

FIRSTwords

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

MEET MATTHEW BROYLES

Matthew Broyles grew up in the church, literally. His father is Bobby Broyles, who pastored several churches in Texas and obviously that was a part of his formative years. Matthew graduated in May 2008 from the University of Texas-Arlington with a Bachelor of Arts in Finance and then from Logsdon Seminary in May 2012 with a Master of Divinity. During his years at Logsdon, he served as the Youth Minister at First Baptist Church in Baird. He then became the Youth Minister at First Baptist Church in Hereford, TX during his last semester of seminary and commuted until graduation. He stayed in Hereford for 3 years and left to become a part of the Pastoral Resident Program at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas. This is an intensive two-year program during which the residents are “learning to be generalists in ministry as they gain experience in preaching, teaching, pastoral care, administration, and congregational organization.” It was during this residency program that Matthew met his wife, Katie. They were married in the summer of 2016.



After the two-year resident program, Matthew was called to be the Pastor of ESIC Baptist Church in Edwardsville, Illinois. He was there for one year and the church struggled to be able to financially continue his support and so, he and Katie moved back to the Dallas area where Katie is currently teaching pre-k in the Plano Independent School District.

Matthew has as his personal statement:

I am called to serve the local church through inspired preaching, worship, missions, pastoral care, and walking alongside people in their journeys of faith, challenging and encouraging them along the way. I am extremely relational and believe building relationships is the greatest way to love God and love our neighbor. I have a deep desire for the church to be in relationship with the world and its own community spreading the good news of Jesus through deed and word.

Come and Meet Matthew and Katie

On Saturday, March 3 from 3-5 p.m. we will have a meet and greet time at the home of Phil and Mary Christopher for everyone in the church to be able to meet the Broyles. In order to not overwhelm the Christopher's home, we are asking folks with the last names A-M to come between 3-4 p.m. and last names N-Z from 4-5 p.m.

The Christophers live at 2102 Westminster Drive

Then on Sunday morning, March 4, Matthew will give his testimony during the morning service and the church will then vote to call Matthew as the Pastor for Emerging Adults.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY LEARNING FROM THE DARKNESS...

I have told you about a restaurant in Zurich, Switzerland called *Blindekuh*. The name means *Blind Cow*. It comes from the word which means Blind Man's Bluff, an old children's game. The restaurant resides in an old Methodist church. The unique feature: you eat your meal in total darkness. It started in 1999 to create a place for the blind to work and develop worth and self-esteem. All the employees are blind except the kitchen staff.

You enter a lighted-lobby with a menu on the wall from which you order. After making your order, a hostess leads you into the total darkness of the restaurant. You are led to your table single-file with your hands on the shoulder of the person in front of you.

Your dinner party is seated at a table. You feel around for the utensils. You search for the plate and glass. You wonder what it will be like to eat a meal in the dark. Will you spill or make a mess? After your dining experience you are led to the exit, **leaving this world of darkness.**

You might be saying, "Thanks, but no thanks." I'll take the efficiency of Chick-fil-A any day. Yet, most people rave about the experience. One patron said she became more aware of smell and taste - it sharpened her senses. Often those we consider "blind" have much to teach us about seeing and sensing in the dark.

We are headed during these days of Lent to Easter. **However, no one is ready for Easter until he or she has spent some time in the dark.** You might be saying, "Phil, I have been living in the dark of an unanswered prayer, a crisis, or crushing defeat. I understand more than you will ever know. Our challenge is the darkness. We need to go through the darkness with Jesus when we think the last word is *"That's all folks."* Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us *"From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over the land..."* as Jesus was dying. Can you imagine that kind of darkness?



A practical question. How do we observe Good Friday when Jesus took our punishment and by His wounds we are healed? **I'm struggling about how we observe Good Friday.** Even the New York Stock Exchange closes on Good Friday. There are some things we would never consider doing on Christmas Day. **Yet, it seems we just go about business as usual on Good Friday.** After all, it's a day off to do what we want to do. If it was not for this day, Christmas would only be sentimental. We just can't show up on Easter and be surprised without remembering the darkness of the day Jesus died.

Perhaps we need to visit the *Blindekuh Restaurant*. What if we had to eat every meal in the dark? What if we had to work in the dark? What if we had to go to funerals in the dark? What if we had to struggle to find a way through problems and pain in the dark? We might become more desperate for Easter hope like the disciples.

