

FIRST *words*

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



GENERATIONS SUNDAY

by Cody Favor

Something you have probably noticed, regardless of how long you have been at First Baptist, is generational diversity. People of all ages worship and participate in the life of FBC. Every Sunday, we all worship together in the same room at the same time. There is no youth church or children's church, there is simply worship for the entire body. With that being said, multiple generations merely being in the same room together is not enough. Being in the same room is just multi-generational worship; to be intergenerational there must be participation from everyone, no matter their age. Intergenerational worship is worship in which people of every age are understood to be equally important. It is imperative to remember this when youth and children are involved in the worship or acts of service. They are not performing for our approval; they are leading the entire community in the worship of God. Participation in the life of the church is vitally important for young people. I regularly tell our youth they are certainly the future of the church, but they are also the now of the church. Their participation matters, which is why their relationships with adults matter too. These relationships teach kids what it looks like to be an adult who trusts their life to Christ. These relationships are what lets a kid know that even if they mess up, they are still loved by the church and by Jesus.

Our young people need more than peer relationships. Our young people need to belong to a community. In Romans 12:4-5 Paul writes, "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." Young and old, we belong to each other. God has a calling for young people that goes beyond the children's sermon, youth group, or emerging adult Bible study. God is calling our young people to participate in the kingdom and show the world that God is indeed making all things new. God is also calling them to participate alongside adults who care about them and the church. On January 15, we have a unique opportunity to have time to share and pray across generations. May we all have our eyes opened to see Jesus in each other as we worship together from generation to generation.

JANUARY 2017



FIRST BAPTIST
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FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

Records show January is the coldest month of the year. Sounds obvious. The intriguing thing about January, the bleak mid-winter when “the earth is like iron and water like stone,” is that it has the hint of spring with the hope of new beginnings. We make resolutions for a New Year. We look to make changes. We consider ways we can start over or grow.

Some contend January gets its name from the Latin word for “door” since it serves as a doorway to a new year. Others believe the name comes from the Roman god, Janus, who was the god of transitions and beginnings. Janus was pictured with two faces – one looking back and the other face looking forward. The symbols of a doorway and two faces catch the mood of the month.

What doorway is before you? Do you have the courage to walk through it? Where is God calling you this New Year? How do you need to say “good-bye” to something in the past? Do you need to release some nagging failure, fear, or shame? It might be as serious as saying “good-bye” to some habitual sin or sickness of the soul. Perhaps you need to say “so long” to who you think you should be to embrace who God created you to be – His beloved child.

How do you need to say, “Hello” to the future? The prophet Isaiah captures the possibilities: “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not see it right before your very eyes? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland in which we have dwelled.”

Another promise of hope during January is the celebration of Epiphany, which occurs on the twelfth day after Christmas. Epipha-what? The word means, “shining, a showing, or revealing” which points to the star and our Savior in the straw for all people. Epiphany celebrates the visit of the Magi or Wise Men to see the Christ Child. They took the risk to set out and follow a star for 750 miles to Bethlehem. Yet, they weren’t sure who or what they would find. They traveled in the dark across miles of wilderness and wasteland. They walked through their doorway and they were never the same. At the end of their journey, or was it the beginning...they said hello to the future, and found their heart’s desire – and they worshiped Him.

Matthew tells us “they departed by another way.” Perhaps they took a different route because of the threat of Herod. Could Matthew be describing their spiritual journey and how it changed them? We have the opportunity this year to walk through a doorway, to let go of the past, to greet the future, and follow the star that can take us another way – “His Way” of peace and abundant life. This year, let us worship Him in our living, our giving, and our serving. I wonder how this year might be different if we worshiped and surrendered to “His Doorway.”

The door is open,
Phil

“At the end of their journey, or was it the beginning...they said hello to the future, and found their heart’s desire – and they worshiped Him.”

PANCAKE SUPPER

Saturday, January 28, 2017

The annual RA/GA/Kids on a Mission Pancake Supper will be held Saturday, January 28, 2017 in the dining room. Pancakes, bacon, coffee, and orange juice will be served from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. This event allows our children to raise money to use for various mission projects.

