



# FIRSTWORDS

## CITY LIGHT UPDATE

*"And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also, He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.'" Revelation 21:5-6*

In the mysterious Revelation letter, John reminds us of God's renewing power with God's promise and images of the world recreated as heaven is reunited with earth. Though not the entire world, the gracious completion of the Hope Center reminds us of Adonai's restorative power and generosity. Not only is God powerful enough to give us this example of renewal, God is generous enough to give and let us participate in the new-making. We have been trusted and called to care for the lost, last, and least, and we are blessed enough to have a new space to do so. We have wheelchair accessible

showers so all of our neighbors can dignify their God-crafted bodies; we have a closet to clothe one another as Jesus calls us to; we have a larger reception area to welcome our fellow Imago Dei carriers; we have a large enough dining area to feed our friends without herding them through a crowded cafeteria. We are blessed to have something new as we await the full restoration, and we are blessed to co-create hope, love, and joy.

*Continued on Page 4.*

# TOWARDS HOPE

Within days of this edition of First Words being published, the Hope Center will be up and running, with children filling the halls of GLO and delicious meals being served to our neighbors in the new City Light facility. What an auspicious beginning for the new year!

We also will continue in our year-long focus on the three aspects of spiritual development – Peace for the Soul, Direction for the Journey, and Hope for the Hungry. Focusing on these three areas throughout the year will help us all to have opportunities to grow in our faith and in our closeness to our Savior.

In particular, the opening of the Hope Center will give us opportunities to practice Hope for the Hungry. We know that as we are fed by God (both literally, “give us this day our daily bread,” and figuratively) we are called to feed others (again, both literally and figuratively). The opening of the new and larger facility will give us new opportunities to support the ministries that take place there.

As we head into the new year, maybe this is one of the “resolutions” you are being asked to make. Maybe you are being asked to engage with these ministries (or others) in a new way. We are going to be doing some new things with our

volunteerism at GLO – maybe you can help us as we lead weekly chapel, provide care to our GLO workers, or rock a baby. Or maybe you can help us as we care for our neighbors at City Light by serving and/or preparing food, serving as a liaison to work with individuals working to break cycles of poverty and addiction, or provide support in some fashion to our culinary students.

If you are able and willing to volunteer in a new capacity, please call City Light @ 325-673-6686 or GLO @ 325-675-8125 so we can find the best ways to use your talents and willingness to further God’s kingdom here at FBC Abilene.

I hope, as you look forward to this new year, you will find new opportunities to serve and minister, just as Jesus serves and ministers to us. I know God has great things in store for our church and community as we practice humble faithfulness to God’s call. I look forward to this year together as we see with wonder the places God will lead us.

Happy New Year!

Love,

*Brandon*

**BRANDON HUDSON**  
Senior Pastor







# COLLEGE & CROSSROADS

The college group had a great Christmas party to take a break from finals and to end the semester. Always fun to see the creativity of students on a \$0 given budget for gifts.

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The Crossroads class had a great time at their Friendsgiving!





*Continued from Cover.*

Our neighbors' grins and declarations (including comments like "Breathtaking!" "First glance, wow!" "Real coffee cups! That'll be so nice!" "I'm gonna have my daughter come see this place!" "Y'all outdid yourselves on this!" and more) upon seeing the building for the first time are life giving, God exalting, and restorative. When our neighbors are excited to be treated well in a clean, neat, and new building, they make us even more thrilled to serve them. We are entitled to no payment from them, but their joy is a worthy exchange.

As we celebrate the new City Light building, we acknowledge the blessing of the old; it has served God and our neighbors well. We are grateful for the opportunity to further dignify our forgotten friends with something new, as we are not often able to share new things with them. As God gives living water without payment, we extend that generosity with a new building, comfortable seating, and accessible services. There are no stairs to limit who can visit, no cramped front room to pen in human beings, and no plastic partitions to separate workers from fellow neighbors. The building on Hickory was a great blessing and helped us reach thousands of people; this new building gives us the chance to reach more.

In the transition to our new building and officially open in January, please pray for us and our neighbors: that we may

extend the grace of God to them, dignify them the way the Enthroned asks, and offer God's love with the same generosity God gives it; that we are stained glass windows, allowing God's glory to filter into the lives of those around us; that we be windows and not walls, broken and beautiful, different and united, welcoming. Please pray for our neighbors, especially as the weather turns, pray for our workers as they labor through this move, and pray for our city, as we strive to serve them.

