

FIRSTwords

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

EPIPHANY SUNDAY, JANUARY 12 – BRINGING OUR FIRST-FRUITS

On Sunday, January 12, during morning worship we will celebrate Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany means “an appearing.” It is the Sunday in January which celebrates the “appearing” of the Christ child to the Magi from the East. It is the day we remember Jesus was revealed to all people of the earth. This “appearing” means Christ came to the Gentiles, which includes all of us. We recall the Wise Men brought their finest gifts to worship Him as King. This celebration provides us with the opportunity to bring our First-Fruits gifts, or Commitment Cards, for GIVE HOPE to worship Jesus and His mission to all people.

Even though some have already given their initial offering to the project, **First-Fruits Sunday** will be the *formal kickoff* of our giving over the next three years. It will be a great day of celebration as we offer the **First-Fruits**, or the first offering toward **GIVE HOPE**. We pray you will be a part of this time of worship as we honor our new born King and give thanks for all God has done.

There will be a specific time in the service to bring our First-Fruits offerings, Ministry Budget offerings or GIVE HOPE Commitment Cards forward to place in baskets. In order for all to participate, there will be a special insert about praying for this New Year and our mission to reach our community. It will give all of us the opportunity to pray about how we can take the message of Christmas to our city. If you need a GIVE HOPE Commitment Card, they are

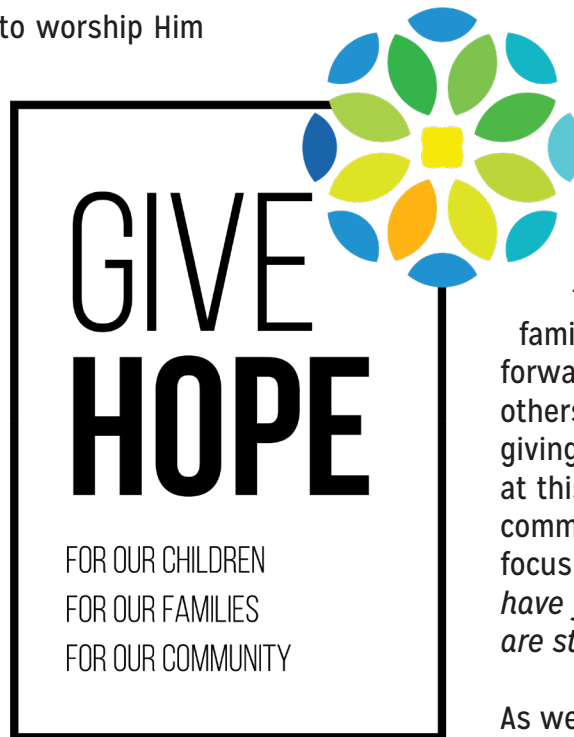
available in the church office or will be in the pew racks.

GIVE HOPE has already been a tremendous success both spiritually and financially. People have grown through the priority of prayer, the principles of Biblical stewardship, the place of sacrificial giving, and the power of the **GIVE HOPE** vision to impact lives. We are indeed a blessed church with this privilege of sharing in God’s Kingdom work.

At this time **\$4,562,425** has been committed over the next three years to change the lives of our children, our families, and our community. We look forward to additional commitments as others have indicated they would be giving, but could not state an amount at this time or have not returned the commitment card. Let us keep our focus as a church on, *“Greater things have yet to come and greater things are still to be done in this city.”*

As we walk into a New Year, we have also crossed the threshold into a new future filled with rich opportunities.

