

FIRSTwords

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

PASTORAL TRANSITION

By now, I trust everyone has heard of Dr. Christopher's plans to retire as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Abilene. He has set September 26 as his last Sunday at the church. Plans for how the church will celebrate his 26½ years of leadership are underway and will be shared as we get closer to that date.

I hope you took advantage of the request for names to be submitted to the Committee on Committees as they are tasked with "reviewing the results to ensure that the nominees reflect the diversity of the church membership. Any changes to accomplish diversity shall be made reflecting the results of the nomination process." Also, as prescribed in the church Constitution and Bylaws, "During a Sunday morning worship service within four (4) weeks of the nomination, the Committee on Committees shall present for a vote the names of the nine (9) nominees who have agreed to serve, to be voted on at that time." That list will be presented in worship on Sunday, July 18 at which time voting on the list will begin. Voting will take place both with written ballots available at the church or electronically through the church website after the motion is presented in the church conference on July 18 and will conclude on Wednesday, July 21 at 7:30 p.m.

So, as this process continues, please be in prayer for the members of the Committee on Committees: Delena Caspell, Rob Fink, Libby Gibson, Tom Martin, Kelley Messer, Chair Barry Moak, Tracy Patterson, Wayne Roy, D'Anna Smith, David Spruiell, and Holly Winfrey.

I would also like to remind you to be praying about your involvement in the search process. You have several key roles to play. You have nominated people who you believe would be good candidates for this momentous task. You hopefully have been and will continue to pray for those who will be selected and for the work they will be tasked with carrying out. But, I also hope you have been praying for the person God has for our next pastor and I hope you have been praying about how you might answer the call if someone from the Committee on Committees were to call you about serving on this committee. You see, by already praying about that possibility, you will be ready to give an answer if called to serve.

A question that naturally comes up in light of the retirement announcement is, "Who is going to preach on Sundays beginning in October?" That is a great question and one that is tasked to the Personnel Committee as set out in our Constitution and Bylaws. They are responsible for scheduling pulpit supply on Sundays and presenting to the church plans for an interim which would be voted on by the church.

So, the Personnel Committee would appreciate your prayers during this time as well and the committee includes: Marylan Bacon, Phil Brown, Casey Curnutt, Tiffany Fink, Louise Gray, Ed Harris, Sarah Matthews, Jeff Messer, and Chair Mike Patrick.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Your loving expressions about my retirement and service have been overwhelming. I thank God you gave me the privilege twenty-six years ago to serve in such a caring church. I have worked to be faithful as a Pastor to you. Mary and I have also been richly blessed by the ways you have been church and pastored us. In so many ways, we have been the gift of grace to each other recognizing how we all need forgiveness.

The thought of no longer being Senior Pastor of this great church still seems surreal. In the past, when I resigned as Pastor, we loaded up and moved to a new church. On the Monday after my announcement, I was at work planning worship for the next Sunday, staff meeting on Tuesday, and a funeral on Saturday.

Over these next months, I will continue to do my job to which you called me. I will provide encouragement in leading our gifted staff. I will work to help in the transition process where it is appropriate and when asked. I will especially seek to empower you as the missional church *you have been, you are, and will be in the future*. I want you to know of your remarkable qualities as a church, regardless of who is Pastor. I want to affirm that **YOU ARE THE CHURCH, THE LIVING BODY OF JESUS**.

One thing I will not do is insert myself into the search process. You will select the Pastoral Search Committee and call a new Senior Pastor. Another thing I will not do is drag you through my nostalgia for three months. Yes, we will do some remembering together, but we will remember the past and how far we've come to give you a vibrant hope for the future.

There are things you can do in preparing for this

journey. The *Center for Healthy Churches* counsels a congregation to begin with a season of reflection and earnest prayer for guidance. This process is more than a pragmatic search for the person you want. It is the earnest desire to pray the prayer of Jesus: *"Not my will but thine, be done."* Pray that these months will be a relentless seeking after God's Guidance. This is more than hiring a new Senior Pastor. It is the opportunity to discover the church's uniqueness and its distinct calling from God into the future.



