

FIRST words

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

NEW BEGINNINGS

by Matthew Broyles

2017 was one of the hardest years of my life. I was serving as the pastor of a small church in Illinois. Ever since my calling to ministry I had dreams of being a lead pastor, no matter the size of the church. I finally had my opportunity. There's more to the story as you can imagine, but let's just say it ended up not being a good match. The church could no longer afford to pay me my salary so Katie and I left in October of 2017, just one year after serving as their pastor. I was devastated. I felt myself to be a failure. A dream I had for so long came crashing down causing me to enter into a dark time in my life.

I found myself angry at God. I was angry with the Church, all of them, not just the one I had been pastoring. I began re-examining my call to ministry and even whether or not I wanted to be part of a church ever again. Having grown up loving the Church, my anger turned to deep grief. Church wasn't supposed to be a place where people vied for power. It isn't supposed to be a place where we act like we have everything together and think it's weird when someone shares deep parts of themselves. It isn't supposed to be a place where people come to be served, but to serve. It's not supposed to be about what's in it for me, but what's in it for the whole world, the greatest, and according to Jesus, especially the least of these.

During this time of questioning, anger, and grief, I began interviewing to be the new Pastor for Emerging Adults. Toward the end of the process, Dr. Christopher asked me a question I'll never forget, "With the pain you've experienced because of the church, what makes you want to continue doing ministry in a church." To be honest, if he had asked that question a month earlier,

I would have said, "I'm not sure. I guess I'm a glutton for punishment." However, having had time to reflect and process my emotions, I said, "I finally realized that I wouldn't be so angry with something I didn't love so much. And, I want to continue ministering in a church so I can help be part of the solution rather than giving up."

Since you're reading this and in case you didn't know, I got the job ☺, and it's been a great new beginning. Working at FBC was a welcomed fresh start for me. One which came with excitement and energy, but also one which came with some anxiety and fear of the unknown. All new beginnings have that tension. We never know what we are getting into. We take the task one day, one person, one situation at a time and before you know it, it's been nine months. I've met people, made friends, and all the facets of newness came true: some fear, frustration, and disappointment, but mainly excitement, energy, and new life.

As I reflect back, I've realized Churches don't always get it right and that's ok. After all, we're human. Also, it should be no surprise that the same thing which hurt me so deeply, a church, is the same place where I've found healing, forgiveness, and a renewed sense of joy for ministry. When the church is who we are called to be, healing, forgiveness, peace, hope, and love are what we have to offer all people. There are many people in our world and our own city who have been hurt by people in a church. It's part of our responsibility as people of God to help them have a new beginning in a different kind of church. I'm so thankful to be at FBC and to have new opportunities to serve the Lord and the Lord's Church.

Whether you've had a good year or a bad one, know God is in the business of making things new. When you have new opportunities this year, trust God is with you and be willing to try it even if it makes you uncomfortable.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Learning to Tell Time...

Happy New Year! We encounter all kinds of customs to greet a New Year. Did you have your black-eyed peas for “good luck?” Not sure the source of that idea. Some credit the innovation of “New Year’s Resolutions” to the ancient Babylonians. Their most popular resolution: “returning farm equipment.” Sure beats losing weight or getting organized.

I have tried the resolution route, or rut, with little success. I usually break half of them by the first quarter of the Sugar Bowl on January 1. What we need more than “*Resolutions*,” which we work so hard to keep by human will-power, is a “*Revolution*” which comes through the power of God’s grace.

Yet, how can that kind of radical transformation become a reality? This past Sunday, we heard about a life-changing pathway to pursue in the book of Ecclesiastes: “*There is a suitable time for everything, and a season for everything under the heavens.*” In Hebrew, “*season*” means there is an appointed time when action must be taken or the opportunity lost. **Ecclesiastes calls us to ask at a New Year: “What time or season is it in my life?”** This revolutionary question becomes the dominant doorway to enter a New Year. Even though we have free choice, God has set an appointed time for you which doesn’t come from a calendar, but the very hands of God. As scripture says, “*Our times are in His hands.*”

In Chapter 3, verses 1-8, Ecclesiastes sets out fourteen contrasting times we will inevitably face. **There will be an appointed time for one and not the other in our lives** based on what time or season it is in our lives. It will be a time for that “*suitable*” action or tragically, the opportunity will be lost. You have an appointed time this year. Musicians know you can play the right note at the wrong time which still makes it the wrong note.