Tickets will go on sale beginning January 4 and may be purchased from one of the children in RA's, GA's, or Kids on a Mission. They may also be purchased in the church office or at the door the day of the pancake supper. The cost is \$5 per ticket and children 4 and under eat free. All monies received will go towards purchasing cows for a cow bank project benefitting Poraka, a special needs group home in Macedonia.

Our children look forward to this event every year. This is a "hands on" activity and is one of the best ways for our children to put into action the service aspect of what they have been learning in their mission classes.

Please join us for a wonderful night of fellowship and some really delicious pancakes and bacon!



DEACON ORDINATION

Pending their election by the church on January 8, the following nine people will be ordained as deacons. The ordination service will be held in the sanctuary on January 15 at 6:00 p.m. God has called them to the ministry of deacon. Those being ordained are: Julie Hay, Sandy Longacre, Rocky McAdams, Matthew McGraw, Katie Palmer, Evan Parker, Marcus Spencer, Wes Davis, and Collin Zalesak. Each one will be sharing his or her journey of faith. Those stories will be powerful moments that will touch our hearts.

We often define deacon as a noun, a position, or even an office of prestige. The New Testament often uses deacon, diakonien, as a verb to describe the posture of a deacon as one who serves. In our church, deacons are not a board of directors who govern. Deacons are servant leaders. They are called and set apart to care for the needs of the congregation. As servant-leaders they provide spiritual direction for the church.

In the service of ordination, the laying on of hands is a significant moment. This act symbolizes the blessing and expression of prayer that confirms the call of God for the deacon to minister in our congregation. This holy practice can be traced back to when Moses laid hands on Joshua and commissioned him to serve Israel. Ordination is not a ceremony of the church, but the call and claim of God most deeply rooted in the Bible: "Follow me, be the servant of all" (Mark 1:17; 10:44).

Deacons are ordained for the specific purpose of ministering in our midst. All of us have been called and ordained through the waters of baptism to discover our ministry and ways to serve. As you pray and watch those being ordained to serve as deacons, you are invited to consider your calling to serve and follow Christ. We believe every member is a minister and missionary ordained by God.

HIGH SCHOOL DISCIPLE NOW

Back to Life

High School Disciple Now will be the first weekend in February and I hope every high school student is able to attend this year. Students will spend the weekend staying in host homes and participating in small group Bible study. There is also community worship on Friday and Saturday nights and plenty of time to make memories. This weekend is important because it helps our high school youth grow closer to one another and experience community in a way that is only possible in a setting like this. It is also an opportunity to focus on what it is to be alive in Christ. I hope you will make it a priority to attend!



NEW BEGINNINGS

by Seth Wilson

August of 2014 was a whirlwind for me. I had just graduated from college, and accepted a position helping with video work for the athletic department at ACU. The whole process happened so fast that I don't know if I really grasped my decision until I arrived in Abilene. The "newness" just hit me all at one time, and the excitement turned to reluctance as my parents and I finished our 1,300 mile drive from Greensboro, NC to Abilene. I was beginning a new job in a new city in a new state (I had never been to Texas before this drive) and had to figure out a way to find new friends; in essence make a new life for myself.

Adjusting to life in Abilene wasn't everything I thought it was going to be. I became overwhelmed by the constant demands from my job and the schedule that came with it. Working in college athletics means lots of long days and working weekends, and it took a toll on me. I grew up going to church and knowing how important it was, but suddenly it became very easy to sleep in on Sunday mornings and use that time to recharge for the next week.

After a few months, I was unhappy with my life in Abilene and knew I needed something to change if I was going to be able to live here long-term. In the back of my mind, I knew that something was finding a church to get involved with. I made it to First Baptist after meeting with C.V. and was surprised by what I found. I was so caught up in all of the "new" in my life that I was overwhelmed by finding something familiar at First Baptist, the feeling of being part of a community of faith. This place welcomed me with open arms and helped me get plugged in, and all of the "new" became much more bearable.