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Churches going through pastoral transitions have found it constructive and creative to begin by asking, "What is right about the church and how can we build on it rather than focusing on and trying to fix problems?" You can begin by asking these questions: *"Why are we here and how did we get here? Where are we really as a congregation? Where do we sense God calling us? What does that calling from God tell us about the type of person we need as our next Pastor as opposed to what we want?"*

I encourage you to do something else during these days. An interim is not a time of maintaining. You have the greatest mission in the world. Come to worship and be a part of the community right now, instead of waiting to check out the new Pastor. Stay involved in your Sunday school or get connected to a Bible study group. As the Pastoral Search Team has conversations with potential candidates, help them to present our church as a vibrant community who is committed to the mission of the church. Stay positive about the church, especially as we recover from COVID-19. Remain committed financially to the church through your tithes to God. If you haven't been giving, this is an opportunity for you to not only know the joy of giving to God, but to provide the assurance to

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a new pastor you are serious about your commitment to the mission of reaching people and being church.

Let me offer my personnel perspective of one interviewed by your Pastoral Search Committee back in 1994. They came excited about the future of the church. They talked about you and what God was doing through you. Whether you are actually on the Search Committee or not...you are there with them. The Search Committee will go to a candidate and say, *"This is who we are and who we are becoming in Jesus Christ."* Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you, each of you, will be a part of the reason someone will uproot and come here...I did...even with a senior in high school. And, I'm so grateful I did.

Stay Faithful,

Phil



FBC ABILENE AT

Adventure COVE

2742 S. 9TH STREET

JULY 18 | 7:30-9:30

On Sunday night, July 18 from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. FBC will have use of Adventure Cove. Adventure Cove is the City of Abilene water park located on the south side of Rose park. At Adventure Cove, families will get to enjoy a leisure pool with a zero-depth beach entry, a lazy river, a pair of water slides, a covered patio, and a new bathhouse.

So get bring your family and friends for a night of water fun at Adventure Cove!

YOUTH UPDATE

by Austen Winfrey

We had a great week of camp with our Middle School students at Heart of Texas Baptist Encampment! It was hot all week, but that didn't stop our students from having a lot of fun at camp. We played a lot of games, had fun in the lake on "the Blob," showed a lot of team spirit in Rec Time, and had a wonderful time at the nightly block parties. Most importantly, our students had a great opportunity to learn more about the great God we serve. We learned that our lives are always "orbiting" something. What does your life "orbit"? God's love for us is so great, God pulls us into His own orbit.

I'm thankful for such a great week for our students to grow each other's friendships, to deepen our relationships with God, and to learn more about scripture. We must remember this though, life happens after camp. Let's take what we learned at camp into our normal lives here in Abilene!





VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2021

We have now completed four fabulous Vacation Bible Schools and still have three more to go. During these four events, we have had more than 115 children attend (that number does not include 55 adults who were helping the children)!

Even though each VBS has been unique, every one has carried the theme "Destination Dig." This theme has given us the opportunity to "dig up" evidence which proves Biblical events were not just stories, as well as explore real-life archaeological finds that have helped to uncover the truth about Jesus!

We are super excited about the success we have had with our Neighborhood Vacation Bible Schools and look forward to seeing more children at our next three and seeing how God works through each of these events.

We can always use more volunteers, so if you are interested in helping, please call Jennifer at 675-8105. If you are unable to come and help us, we ask that you pray for the children and the volunteers who will be at each VBS. If you have children, ages 4 - completed 5th grade, we hope you will have them come join us and explore at least one of our fabulous events!

FBC MISSIONS: **ACTING IN** *love*

MISSION BITE: Southeast Asia by Hunter and Mary

"The best laid plans of mice and men . . ." Many of you have to submit plans months in advance of what your work will look like in the upcoming year. In broad strokes, we have to do likewise. When 2020 began, concerns about a new highly-contagious virus began circulating in our part of the world. By the end of January, we had a cancer diagnosis to go with that. Our plans for returning to the U.S. were accelerated. By the beginning of March, Hunter had returned. At the beginning of April, Mary joined him. God's provision for life on the fly has been exceedingly abundant. First Baptist Church of Abilene has been part of that provision. As treatments got extended, you have put a roof over our heads and provided the security of knowing there was community to contact should we need help. Your prayers sustain us. We have been grateful for the opportunity to join in virtual worship and look hopefully to the One who unites us. As Dr. Christopher has highlighted over the last few weeks, FBC Abilene has a history of sharing the love of Christ in myriad ways. We are humbled to be recipients of that love and care.