It is time to ask: “What season is it in my life?” God has an appointed time for you this year to take action.

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Take for example, “*There is a time to keep and a time to throw away.*” There are things worth keeping. Perhaps things are good for you right now. While everything is OK, don’t borrow trouble by worrying about tomorrow. Keep this time of joy. There are things you cannot control, but don’t let those uncertainties rob you of the joy of this time. You might even want to keep the remnants of pain since pain is our great teacher. But perhaps you are keeping too much. What you are keeping has become stale, unsatisfying, or even destructive. It might be time for you to unload the guilt, regret, or the idea everything is up to

you. **As you search these seasons keep asking: “What time or season is it in my life?” Also, trust no matter what... “In His time He will make all things beautiful.”**

The following statement was found among the few possessions and papers of a young African pastor after

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he died as a martyr for his faith in Christ. His moving testimony clearly shows he knew what time or season it was in his life.

"I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit's power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made -- I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in his presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labor with power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifices, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me...my banner will be clear." (Text circulates with byline "Unknown Author" or "Prayer of the Unashamed." Contributed by Dr. Nina Gunter from Louise Robinson Chapman.)

What season or time is it in your life for action or the opportunity lost?

Phil

Continued from Page 1.

When you do, you will find God is with you, willing and ready to continue the journey alongside you. It won't be perfect. It won't be easy. BUT, it will be good.

An excerpt from For a New Beginning
by John O'Donohue

***Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.
Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.***

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DEACON ORDINATION

*An Evening of Inspiration...
Hearing How God is at Work*
Sunday, January 13, 6:00 p.m. Sanctuary

On Sunday, January 13 at 6:00 p.m. the church will gather for our service of Deacon Ordination. This service is one of the highlights of the church year and our times of worship. Those being ordained by God through the call of our church are: Beverley Cunningham, Colton Gragg, Don Kennedy, Sean Morgan, and Mike Taylor. We will be inspired as we hear the story and testimony of each of these candidates as they share their journey and the ways God has been at work guiding and leading. These personal moments have become some of the most memorable times of worship in the life of our church. The service also offers the opportunity to install those deacons returning to service and for present deacons to renew their commitment to be servant-leaders.

As followers of Jesus, all of us have been called to serve. In one sense, all of us are ordained to be Christ's ministers and servants when we pass through the waters of Christian baptism. There are those which God particularly calls as deacons to look after and care for the needs of the church. They take on the privilege and responsibility of shepherding and guiding the spiritual needs of our church. The service provides the opportunity for all of us to consider God's call in our lives and where Christ is leading us to serve and be His presence. Come join in worship for a joyous evening of inspiration, commitment, and calling to "Reach people for Jesus Christ, and together become like Him."



WOMEN'S RETREAT

As we begin a new year, many make resolutions to become more physically fit, and that indeed is a wonderful goal. With all the challenges that brings, we sometimes forget to focus on our spiritual health. So this year, the Women's Ministry wants to try and help us get fit and stay fit in our spiritual lives. We have three events scheduled this spring semester to help us.

Our Women's Fellowships planned for January 8 and April 9 will focus on spiritual wellness. In January, we will talk about getting started with practices which will improve our spiritual lives and then in April we will have a check-up or do some spring cleaning if necessary.

Kate Henderson will also be focusing on this at our annual Women's Retreat, February 22 & 23, as she will be speaking on "Stop Striving and Start Abiding." This will be a wonderful time to consider our

priorities, as well as get to know or continue to grow relationships with other women in our church.

We will once again be hosting the retreat at the McM Elegante and you will have the option of staying overnight or choosing to come and go.

Registration will begin at the Winter Women's Fellowship (January 8) and will continue each Sunday and Wednesday in January. Registration tables will be in various locations around church. Rates will vary as to what option you choose for the retreat.