Joshua 1:9 says "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not fear, do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." I always fall back on this verse when the "new beginnings" in life seem frightening, because it reminds me that I'm not alone. God is always with me, but also I have the familiarity of a church family in the midst of all the "new," and I'm proud to say that First Baptist is that family in this home away from home.



The ENCORE! Series will feature three sets of 4-6 weeks series presented in sermon format. These series will be led by our pastoral staff, retired pastors, and other ordained ministers. Make plans to participate in any or all of these series:

ENCORE! SERIES

JANUARY - MAY
SUNDAY EVENINGS
DINING ROOM
5:00 P.M.-6:00 P.M.

Series Title: **Elijah - Principles of a Prophet**

January 22 - March 5

This Series will focus on the principles we can learn from the prophet Elijah found in 1 Kings 17-19. Topics include: Problems, Commitment, Solitude, Provision, Conviction, and Restoration

Series Title: **Relax! Accept the Crazy**

March 19 - April 9

The world thinks Christians are crazy (and maybe we are), but we are "good crazy" about Christ. Using a selected group of Scripture texts, we examine the Cross, Community, Compassion, and The Christian Life.

Series Title: **School of Prayer - Learning How to Pray**

April 23 - May 21

We will take a look at the Model Prayer found in Matthew 6 as we break down our Lord's words which teach us about Our Father, our total surrender, our dependence, our freedom, and our victory.

THE CHRISTMAS STORE

by Janet Mendenhall

I have always thought gifts should be accompanied by a video of the shopping trip on which the gift was purchased. This has been especially true when my young children have shopped with one parent for the other – and in particular my daughter shopping with my husband for me. It would be a videographer's delight; eye-rolling and dramatic exclamations, "Oh no, not that, Dad! That's for old ladies. Mom would never wear that." But also the excitement when they see that thing they know is perfect for him or her. "He is going to love this! I can't wait to watch him open this!" Sometimes the anticipation is so great they don't wait, bursting in the house with, "Guess what we got you for Christmas?" But if you could be the proverbial fly on the wall and witness the conspiratorial whispers and the delight of discovering the just rightness of a gift, it would magnify the magic of the moment.

It is more blessed to give, than to receive. Most of us have almost learned this as we become adults. I was just bemoaning the fact I was being a terrible shopper this year, and my son replied with this text: "Nah, I think the older we get, the less important it becomes to us material-wise. At least for me. I never understood how or why you guys could say you didn't want anything for Christmas, but now it is more difficult for me to think of something I want, than it is scary to imagine getting nothing. Which is to say you rock and played Santa wonderfully well for many years and we all appreciate you enough to know that as adults, the best things in life aren't things."

He has a son who is now 3 and definitely sees life differently as a father.

I know things aren't all that important, and I struggle with the consumerism of Christmas, but I do enjoy choosing gifts for people I love. It gives you a moment to focus on the individual characteristics of that person in your life, to celebrate the things that make him or her special and to appreciate the unique role that person plays in your life. That has become a big part of the season's joy for me. Giving gifts makes me happy.

The past two weeks, I had the opportunity to eavesdrop on some families who were doing just that for their children, and it was pure joy.