The power of the Gospel, the urgent needs of our city, and the commitment of God’s people all merge into a mission of eternal consequences. We see these days as a great spiritual journey. The adequacy of God’s grace and the blessing of His provision are God’s promised response to our faithfulness. *(II Corinthians 9:9-11)*



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

A New Year...Fill in the Squares with What Matters Most

Those who rush...arrive first at the grave. (Spanish Proverb)

We've traveled into a New Year. It will be filled with squares on your calendar for each precious day, whether you use technology or a traditional calendar. The question is: "How...or with what will we fill in those sacred squares?" Lewis Smedes wrote:

I bought a brand-new date book yesterday, the kind I use every year - spiral-bound,...pages and pages of blank boxes. Every square has a number to tell me which day of the month I'm in at the moment. Each square is a frame for one episode of my life. Before I'm through with the book, I will fill the squares with classes I teach, people with whom I ate lunch, everlasting committee meetings I sit through, and these are only the things I cannot afford to forget. ...I do not write down to remember: thousands of cups of coffee...some praying, and, I hope, gestures of help to my neighbors. Whatever I do, it has to fit inside one of those squares on my date book. I live one square at a time. The four lines that make up the box are the walls of time that organize my life. Each box has an invisible door that leads to the next square. As if by a silent stroke, the door opens and I am pulled through, as if by a magnet, sucked into the next square in line. There I will again fill the time that seals me - fill it with busy-ness just as I did the square before. As I get older, the squares seem to get smaller. One day I will walk into a square that has no door. ... I do not know which square it will be.

John Ortberg in his book, "When the Game is Over It All Goes Back in the Box," calls us to examine the way we fill in the squares of our lives. This year, we will fill in the squares of our calendar whether scribbled down, punched into a computer, or in fact, by the way we live. What will those squares look like at the end of 2020? Will

our calendar be filled with squares which squandered opportunities because they are filled with too much activity? Sydney Harris wrote: "Regret for things we did can be tempered by time; it is regret for the things we did not do that is inconsolable." As you look at your squares, what matters the most? We are only given so many squares to fill in.

Ortberg was part of a survey which asked thousands of people what kept them from serving, knowing, and loving God better. The number one answer was "I'm too busy." Ortberg observes, "It's ironic that the early followers of Jesus could not be stopped by persecution, poverty, prison, or martyrdom. But we're stunted by something as trivial as too much to do."

There are the "have-tos" to fill in the squares. We have demanding jobs. We have family. We have all kinds of obligations and struggles to juggle. If you have children you have school, ballet, and select sport teams. If you have grandchildren, you might be on the road a lot. Your squares can quickly fill up. None of these are bad. They are important. But Jesus said, "Seek His Kingdom and righteousness FIRST and all these things shall be added unto you."

January 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 No Sunday School Church @ 10:30	30	31 New Years Eve PARTY	1 New Years Day! OFF WORK	2 Ballet @ 6	3 Dinner with friends	4
5 Sunday School @ 9 Church @ 10:30	6 Errands after work	7 Basketball Practice @ 6:30	8 Dinner @ 5 J.A.M. @ 6	9 Ballet @ 6	10	11 Basketball Game @ 11
12 Sunday School @ 9 Church @ 10:30	13	14 Basketball Practice @ 6:30	15 Dinner @ 5 J.A.M. @ 6	16 Ballet @ 6	17 Dinner with family	18 Basketball Game @ 12
19 Sunday School @ 9 Church @ 10:30	20 Grocery Shop after work	21 Basketball Practice @ 6:30	22 Dinner @ 5 J.A.M. @ 6	23 Ballet @ 6	24 Date Night	25 Basketball @ 10
26 Sunday School @ 9 Church @ 10:30	27	28 Basketball Practice @ 6:30	29 Dinner @ 5 J.A.M. @ 6	30 Ballet @ 6	31 Dinner with friends	1
2 Sunday School @ 9	3	4 Basketball Practice @ 6:30	5 Dinner @ 5 J.A.M. @ 6	6 Ballet @ 6	7	8

(continued from page 2)

Are we living out what matters the most? How are we growing as followers of Jesus? As we fill in our squares, are we missing out on the life God intended? Jesus said, *"I have come so you will have life more abundantly."* The Apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy, *"Do not neglect your gift."* How are you using your gift to fill in the squares? In the classic movie, *"The Blues Brothers"* Elwood says, *"We are on a mission from God."* As you fill in your squares this New Year, consider your mission and calling. You have heard, *"If the devil cannot make you bad, he will make you busy."* This coming year, what will you do with your squares?