On Good Friday, the disciples lived in such darkness. We are not ready for Easter until we have spent time in the darkness thinking it is over. This month, walk through Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and come on Sunday, April 1, "April's Fools Day" and be surprised and overwhelmed by what God does out of the darkness. **Easter is the doorway which allows us to exit the world of darkness.**

God will have the last laugh,

Phil

EXPERIENCING GOD

In 1976, Henry Blackaby and Claude King first published the book, *EXPERIENCING GOD: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. The popularity of this book led to the development of a 13-week study course of the same title published in 1990. Since that time, millions of lives and countless churches around the world have been radically impacted by the seven realities which are at the heart of this study. In 2000, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of publication, more than three million of the workbooks had been distributed and is now published in 47 different languages.

In 1999, Lifeway Christian Resources, under the leadership of Mark Blankenship, approached Mr. Blackaby about a musical that could effectively communicate the seven realities within the study. They needed to find someone who could be the lead on this project who had been impacted by the Experiencing God study. The search led them to composer, Gary Rhodes, who had served as a college summer missionary at Faith Baptist Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, where Henry Blackaby pastored for 12 years. Rhodes partnered with Claire Cloninger, who was also impacted by the Experiencing God study, and together they wrote *EXPERIENCING GOD, THE MUSICAL*, which premiered in 2000.

Since that time, this musical has been used to introduce the study to many people and to reinforce the truths of the study which had already been a part of their lives.

Sunday morning, April 22, the Sanctuary Choir and Celebration Orchestra along with children, youth, soloists, and narration will present this wonderful expression of worship.

If you would like to join the choir in this presentation, you are invited to our rehearsals on Sunday evenings from 6-7 p.m. in the Music Suite. For questions, call the office of Worship and Music (675-8118).

FLOWERING OF THE CROSS

For many years on Easter morning, we have had a tradition of the children coming forward and flowering the cross during the morning service. This is such a beautiful depiction of the resurrection and the beauty it brings to our lives. When we arrive in the sanctuary Easter morning we will see an ugly cross, which reminds us of the terrible and ugly death Jesus suffered on the prior Friday. As we look at the ugliness of the cross, we are reminded of the ugliness and sin in our lives which Jesus so willingly died for. During the service, as the children flower the cross, we will see the transformation into a beautiful cross that represents the beauty of Jesus' resurrection and the new life we have because of His sacrifice.

Last year, we also began a new tradition of having a cross outside on the front porch of the sanctuary and allowing people to bring their own flowers to decorate. We will once again have the cross on the front porch, and we ask that you bring flowers, bought or from your own garden, to help depict the beauty of Easter in the transforming of the cross. We do recommend that the stems be cut 4" - 6" prior to bringing them.



PARENTING CONFERENCE REFLECTION

by Kristian Spencer

When you tell your husband of one year that you'd like to attend the Grace Based Parenting Conference, you are guaranteed to see him sweat! Thankfully, my husband got on board and we made arrangements to attend this event. Last February, we attended the Grace Filled Marriage event and were so encouraged early on in our marriage to fight for each other, to show unending grace, and to keep on adding tools to our toolbox! This event was no different. Marcus and I went through premarital counseling with C.V. Blake in the months leading up to our big day, an experience I would highly encourage every couple to participate in. One of the pieces of wisdom C.V. shared with us is that great marriages are built on thousands of great conversations. The Grace Based Parenting event allowed for some of those conversations to be had. We spent Saturday morning diving into what it truly looks like to parent as our Father parents, with a grace that cannot be shaken. Marcus and I are not yet in a place to take on the role of parents. However, our roles as spouse, friend, child, sibling, coworker, employee, and believer, all require a heart of grace behind them. The reminder that grace comes from a heart focused on the person and not on self, is a reminder we could all use every day! The same tools being given to parents, are tools I can use in my daily life as a follower of Christ (especially as a Junior High teacher). We have been called to love as Christ loves us, we are called to love as a Father who would (and did) love without expectation, a love undeserving. I am not a "fly by the seat of my pants" kind of person, I require plans. I can't tell you how many times I have been reminded to set aside worry over things yet to happen! As Marcus and I began the journey into marriage, we agreed to not wait for challenges to arise before we prepared for the battle, but to always be in preparation. We agreed to store up those tools we might not need yet, but one day might. We agreed to be proactive, not reactive. Over the course of our relationship, I have repeatedly desired for Marcus to just dream with me, of the things not yet here, but hopefully to come. This conference allowed for us not only to begin preparations, but to dream together of the blessings to come and to spend a sweet time together following the event diving into the messages we heard. We asked questions, shared fears, and most importantly we both realized how much we needed to rely on our Heavenly Father to shape us into grace-based parents. I texted C.V. over lunch, thanking him for the morning and the conversations it started for myself and Marcus. He responded with, "Not only must you have those great conversations, but you must also learn to anticipate together." Thank you FBC, for continually taking the initiative to build up your congregation in all stages of life. Thank you for reminding us we are not alone, that we are a community who lives life together. Thank you for the opportunity to anticipate this next season of our life, to dream aloud together, and to be encouraged. Thank you for equipping your congregation with the tools necessary to live as we have been called. I encourage each of you to remember you are not alone and to continue preparing your hearts for whatever may lie ahead!