A letter from our neighbor,  
Brock, that reads:

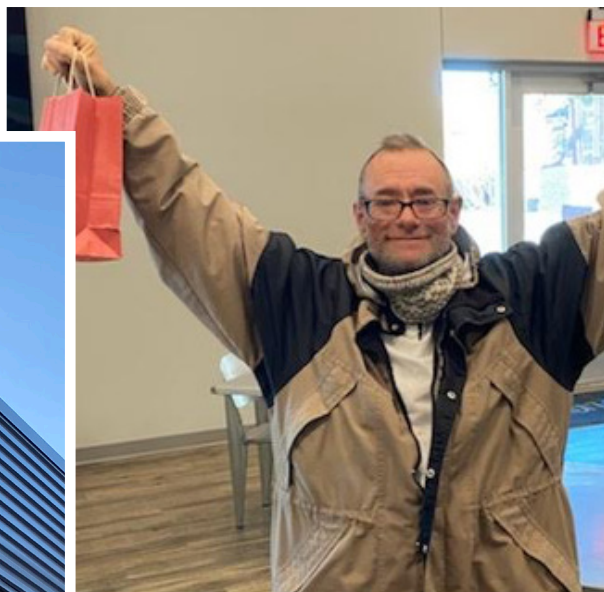
**To City Lights Staff, volunteers,  
All of yall are amazing and  
been a crucial part of my  
life. Feeding me, letting me  
shower, getting my mail, able  
worship Sunday mornings!  
This town owes you a debt of  
gratitude and I know God is  
proud of all of yall. We are so  
blessed to have yall and your  
assistance.**

**Be Blessed abundantly,  
Love all of yall,  
Brock**



**MAKENZIE MORRISON**  
Clerical Assistant  
at City Light







# CITY LIGHT CHRISTMAS STORE BLESSING

It was a tremendous privilege and honor to be a part of the Christmas store. The overwhelming generosity of our church, from the gifts and money to the heartfelt prayers and the dedicated volunteers who worked tirelessly to set up the store and bake cookies, has truly been a blessing. Thank you all for making this experience so special and meaningful.

At the Christmas store, we reflect on the gratitude expressed by the one man who returned to thank Jesus. Unlike that story, we are grateful to share how our experience differs. We've had numerous individuals return with heartfelt words of appreciation for the opportunity to shop for their children at the Christmas Store. The support and gratitude from the community has been truly uplifting.

What a blessing to be part of an amazing church body.

Together we helped 29 families and 115 children. Your generosity, love, and prayers made all this possible for these families.

They write:

*"After my husband left this year, I never thought I'd be able to buy gifts for my children. Thank you for showing us love this Christmas." -Charlie*

*"Thank you for allowing my kids to celebrate some magic this Christmas!" -Rachel*

*"I can't begin to tell you what a blessing this is!" -Jamie*

*"This bike is perfect! Wow! This would not have been possible without your help!" -Brandie*



**BETH YOUNG**  
Ministry Assistant to  
Pastor for Missions





# CITY LIGHT

Community Ministries

**3,672**

## MEALS SERVED

Includes: Sunday Breakfast, Community Breakfast, Community Lunch (both dine-in and take out), and Produce from the City Light Market

**423**

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

Personal Assistance:

**20**

## HOUSEHOLDS

helped with rent and utilities

**557**

## PHONE CALLS

for assistance

**303**

## MAIL

Delivered and checked

**108**

## SHOWERS



# FLC

Family Life Center

**45**

## PARTIES

**389**

Individuals

## FITNESS CENTER USE

**17**

Classes

## FITNESS CLASSES

**127**

Individuals

## SERENITY HOUSE

**7**

GROUPS

## FULL BUILDING RENTAL

**438**

Individuals

## WALK-INS

**300+**

Individuals

## SCHOOL & HOME

## SCHOOL GROUPS

**320**

Individuals

## BASKETBALL LEAGUE

## PRACTICES

# coming back...

## ANNUAL PANCAKE SUPPER

It's been three years since we had our last Annual Pancake Supper and now the wait is over for those of you who have been waiting for it to come back! On Saturday, January 27 we will once again host the Pancake Supper which allows us to raise money for missions.

This year will be a little different as this event will 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, January 10. We hope you will make plans to join us on Saturday, January 27 in the church dining room from 5:00-7:00 p.m. as we bring back this wonderful event!



# LOOKING AHEAD...Financially Speaking

2023 is over. 2024 is like a freight train which has left the station and is already rolling down the tracks. Continuing that metaphor, the freight train (i.e. the church) is loaded with lots of exciting events, ministries, and mission opportunities. Of course, it also has numerous personnel needed to keep the train running smoothly and even make repairs and adjustments while continuing down the tracks. What it also depends on is a steady supply of resources needed for it to function. When those resources are not present, then the crew on the train, with advice from headquarters, has to make tough decisions about what has to be dumped from the train, or not picked up at the next waystation because the train simply does not have enough resources to power the engine and pull the load.

Ok, enough of the metaphor. I think you get the picture. But, in case you need it to be a bit clearer, let me share some facts that the budget committee is dealing with and will report to the church later this month. For the past several years, starting with the 2020 COVID year, the church has not collected the voted-on Ministry Budget. This year is no exception. We missed the mark by \$405,000. That is the biggest deficit with have had in many, many years. We were short \$164,000 in 2020, \$168,500 in 2021, and \$181,836 in 2022. Now, each year, the finance committee has been monitoring the situation every year and have kept expenses down, so the situation is not dire, but it is a problem.