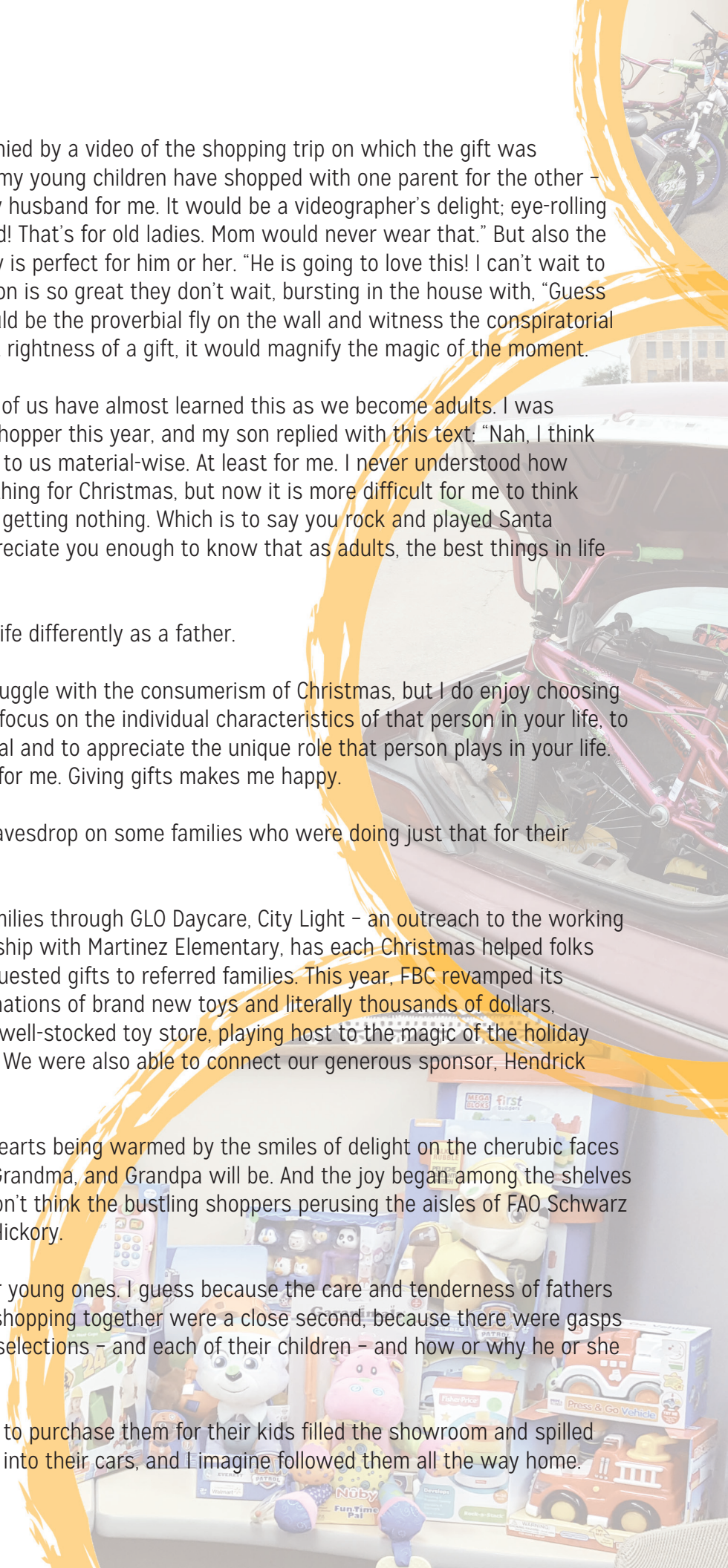
First Baptist Church, in its service to Abilene families through GLO Daycare, City Light – an outreach to the working poor and homeless, and a longstanding partnership with Martinez Elementary, has each Christmas helped folks in the traditional way; buying and delivering requested gifts to referred families. This year, FBC revamped its Christmas contributions and with members' donations of brand new toys and literally thousands of dollars, transformed the City Light meeting room into a well-stocked toy store, playing host to the magic of the holiday season. And as a partner, we got to participate. We were also able to connect our generous sponsor, Hendrick Health System, to the Christmas store as well.

So, rather than the philanthropic church folks' hearts being warmed by the smiles of delight on the cherubic faces of Christmas children, the hearts of Mom, Dad, Grandma, and Grandpa will be. And the joy began among the shelves of a makeshift showroom on Hickory Street. I don't think the bustling shoppers perusing the aisles of FAO Schwarz could outdo the merriment of the shoppers on Hickory.