FBC April Emphasis - New Shoes

Donate NEW Shoes and make life better for orphans and children in need along the Texas/Mexico border.

Please pray and consider how you can help with our Shoes for Orphan Souls Project in the month of April. Our goal is to collect 1,000 pairs of new shoes. The shoes donated will be taken to Buckner Ministries in McAllen, Texas during the FBC Family Mission Trip, July 15 - July 21. All of the shoes collected by FBC will be used in the Buckner Ministries happening along the Texas/Mexico border. We will take new shoes and or donations for new shoes the entire month of April. You can drop them off by the church office or make them a part of your worship on Sunday, April 29. New shoes really can make a difference in a child's life, thank you for making a difference! Please call the FBC missions' office for any questions (325-675-8112) or to learn how to help with this opportunity.

DISCIPLE NOW

by Cody Favor

As we continue on our Lenten journey and head toward Holy Week, there is a question bouncing around in my head: What did Jesus think about dying? After all, Jesus predicted His own death and was certainly exposed to death during His ministry. It is hard to know exactly what Jesus thought, because Jesus didn't say much about it. But Jesus' behavior was reported as public and obvious. For instance, how did He deal with others who were dying, grieving the dead, or dead themselves? Numerous stories in the New Testament tell us the ways in which Jesus is called upon to address the needs of the person dying. There are four occasions in the gospels where a person has died or is at the point of death and Jesus intervenes. They are: the centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13/Luke 7:1-10); Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:18-26); the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-17); and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44). What do these stories tell us about Jesus' attitude toward death?

It was amazing Jesus could raise the dead. Jesus' own resurrection gives us hope that death is not the ultimate victor. But knowing Jesus could do it, raises a meaningful question: why stop with the small number He did raise? The fact Jesus only raised four people from the dead seems odd given His ability to raise the dead. One thing we can infer from



all those Jesus saved from death - they would later die again. This suggests, that for Jesus, dying was not the number one problem. Much larger were issues of forgiveness, inclusiveness, and love - all features of the central focus of His preaching of the kingdom of God.

One thing I love about teenagers is their curiosity about how to connect the Biblical story to the world they live in each day. One night as our high school group talked about the resurrection and what that meant for believers, there was a realization that the resurrection transforms us to be able to live into the Kingdom of God. For instance, Jesus was physically in Judea, but in His thinking, preaching, and dealings with those He encountered - He was living in the kingdom of God. So, there is a sense that even before His death on the cross, Jesus had already died and taken on a new life; a new life as a citizen of God's kingdom. Young people are hungry to see that Jesus is risen and that He has given His followers agency to participate in His work in the world. They want to see it not just in our words, but in our actions as well.

Easter reminds us that God is still bringing us back to life. Jesus brings life to dead places. This Easter, may we see how God is working to bring us back to life and may we be resurrected so we might live in the kingdom of God.

ACTING IN *love*

BLESSED FAMILY FUN NIGHT

On Thursday, March 22, First Baptist will host the fourth FREE community-wide Blessed Family Fun Night, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Family Life Center. Children, youth, and adults with special needs and their families are invited to an afternoon of fun and games with lots of adapted activities which include bowling, skating, art, games in the gym, and visits with therapy dogs. Free pizza and snacks will be served. Parents or guardians need to accompany children and youth.

So, spread the word to all families with special needs children, youth, or adults. If you would like to help, notify the church office. You will be blessed.