Surveying my squares,

Phil

John Moore, Pastor for Missions, received the following letter from a former Big A participant.

Hey John, my name is Sidney Parker and I used to go to Big A Club when I was a kid back in 2001.

I was wondering if you guys still give the t-shirts out for reciting Matthew 22:37-39? It has been a crazy thought of mine for years that I could possibly obtain one since I lost mine years ago.

I now teach and coach in Burnet, Texas and 3 years prior to that, I was a youth pastor for Hillside Christian Church in Amarillo, Texas. I owe the foundation of knowing Christ to the Big A Club and I am grateful to know you guys are still transforming lives all these years later.



Big A does still have shirts with the Matthew 22 verse, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...."

So, we were able to mail him some current t-shirts.

If you would like more information regarding Big A, please call City Light at 325-673-6686 or the church office at 325-675-8112.

SECURITY CONCERNS AT FIRST BAPTIST

We were all saddened to read about the tragic event which occurred on Sunday morning at the West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, Texas. I hope you will continue to pray for the families of those who were killed in this horrible act.

By way of reminder, here at First Baptist we have taken steps to enhance the safety of all of our members and guests. We have a surveillance system in place and it is monitored by one of our courtesy team members each Sunday morning and Wednesday night. It is also used during the week to monitor all of the entrances and allows us to keep the exterior doors locked requiring everyone to be buzzed in. We have a "courtesy team" in place. These folks have radios and are strategically placed throughout the church and are there to keep an eye on things. Many of them come from a law enforcement background and have obviously been trained to help in times of crises. They will continue to receive training and if you would like to find out more about the courtesy team, please contact C.V. Blake. You can identify those on the team by the bright blue lanyard and name tag they wear while at church. They are also great folks to go to if you see something that "just does not look right." You know how things look on a normal basis, so when something "just does not look right" let someone know, either staff or courtesy team. You can be a big help by just being aware. And one final reminder, on Sunday mornings following Sunday school, all the exterior doors to the church will be locked except for the front entrance to the Sanctuary. This will ensure that we do not have folks just wandering around the building during worship. So, if you arrive late for worship, just know you will need to come in the front doors of the Sanctuary.

DISCIPLE NOW 2020

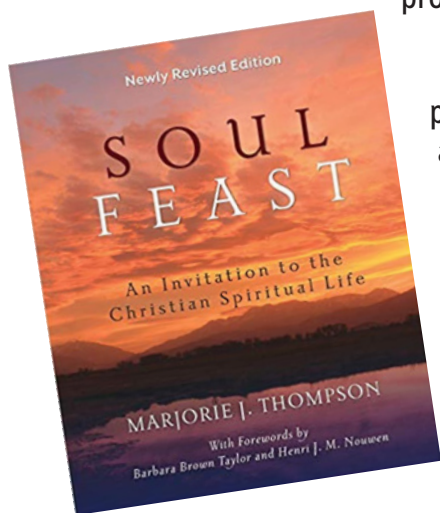
Disciple Now 2020 is quickly approaching! This event for our high school students will be held on the weekend of January 31 - February 2. If you are a student who is interested, sign up in the Youth Room. If you are an adult interested in volunteering either as a host home, meal provider, or in any other way please contact Austen Winfrey (austen.winfrey@fbcabilene.org or 325-675-8161).