We offer thanks to God on your behalf for your partnership with us in sharing Christ's love on the other side of the world.

Though we have been "stuck" here in the US, ministries continue. One of the ministries FBC Abilene has been instrumental in has been the building of a foster home for at-risk children in the southern part of the country. These children come from communities where children are an integral part in drug trafficking and the sex trade. Our local partners, B and J, work with these children's parents to help them escape these risks. With the help of FBC, construction has begun. Additional funding is needed for its completion, and we are working toward finding that support. The following is a glimpse into the life of one the lives your support is helping to change.



Earth is his nickname -- almost everyone in Thailand has a nickname. Earth is a 15-year-old 10th grade student born on April 13. His father is struggling with cancer, and his mother is a day laborer and does not have the means to support Earth. Earth is a well-behaved and kind child who is willing to cooperate in all aspects of community life within the foster home. The love and grace of Christ is shared with Earth and his foster siblings on a daily basis and provides opportunities for them to grow in remarkable ways. The miracle of change is seen in each of these children. Your ongoing support through the Offering for Global Missions, which makes long-term presence possible and your specific support to our ministries, is transforming lives in Christ's kingdom. Thank you for being a part of this change through your gifts to missions.

Demons of the air tickle the timpani of all ears readied to hear their argument: If God did not desire you to judge, why did he compose you superior to the ragged rabble roaming the streets, shopping the dumpsters, shooting up what remains of their body, God's holy temple desecrated?

And also a demons-of-the-air-approved silent superiority, its good and faithful selective inerrant thumbs down on shepherding pastors making room at the table set for all stamped unclean-lepers and tattooed women, smudged children, the uninvited unwashed storming the borders of propriety, multicolored invaders of invested peace.

All the demon-denounced Disenfranchised, unappreciative of tax dollars, indifferent to degrees of enlightenment, only at home displaced to corners praying Lord be merciful I'm sorry forgive me sorry sorry forgive forgive . . .

Saint Francis knew demons, as do Pastor John, Ms. Lynn, Jersey and Tom, Olga, Pearl, Katherine and Wanda, Keith, Kaylene, Dale, and Pastor Phil knowing first-hand the insatiable demons of hate, injury, doubt, despair, darkness, sadness. Thanks be to God for the wing-clipped angels of City Light Community Ministries countering the demons with love, pardon, faith, hope, light, joy. Even with Bob, fallen laughing, cast flailing into the waiting arms of Mr. Battles: "So, John, is Bob behaving?" Yes, pastors will lie to save a soul.

So each mealtime, Pastor John asks for prayer requests. Hands rise to heaven at every table-a night safe from the street, mercy for a child wandering, a job consideration, ease from pain, peace that passes all understanding. John takes a small French loaf of Food Bank bread, breaks it, and offers a prayer for all, a laying on of hands, the touch of healing. Amen. Let it be so. And all, in unison, reply Amen. Let's eat!

John Moore, First Baptist Church Pastor for Missions,
Director of City Light

**From the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis, Loyola Press, A Jesuit Ministry, 2017.*





July

It is time once again for the July 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 allow purchases to be spread out over the next six months.

UPCOMING TV PREEMPTIONS

- July 4:** Preempted with a special 30 minute program @ 10:30 a.m.
- July 11:** Normal service
- July 18:** Preempted for Golf
- July 25:** Preempted for Olympics
- August 1:** Preempted for Olympics

However, the worship service can be joined live via streaming on [Facebook](#), [Youtube](#), and the church website, www.fbcabilene.org and click "watch live."

- 4 College Cook-Out
- 5 Church Offices Closed
- 6-8 Neighborhood VBS
Lytle Shores Area
- 11 Personnel Committee Meeting
Recreation Board Meeting
- 12 Children's Trip to
Splash Kingdom
- 12-15 Neighborhood VBS
Fairway Oaks Area
- 14 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 17 Memorial Service for
Robert Gray
- 18 FBC Night at Adventure Cove
- 19-22 Neighborhood VBS
Elmwood Area
- 20 Finance Committee
Deacons' Meeting
- 28 Hospital Visitation Team

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

June 2021

Budget	June	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 260,060	\$ 1,655,860
Given	\$ 180,159	\$ 1,448,449

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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