My favorites were the fathers shopping for their young ones. I guess because the care and tenderness of fathers often gets overlooked these days. The couples shopping together were a close second, because there were gasps and laughter and talk about the merits of their selections – and each of their children – and how or why he or she would love the purchase.

The joy and relief of finding gifts and being able to purchase them for their kids filled the showroom and spilled into the city streets as we loaded their bundles into their cars, and I imagine followed them all the way home.

I know it has followed me for days.



ACTING IN *Love*

CITY LIGHT CHRISTMAS STORE

Thank you to everyone who donated toward our City Light Christmas Store! Through your generous donations, we were able to provide Christmas for 47 families with 132 children! A special thank you to Janet Mendenhall, Connecting Caring Communities, Hendrick Medical Center, and Leigh Black who played a significant role with the store. We also had volunteers like Sherry Frush, Lynn King, Molly Mercer, Sue Edwards, Margie Siewert, and Barbara Bacon who helped set up the store, greet shoppers, assist with shopping, and load the cars with gifts. We appreciate all of our volunteers, and could not have done it without them. Our City Light Christmas Store was a new venture this year, and was a success because of the congregation here at First Baptist. Thank you all, and we look forward to what next year brings!



SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS FOR 2017

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 2017. Begin praying about how God can use you on a short-term missions 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 that are not passed on to each participant. The earlier you 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 (325-675-8112).

THE 2017 TENTATIVE DATES FOR SHORT TERM PROJECTS ARE:

May 19-27 Skopje, Macedonia

To support, encourage, and walk alongside CBF missionaries Alicia & Jeff Lee and their work happening in Skopje. The tentative price will range from \$2,200 - \$2,500 depending on cost of airfare.

**June Habitat for Humanity
Abilene, Texas**

**July 23-28 Family Mission Trip
McAllen, Texas**

Would you be willing to participate in the second Family Mission Trip along the Texas border? FBC has another opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center just outside of McAllen, Texas. Please begin to pray about this mission project and how your family can be involved.

Did you know that by giving to FBC Abilene through the ministry budget, Unified Missions Offering, and Faces and Places missions campaign, you helped to be the presence of Christ in these areas for 2016?

Thank you for being a church who cares about our city, state, nation, and world!

Skopje Food Bank • GA's • City Light Community Ministries • Martinez Elementary Partnership • Louisiana Floods • Hardin Simmons University • PrayerWorks • CBF Global Missions Offering (110 Missionaries) • City Light Thanksgiving Breakfast • FBC TV Ministry • FBC Single Moms Ministry • Abilene Baptist Association • Baptist World Alliance • Operation Christmas Child • God's Little Ones • Flour & Sugar • FBC Bereavement Ministry • McAllen New Beds • South Africa Network of Churches • McAllen Family Gardens • City Light Christmas Eve Dinner • Big A • Buckner Partnership • Myung Lee New Church Start • Brazil Ministries • Rockin' Moms • Shoes for Orphan Souls • Internationals • CBF Texas • City Light Christmas Store • RA's • Templo Bautista • Jenny Spruiell - Haiti • Cooperative Baptist Fellowship • Unified Missions Offering • Skopje, Macedonia - Jeff, Alicia & Ethan Lee • FBC Family Life Center • Upward Basketball • Ministry Phnom Pehn, Cambodia - David & Lauren Bass • City Light Personal Assistance • Healing Hearts Ministry • 2 FBC Missions Homes • Martinez School Supplies • Abilene Operation Blue Santa • Abilene Baptist Social Ministries • Macedonia Milk Bank Milking Machines • Martinez Fall Festival • Abilene Habitat for Humanity • Texas Baptist Mary Hill Davis Offering • City Light Church • Ladywell Baptist Church in Livingston, Scotland - Katherine Ellis & David Pearson • Martinez Art Studio • FBC Trunk or Treat • Adults on Mission • Potter's Inn, Colorado - Duane & Sandy Hammack • FBC Ministry of Counseling • Baptist World Aid • Martinez Meet the Teacher • Texas Baptist Disaster Relief • FBC Good Cheer • McAllen Family Mission Trip • CBF Dr. Bill Bruster Scholarship • GLO Thanksgiving • City Light Laundry Ministry • Haiti Mission Trip - Living Water International • City Light Community Meals • Singing Men of Texas Cuba Mission Trip • Single Moms Ministry • Paws for People • HSU Physical Therapy Mission Trip • Youth Choir Mission Trip • Baptist Joint Committee • Robin Cunningham - Zimbabwe • Macedonia Cow • Martinez Teacher Gifts • Big Hope Mentoring Program • Martinez emergency needs • Easter Egg Hunt • Friendship House • BOBS • FBC Friendship House • CBF 25 Anniversary Missions Endowment • Texas Baptist Mary Hill Davis Offering • CBF Arizona • CBF West • Big Country Baptist Assembly • Eunice Chambless Hospitality House • Baptist Joint Committee • Texas Baptist World Hunger • City Light Shower Ministry • Lawrence Trott Associational Offering • Abilene Community Transformation • Blessed Family Fun Night