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SPIRITUAL FORMATION STUDY

Soul Feast by Marjorie Thompson *Led by Gene Hendrix*

Beginning on January 8 in room 316, Gene Hendrix will be leading a ten-week study of the book Soul Feast by Marjorie Thompson. Henri Nouwen says, "Marjorie Thompson has unique gifts of mind and heart that has enabled her to make significant contributions to the spiritual life of the Christian church." Soul Feast offers a framework for understanding the spiritual disciplines and provides instruction

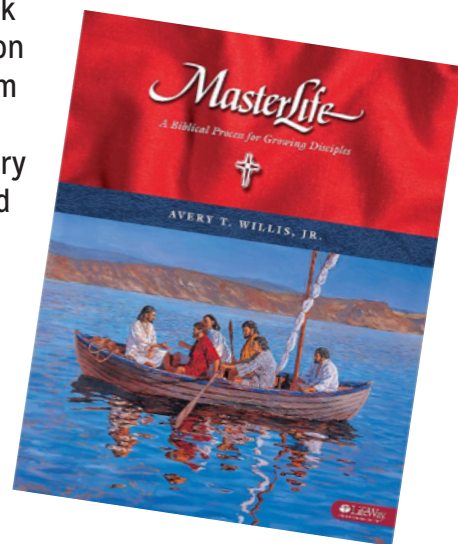
for developing and nurturing those practices. It helps you answer the question: What have you been hearing from God lately?



Discipleship Study for Men MasterLife: The Disciple's Cross *Led by C.V. Blake*

MasterLife is a small-group disciple-making process designed to help learners develop lifelong skills which promote a closer relationship with Christ the Master. Christian disciplines such as: living in God's Word, praying in Faith, fellowshiping with other men, and several other disciplines will be explored.

The twelve-week class will begin on January 8 in room 308 and will be closed after January 15 due to the need for participants to all study the workbook at the same pace. There will be a small fee for the purchase of study materials.



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. Bags of flour and sugar will be taken to Social Ministries for immediate use, and any financial gifts will allow them to purchase as the need arises over the next 5 months.



WEDNESDAY NIGHT CHANGES ON 4TH FLOOR

By Becky Tucker and Todd Wilson

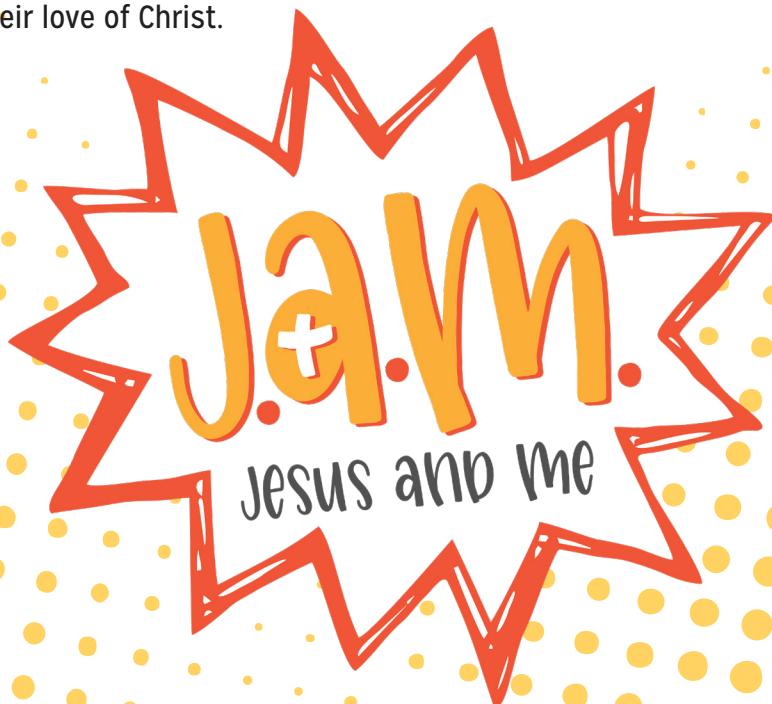
Beginning January 8, the activities on the 4th floor will have a different look and name than it has in the past. We will be calling our Wednesday nights on the 4th floor, J.A.M., which stands for Jesus And Me. This change will be for Kindergarten through 5th grade.

