$25 per person plus your transportation to McAllen, lodging, and nightly dinner meals.



# WOMEN'S RETREAT 2025

BY BECKY TUCKER, Pastor for Children and Women's Ministry

The FBC Women's Retreat is 8 weeks away! Our Annual FBC Women's Retreat will be March 28 -30!!! We have added a new twist this year as we are heading to Granbury for a time to Refresh! We have chosen not to have a speaker this year, but will plan to gather each evening as well as on Saturday morning where we will hear a testimony from one of our own during each of these times together. The rest of the weekend will be whatever you choose it to be. You can choose to sit around and read, go shopping, play games with friends, or spend time in fellowship with some of our wonderful women from our church! This weekend is just meant to help each of us to regroup and REFRESH!



We will be staying at the Hilton Garden Inn in Granbury, Texas. The retreat fee is \$50 PLUS your room rate: \$170 for a king/\$180 for two queens per night. You choose how many people you want to share a room with. We will need to know who you will be rooming with as well as your room preference, by February 28. Please contact Jennifer Miller (325-675-8105 or [jennifer.miller@fbcabilene.org](mailto:jennifer.miller@fbcabilene.org)) with your rooming information as well as any other questions.

We will have some snacks each evening, but you will be responsible for your meals.

**We hope you will take time to join us the weekend of March 28-30 and be Refreshed!**



SAVE \$6 WITH CODE: CHURCH

# GAITHER VOCAL BAND

LOVE LIKE I'M LEAVING TOUR 2025



CHRIS BLUE

LADYE LOVE SMITH

GENE McDONALD

KEVIN WILLIAMS



**THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025**  
**ABILENE, TX**

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ABILENE

G A I T H E R . C O M

TPR.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR GAITHER CONCERT**

We need volunteers on March 13 for load-in, load-out, greeting, tickets, and runners. If you would like to serve as a volunteer, contact the office of Worship and Music (325-675-8118 or [worship@fbcabilene.org](mailto:worship@fbcabilene.org)).

# MINISTRY SPOTLIGHTS:

## CITY LIGHT Community Ministries

MEALS:  
**4,044**

VOLUNTEER HOURS:  
**410**

WALK-INS:  
**564**

MAIL CHECKS:  
**329**

SHOWERS:  
**204**



## PRAYER WORKS

PRAYER REQUESTS:  
**78**

PRAYERGRAMS MAILED:  
**93**

EMAIL & PHONE REQUESTS:  
**10**

## FLC Family Life Center



PARTY PACKAGES:  
**55**

FITNESS CENTER USES:  
**177**

NEW FITNESS MEMBERS:  
**7**

FITNESS CLASSES:  
**13**

SERENITY HOUSE:  
**285**

FULL BUILDING RENTAL:  
**10**

WALK-INS:  
**476**

SPECIAL NEEDS GROUPS:  
**6**

DYESS 317<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON  
FAMILIES



# COLLEGE SKI TRIP

We had a blast on our last college retreat at Glorieta! We skied, ate good food, and had great conversations. In one conversation we discussed why there's no fear in death. God is love. God is perfect. And, as John teaches us, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." May we all seek to know the joy which comes from experiencing God's love so deeply we have no reason to fear.

We're forever grateful to have been able to use the FBC cabin to spend some time in the mountains growing our relationships with God and with one another. Thank you, First Baptist Church!





# MISSIONS AROUND THE WORLD

## LAUREN AND DAVID BASS

The academic year at the Phnom Penh Bible School started this week, so life and ministry are in full swing for us in Cambodia. David is teaching New Testament again and adding in teaching Hebrew for the first time (and all in the Khmer language)! He's also leading a new spiritual formation group and is excited to get to know and journey alongside these students. Lauren manages the library and works with staff to get the library put back together after construction during the school break. The floor was raised to hopefully mitigate issues with recurring flooding. Getting all those books back on shelves and in the right place has been a lot of work, but it's been fun to make changes to help students and mentor my assistant along the way. Our girls, Chloe (5) and Lily (almost 3) are busy as ever and excited to be back into their routines as well.

**Pictures below:** Lauren and David in their shared office at the Bible school; a picture of campus during student sports day; Chloe and Lily at our neighborhood coffee shop.



## JEFF AND ALICIA LEE

We are doing great here. Work is very busy. We have acquired a small vineyard from the government for our partnership with Poraka, the group home for adults with developmental delays. We will be using that vineyard to grow grapes for selling to the winery and having grapes for consumption at Poraka. We are still wanting to restart our dairy production and "Cow Bank," and hope that it will restart later this year. The work of the Food Bank is in transition at the moment. We have lost our warehouse and are in the process of constructing a new building. We have received a grant from the Federation of European Food Banks (FEBA) for some of the cost of the construction, but we are still fundraising for the rest. We have a representative from the FEBA coming in February to visit and see our work. We are excited to have a group from FBC coming in June. Alicia's work at the school is going very well. She is the school counselor for over 150 students K-12. Ethan is growing very fast. He is taller than Jeff and still growing. He will finish 10th grade this summer, and he is starting to have an interest in universities. Sorry John, he is looking at A&M. We will be coming back to the USA this summer for partnership development. We are still making our plans so we will let you know if we can make it out to Abilene. We know for sure that Jeff will attend the CBF General Assembly, so if anyone is going to be there we can connect. We love y'all. Thanks for the years of support and prayers for the work here in Macedonia

Peace be the Journey,  
Jeff, Alicia, and Ethan

## JANA LEE

I am still here working in Larnaca, Cyprus with All4Aid. I work three days a week with clothing and food distribution for the local refugees and asylum seekers. I also do public health sessions and lessons about pertinent topics. Most recently it was about urinary tract infections (UTIS). It was so fun and interesting for the ladies who attended. I go to the refugee camp once a week with a women's group. We do health topics, art sessions, and game days. It is a way for the women at the camp to just have a day where they can focus on themselves and get away. A lot of the women say it is their favorite part of the week. My time here has been amazing and nothing like I originally expected or thought. I am looking forward to more health topics this year and other training events.

Thank you for all your support and love from afar. I truly feel it and appreciate it.

Many blessings,

Jana Lee

# STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

February 1, 26 years

**C. V. BLAKE**  
*Pastor for Adults*

February 6, 1 year

**SHELI GARZA**  
*GLO Teacher*

February 17, 25 years

**DEBRA CLEMMER**  
*Ministry Assistant to the Pastor  
for Administration & Spiritual  
Development*

February 18, 6 years

**JOE FRUSH**  
*Director for Pastoral Care*

February 20, 2 years

**SUSIE VANDEVER**  
*Ministry Assistant to the Senior Pastor*

February 26, 1 year

**FRANCES PEREZ**  
*GLO Teacher*

February 27, 2 years

**RICKEY MEREDITH**  
*Sous Chef @ CLCM*

# FEBRUARY

- 1-2** Community Weekend
- 2** Intergenerational Breakfast during Sunday School
- 9** Personnel Committee Meeting
- 12** Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
- 14-16** Disciple Now Weekend
- 16** Missions Committee Meeting
- 18** Finance Committee Meeting  
Deacons' Meeting
- 21-23** Youth Cue Winter Festival in Austin

## MARCH

- 1** Pancake Supper

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

January 2025

Budget	January	Year-to-Date
Required	\$272,060	\$272,060
Given	\$224,827	\$211,086

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



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

1333 North 3rd, Abilene, TX 79601  
fbc@fbcabilene.org | 325-673-5031

[www.fbcabilene.org](http://www.fbcabilene.org)