A NEW LOOK

by Mike Greenfield

This is the first edition of the new monthly format of FirstWords. As you can see, it has a new look and hopefully a new feel. Our goal is to keep you informed about what is happening at the church, but instead of just making announcements, we are wanting to present the idea with a story and many times with pictures. Each month, we will work around a theme that represents what is going on in the life of the church. This month we are thinking about new beginnings; kind of fitting for the new first edition. Just as the calendar flips over to start a new year, we have the ability, through the grace of God, to start over each and every day when it comes to our spiritual life. Sin seems to keep dragging us down, but because of the grace of God, we can get back up and confess our mistakes and start over.

With the new digital version of FirstWords, we have the ability to send to as many people as we want without it costing us more. So, if you know of someone who would benefit from getting FirstWords, please send us their email address and we will add them to the list. You may send it to debra.clemmer@fbcabilene.org. Thanks again for reading FirstWords and may you have a wonderful, grace-filled new year.

GRACE FILLED MARRIAGE

On Saturday, February 11, 2017, FBC will host the Grace Filled Marriage Conference featuring Dr. Tim Kimmel. This conference is for married couples; however, it is also for the engaged and for those who plan to marry someday. We are offering this conference to military and first responder couples without charge (they do need to [register online](#)). While the conference fee for everyone else is \$50 per couple (\$25 per person), there is a FBC insider rate of \$30 (\$15 per person) that we have extended until the end of January. Use the code "abilene17" when registering.

Please spread the word and keep in mind that childcare for birth thru 5th grade is free with a reservation.

NOTE: Reservations for childcare must be made on or before Sunday, February 5.

FBC FOUNDATION

Grant Request Forms Are Available

Forms are available in the office.

Deadline to return the form is noon, Friday, February 10.

UPDATE ON DR. CHRISTOPHER

Phil had knee replacement surgery on Tuesday. He is home and will be recovering during the month of January. He appreciates all of the prayers, encouragement, and the many ways the church has reached out to him and Mary. As always your love has been overwhelming.

Preaching during the month of January in Phil's absence will be members of the Pastoral Staff: Keith Post, January 8; Sarah Greenfield, January 22; and C.V. Blake, January 29. Sunday, January 15 will be "Generation Sunday" during Sunday school and in worship. Worship will be led by Cody Favor and Becky Tucker. It will also feature other members who represent the generations, vitality, and strength of our congregation. As we begin a New Year, pay attention to caring for your soul and spiritual health by regular worship with your church family. Worship serves as the doorway and threshold to renewal.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

December 2016

Budget	December	Year-to-Date
Required	\$469,529	\$3,343,827
Given	\$654,534	\$3,286,917

EVENT CALENDAR:

JANUARY

- 15 Generation Sunday
- 15 Deacon Ordination
- 19 Prayer Time for Inauguration
- 28 Pancake Supper

FEBRUARY

- 11-12 Grace Filled Marriage Conference
- 3-5 High School Disciple Now



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