Each Wednesday, we will sing inter-active songs, traditional hymns, and a variety of other songs led by a college praise band. This group of college students is very excited about the opportunity to interact and work with these children. They truly want to encourage the children to love worshiping God through a variety of styles of music, and build on the foundation which has been provided through children's choirs. The music leaders are sensitive to the specific needs of the children and the music, as well as the volume, will be designed with them in mind. The college leaders are also very interested in the children understanding what we are singing, and want to continue to help the children learn about different elements within worship. The children will continue to help lead in worship each month by singing the hymn of the month in our service and will continue the tradition of singing Carry the Light each year during the Parade of Flags. It is our goal that the children will have even more opportunities to help lead in worship services through singing.

The children will also continue to have Bible studies and not only learn about missions, but will have opportunities to participate in mission activities. We feel it is very important for our children to continue learning about the missionaries who our church helps support and for the kids to have opportunities to participate in supporting those missionaries. Activities such as our annual Missions Fundraiser, Pancake Supper, and Racer/Bake Sale will continue as these are wonderful hands on activities for our children to learn about serving. As a church who emphasizes missions as much as First Baptist does, we want to continue to help these children in developing a desire to share God's love through missions.

It can be uncomfortable when changes to long-standing traditions are made. We ask you to be in prayer for the children's ministry as we make this transition. We also ask you to pray for the college students who will be leading, as well as those who will be leading the small groups.

We are thankful for all of those who have led in both children's choirs and in RA's/GA's. Our children have been blessed by the many volunteers who have led in both ministries and it is our prayer that we build on those ministries. Thank you for being a church who loves all ages and for providing a place for our children to have opportunities to grow in their love of Christ.



ACTING IN *love*

CITY LIGHT COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS STORE

By Janet Mendenhall

Thank you First Baptist Church as always for your generosity! The Christmas Store was again a blessing to so many.

We were able to help 148 kids have gifts this Christmas and give the parents, grandparents, and guardians some dignity as they shopped which made their burden a little lighter for this time of year.

These are just a few comments we received from our shoppers:

"Thank you for helping me give my kids a new toy this year!"

"My wife is in hospital for Christmas this year and this will make it easier for my kids!"

"I am now raising my grandkids and they would not have Christmas without your help!"

"One of my three-month-old twins needs a kidney and is on dialysis! Being able to get gifts for our other children was not possible this year until we heard about the Christmas Store!"

"Thank you for being so nice and this opportunity!"

Thanksgiving flowed seamlessly into the first Sunday of Advent this year, without the awkward in between week. I like it that way. There seems no better appetizer to the Christmas feast than a hearty helping of thankfulness. Gratitude prepares us for hospitality, finding new ways to welcome Jesus into our crowded lives.

I was still savoring Thanksgiving as we opened the doors of the FBC Christmas store. The storefront is makeshift-occupying what is usually the City Light conference room, but there is nothing makeshift about the shopping experience. A mixture of the newfangled-small plastic drones which respond to your gestures only and Bluetooth speakers which fit in the palm of your hand-and the tried and true-baby dolls which open and close their eyes and board games even you Boomers played as a child. As well as parents and grandparents excited about the prospect of surprising their little ones with gifts they had chosen and purchased. In some cases, gifts they had told their children would not be there prior to the invitation to the Christmas store.

The folks who came to shop for their kids had apparently been feasting at the table of gratitude. It is at this event each year where I learn the most about being grateful. Without fail, the stories of our guests tumble out in a mixture of resiliency, strength, and humility. Lost jobs, cancer diagnoses, children with incurable conditions, families who have been separated, and mental illnesses. Sometimes with tears. Sometimes with laughter. But always with gratitude. Thankfulness for the One who's coming we await and the hope He brings. Gratitude for the support and comfort of family and friends throughout the year.

And a parting word of thanks for your incredible generosity and understanding of their lives and situations.

And your best gift to them was the opportunity for them to experience the blessedness of giving.



MARTINEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THANK YOU

Hello all!