We hope you will choose to come to one, or hopefully all these events, and your spiritual life will be increased in this new year.

STAFF UPDATES

by Mike Greenfield

There have been a few changes to the staff over the past several weeks and wanted you to be aware of the changes and where we are in the process of filling some open positions.

The Pastor for Students Search Committee is hard at work and they have reviewed over 40 resumes and have narrowed their focus to several of those resumes and are in the process of getting more information through the means of some written answers to some challenging questions.

Over the past several weeks, the Pastor for Senior Adults Search Committee has been meeting and have some information they would like to share with the church. In cooperation with the Personnel Committee and Pastoral Staff, and then seriously looking at the church budget and current staffing, the search committee is moving forward with the following:

C.V. Blake (who approached the staff with this desire) will assume responsibility for the overall leadership of the Senior Adult Ministry and the church will seek to fill a part-time position (25-29 hours per week) which will focus on pastoral care. The job description will include:

- Lead in planning, conducting, and evaluating a comprehensive program of pastoral care to the members who are in care facilities, nursing homes, homebound, and in the hospitals
- Be a consistent presence in the various facilities and homes of those in this ministry group. Work with the Pastor for Adults in developing a support ministry for the care givers of those in this ministry group
- Provide counsel for those in need when appropriate
- Work with the pastoral team in developing intergenerational activities which would incorporate this age group with all other age groups in the church
- Develop a strategy to keep the members of this ministry group before the church
- Plan appropriate activities for those in this ministry group
- Serve as staff liaison with the hospital visitation team
- Work with the deacons in coordinating communion with those who are not able to attend church.

If you know of someone who would be a fit for this position, please have them submit a resume to Mike Greenfield (mike.greenfield@fbcabilene.org). The committee would like to begin interviewing beginning the first of the year. A complete job description is available on the church website in the Media/forms sections.

Around the office, we are excited to have David Curry join the staff as the Ministry Assistant for Finance. Most of you see David on Sunday mornings as he plays guitar in the Celebration Orchestra. He brings more than a musical flair to the job, as he has an accounting degree and banking background. So, next time you are in the office, drop by and welcome David to the staff.

Stacey Collins, Ministry Assistant to the Senior Pastor has resigned to start a new chapter in her life towards becoming a police officer and will begin the Abilene Police Academy on January 7. We are grateful for all the ways Stacey has served our church staff and she will be dearly missed. Applications are being received for the Ministry Assistant to the Senior Pastor. Those applications are available in Debra Clemmer's office.

RA/GA PANCAKE SUPPER

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!! On Saturday, January 26, we will host our annual Pancake Supper in the FBC dining room. This is a wonderful event which our children's missions' classes look forward to each year. The pancake supper provides a way for our children to put into action the things they have talked about each Wednesday night in their classes. They look forward each year to serving pancakes, bacon, coffee, and orange juice to those who attend.

Tickets will go on sale January 9 and will be on sale through the event. All monies given for tickets or put in our "tip" jars will go towards missions. We have not chosen a specific mission project for our earnings as of now, but John Moore always has wonderful projects for us to be partners.

Be looking for our eager children who will have plenty of tickets to sale and get ready for some terrific pancakes (and bacon)!



VALENTINE'S DAY COMEDY NIGHT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Includes: Dinner by Mike Greenfield

*Child Care: Birth-5th Grade

Entertainment Featuring Barnes and Miner
[barnesandminer.com]

Venue: 201 Mesquite

Cost: \$40 per Couple (\$20 per Person)

**Child Care is from 6-9
and is for this event only.*

ACTING IN Love

Dear First Baptist Church Family:

Thank you so much for your generous donations to the Big A Store and the Big A Christmas Parties this year. I wish you could have been there to see the looks of joy and appreciation on all of the kids' faces. You made their Christmas bright. Through you, they feel the love and joy of Christ, and for that, we are truly blessed. Thanks again for all you do to support this wonderful mission.

In Him,

Big A Director, Teachers,
Volunteers, and Students

Thank You Church Family

Many of you responded to our Blessings of Christmas event on Sunday, December 16.