Since I am the one writing this, I am a bit uncomfortable talking about certain subjects, compensation being one of those. However, facts are facts and this is a part of the story. For the past three years, there have been no salary increases for any of the staff at the church. The personnel committee also had to pass some of the health insurance increases to the staff instead of the church covering the increases. This has resulted in a net loss of pay for all full-time employees

each year since 2019. This year, personnel agreed to trim some of the personnel portion of the budget by eliminating one part-time position.

Now, if that is not enough gloom, let me share another major item which has recently come up, property and casualty insurance. The insurance carrier we had for the past several years dropped us. Not just us, but basically the whole state of Texas because of the increase risk and damages from recent hail storms. When our broker began looking for new coverage, he said, ironically, that we are too successful as a church! Meaning, we have so much property to insure, companies are not willing to take on the risk. So, after talking to 49 different companies, he found one, yes only one, who would take us on as a client. And actually, it is 4 different companies who are all taking just a portion of the total risk by stacking coverage on top of coverage. End result, our premiums have more than doubled for 2024 and we have much higher deductibles. But, as we have seen in recent years, having insurance has saved us in the long run.

Good news? Well actually there is! Over that same time period, we have raised almost \$8 million and are opening the Hope Center next Monday! So, my belief is that as a church, we can and should be able to support the budget and the Hope Center and whatever else God lays out before us in 2024. The budget committee met a few weeks ago and one member said, "This is our home, and we are a family who needs to take care of it." I agree. So, as a member of this family, have you done all you need to do to help provide for the home?



**MIKE GREENFIELD**

Pastor for Administration  
& Spiritual Development

# SUNDAY MORNING TV BROADCAST UPDATE

For the next 8 weeks, our regularly scheduled Sunday morning broadcast of the morning worship services will be interrupted by the CW Network. From now until March 3 we are limited to only 30 minutes from 10:30 –11:00 a.m. on the CW. At 11:00 a.m. ACC Women's Basketball will air. This change was made at the network level and the local TV station had no choice but to air the basketball games.

So, we had a choice to make as well and decided that we still wanted to have a TV presence, if only for 30 minutes. On Sunday, December 31, we aired a special prerecorded 30-minute worship service. We will do the same again on Sunday, January 7. Then on January 14 through February 25, we will air the previous week's sermon and music. This special program is aired from 10:30–11:00 a.m. on CW, but it also is aired from 10:00–10:30 a.m. on KTXS.

For those who have been joining us by way of streaming, you will continue to be able to see the entire morning service live each week, from 10:30 a.m. until the service is over.

**You can see the live stream in one of three locations:**

[www.fbcabilene.org](http://www.fbcabilene.org) and click "**Watch Live**" at the top,  
on Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/FirstBaptistChurchAbileneTx>, or on  
YouTube @ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQZnDFJyzZtopU58I-1sLpw> .  
And if you were to miss a service, you can go back and watch previous services by  
going to the website, clicking "**Watch Live**" and then select the service you want to  
see in the related services box on the right side of the page.

JANUARY  
**FLOUR &  
SUGAR  
DRIVE**

It is time once again for the January 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 as they can be used over the next six months to purchase additional amounts as needed.



# DEACON ORDINATION SERVICE

**Sunday, January 14**  
**6:00 pm**  
**Sancutary**

## **Ordination of:**

Trevor Allen,  
Debby Brown,  
Tom Cunningham,  
Tyler Gaddis,  
Libby Gibson,  
Jordan Neal,  
Connie Peacock,  
Jecilly Varghese

# PANCAKE SUPPER

**Saturday, January 27**  
**5:00-7:00 P.M**  
**FBC DINING ROOM**



# JANUARY

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>7-11</b> | College Ski Retreat/Glorieta                |
| <b>7</b>    | Personnel Committee Meeting                 |
| <b>10</b>   | Wednesday Evening Meal/<br>Activities begin |
|             | Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting       |
|             | Women's Ministry Meeting                    |
| <b>14</b>   | Deacon Ordination Service                   |
| <b>15</b>   | Church Offices Closed                       |
| <b>16</b>   | Finance Committee Meeting                   |
|             | Deacons' Meeting                            |
| <b>21</b>   | Lord's Supper                               |
| <b>27</b>   | Pancake Supper                              |

## STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

January 1, 16 years

**JOHN MOORE**

*Pastor for Missions*

January 9, 1 year

**BRANDON HUDSON**

*Senior Pastor*

January 16, 5 years

**RACHELLE PHILLIPS**

*Assistant GLO Director*

January 19, 5 years

**WHITNEY PATTERSON**

*GLO Teacher*

January 28, 5 years

**KAYLEEN MILLS**

*Director of Operations/Chef Trainer*



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### FBC FOUNDATION

#### Grant Request Forms Are Available

Forms are available in the office.  
Deadline to return the form is noon,  
Friday, February 2.

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

December 2023

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Decemer</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Required	\$ 499,912	\$ 3,469,572
Given	\$ 408,610	\$ 3,063,847

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



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

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