I wanted to take a moment and say thank you for the wonderful Christmas gift you provided for us at Martinez Elementary! I really appreciate how thoughtful you are. Thank you for all you do for our school and staff!

I hope you all have a very merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

Sincerely,

Codi Bruner

Special education, Martinez Elementary



HEALING HEARTS

by Cherry Curry

Have you wondered how God can use you at FBC? Healing Hearts Ministry might be the perfect place to use your talents. Although Healing Hearts is a prayer shawl ministry, there are ways you can be a part, even if you don't knit or crochet.

We can always use "couriers" to help with the delivery of the prayer gifts.

We also make "no-sew" fleece blankets, which only require cutting the material and tying the strips on the edge. We can teach you to do this.

If you enjoy scrapbooking, you could help with making a scrapbook to document our ministry.

If you don't feel any of these fit your skill-set, you can simply pray for those of us who work in this ministry. Pray that God will continue to give us the strength to make the prayer gifts to bless and encourage those who need prayer for healing, comfort, and peace during their difficult days of illness, grief, or family issues.

Please prayerfully consider joining us in the Healing Hearts Ministry. Our first meeting of the New Year will be Thursday, January 9, in Room 6 of the University Place from 3:00-4:30 p.m. We use the side entrance which faces N. 3rd Street.

I hope you have a blessed Christmas, and we look forward to serving FBC in the New Year 2020.

SHARING THE LOAD

by Mike Greenfield

On Sunday, December 29, as a part of my sermon I shared a story about a barn being moved. The barn was prone to flooding after some road construction changed the drainage patterns. What made the move unique was that it was totally moved by volunteers working together to lift and then walk the barn to its new location. The barn weighed approximately 20,000 lbs., but when the 344 people all lifted at the same time, each person only had to lift 58 pounds. This all occurred in 1988 in the small town of Bruno, Nebraska, with a population of around 150. Not only did 344 people show up to help, but over 4,000 came to watch. The crowd was mixed with those who thought it would fail, and those who wanted it to succeed.

As we move into the New Year and continue to move forward with our Give Hope Project, I again want to challenge each of us to carry our 58 pounds. You see, when each of us does our part, the whole project will be a success. But it does take all of us carrying our load for it to work. We have to have everyone picking up their 58 pounds and not just standing by watching.

So, I ask again, "Are you ready to carry your 58 pounds?"



STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

January 1, 19 years
Maura dela Cruz
Assoc. Director of CLCM

January 1, 12 years
John Moore
Pastor for Missions

January 1, 16 years
Malisa Baldivia
GLO Teacher

January 1, 8 years
Lynn Martin
City Light Food Service

January 1, 5 years
Heather Elliott-Henderson
Librarian

January 7, 24 years
Beverly Warren
Pianist

January 14, 16 years
Melissa Mundy
*M. A. to Pastors for
Emerging Adults
& Students*

January 16, 1 year
Rachelle Phillips
GLO Teacher

January 19, 1 year
Whitney Patterson
GLO Teacher

January 23, 1 year
Courtney Edwards
M. A. to Senior Pastor

January 28, 1 year
Kayleen Mills
*Director of Operations/
Chef Trainer*

January 28, 1 year
Chris Hufford
Custodian

FBC FOUNDATION GRANT REQUEST FORMS ARE AVAILABLE

Forms are available in the office.
Deadline to return the form is noon,
Friday, February 7.

EVENT CALENDAR:

JANUARY

- 5-9 College & Career Winter Retreat/Glorieta
- 7 Women's Fellowship
- 8 Maturing Adults Leadership Meeting
Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
- 12 Personnel Committee Meeting
- 20 Church Offices Closed
- 21 Finance Committee Meeting
- 23-26 Under 50 Men's Ski Retreat/Glorieta
- 25 Pancake Supper
- 29 Church Conference
FFP Book Fair
- 31- Disciple Now
Feb. 2

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

December 2019

Budget	December	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 494,519	\$ 3,477,872
Given	\$ 514,477	\$ 3,501,696

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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