All of our gifts were taken, which means 60 members received not only a gift from the church, but also a visit from many of you.

Please know how important it is for us to remember our fellow members who are not able to get out and about as in years past. The blessing is not only theirs, but also yours.

We appreciate you!

C. V. Blake
Pastor for Adults

City Light Christmas Store 2018

Thank you!

Thank you all so much for your generosity this year to the City Light Christmas Store and thank you for the privilege of letting me witness it firsthand! Your donations and gifts helped over 100 children and families have a brighter Christmas this year!

It was a great blessing to talk to the moms, dads and grandparents who have this difficult job of raising their own and sometimes other family member's children. They expressed their gratitude many times! They would get excited to see a specific toy, game, or ball and would proudly tell how their child loved a certain color, or was a good artist, loved crafts, building things, or a good athlete and they were getting to choose for the child a gift they knew they would love! Wow...what a great gift you allowed these parents and grandparents to have...the gift of dignity!

A special thanks to Janet Mendenhall, Barbara Bacon, and Maura dela Cruz who helped serve our guests who came to the store this year!

Melinda Norris, Missions Assistant

WORDS FROM ONE OF OUR CHRISTMAS STORE VOLUNTEERS: *Janet Mendenhall*

Christmas really IS about the gifts!

For weeks, you await with cheerful expectation the arrival of the big day. You have decorated, sang carols, read advent devotions, and lit candles both anticipating and celebrating the true gifts of the season: Hope, peace, joy, and love!

You have reminded one another that giving is far superior to receiving, although those of us with more than a few Christmases under our belt need no such reminders.

You have shopped for the perfect gifts for your loved ones to experience the joy of giving.

And, for a third year, you have opened the door for others to experience that same joy.

For the third year, you have transformed the usually stark meeting rooms in the City Light

building into a shiny showroom. For the third year, you have helped to host the FBC Christmas Store!

For the third year, you have celebrated the blessedness of giving and have given something even better than shiny wrapped packages.

You have given the gift of giving!

You gave the gift of giving to many grandmothers recently finding themselves raising several grandchildren, who had no idea how they were going to make Christmas happen this year in addition to all the other responsibilities of parenting.

You have given the gift of giving to a single parent recently forced to move and cover all of the cost tied up in that, who didn't think the joy of Christmas giving would come for them this season.

You have given the gift of giving to other parents each with their own struggles and stories and desires to experience the thrill of watching their children open a gift they have chosen, paid for, wrapped, and placed under the Christmas tree.

That's the beautiful part of the format of the Christmas Store: It extends to others the gift of giving!

And you have given the gifts of the season...hope, peace, joy, and love!

I know! I worked in the store and I heard the shoppers' sometimes teary-eyed words of thanksgiving, their joyful exclamations when finding the perfect gift, and their peaceful relief that Christmas would be a little happier for their little ones.

It is better to give than to receive and giving the gift of giving is the best!

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

January 1, 18 years
Maura dela Cruz
Associate Director of CLCM

January 1, 4 years
Heather Henderson
Librarian

January 1, 11 years
John Moore
Pastor for Missions

January 7, 29 years
Beverly Warren
Pianist

January 1, 15 years
Malisa Baldivia
GLO Teacher

January 14, 15 years
Melissa Mundy
*Ministry Assistant to the
Pastor for Adults*

January 1, 7 years
Lynn Martin
City Light Food Service

EVENT CALENDAR:

JANUARY

- 6 Feasibility Study Team
- 6-10 Gap Ski Retreat/Glorieta
- 8 Women's Fellowship
- 9 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 13 Budget/Stewardship Committee
Personnel Committee
Deacon Ordination Service
- 15 Finance Committee
Deacons' Meeting
- 21 Church Offices Closed for
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 26 Changing Church Culture Seminar
Pancake Supper
- 30 Hospital Visitation Team

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

December 2018

| Budget | December | Year-to-Date |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Required | \$499,855 | \$3,381,658 |
| Given | \$441,849 | \$3,573,359 |

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



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CHURCH • ABILENE

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