2018 MCALLEN FAMILY MISSION TRIP INFORMATION

Team 1: July 15-21 & Team 2: July 22-28

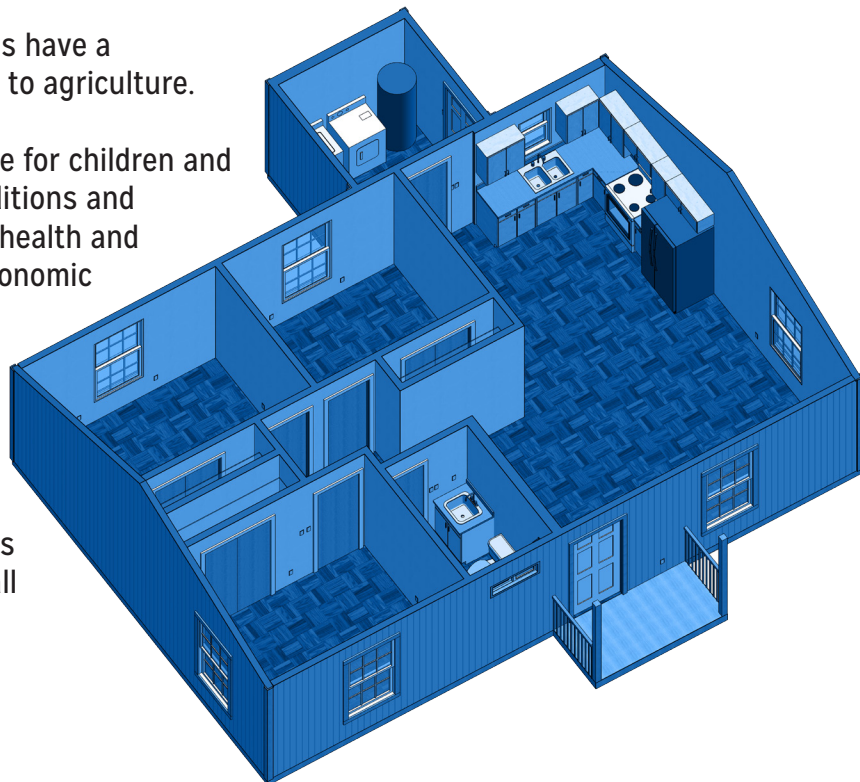
This year, FBC has an opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center just outside of McAllen, Texas. This flexible and family friendly mission trip will deliver shoes we will collect in April, work in the Family Hope Center, and build a house.

Here are a few reasons why FBC Abilene will be helping build a house:

- The Colonias are residential areas lacking the most basic living necessities; such as potable water, sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, or safe and sanitary housing
- Due to a lack of economic opportunity, Colonia families can take fifteen or more years to build a home on their own
- Research has shown there is a direct correlation between home ownership and positive family and community transformation
- Research has shown that many families have a home-based-business from auto repair to agriculture.

A Buckner home provides a sustainable and safe place for children and their families to live life. By increasing the living conditions and improving their environment, families have improved health and self-esteem. This can lead to better education and economic opportunities like resident-owned businesses or cooperatives. The possibilities are boundless once families are empowered and moved forward in 15 years of housing expenses.

A meeting will be held on Sunday, March 25, right after the worship service for anyone interested in this important mission trip. For more questions, please call John Moore in the mission's office, 675-8112.



FINAL NUMBERS

by Mike Greenfield

Each year, people ask how we ended the year. I know they are referring to the financial numbers of the church, so I am quick to answer, "Well we have to wait until February to know exactly how we ended because of last year bills that are still coming in." Now that February is almost over, that answer is no longer speculation, but reality. So, how did we end the year? Glad you asked!

For the first time in many years, we collected more than the adopted budget; \$84,821 to be exact. And due to the diligence of the staff, changes in staff and programming, and the occasional cost savings, we underspent the budget by \$146,234. So, the obvious next question is, "What happens to this 'extra' money?" At the monthly meeting of the finance committee in January, the committee was apprised of the potential overage. At that meeting, a couple of other committees gave suggestions as to how the overage could help in other areas. Then at the February finance committee meeting, the committee had all the final numbers in and were ready to make some decisions. The first issue to be addressed was the Mission Action account. As you know, Mission Action is the legal name for the combined efforts of the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment, Family Life Center, and GLO Daycare. Between the three entities, they ended the year in the red and so the finance committee used some of the overage to zero out those accounts and have them ready for 2018.

Buildings and Grounds also gave some options to the committee and so the finance committee was able to fund two different projects. The first project is to continue to enhance the security system here at the church. It includes, Counseling, GLO, FLC, as well as adding to the current church system. This request is one that would have been presented to the church foundation, but because of the overage the church was able to take care of it now. The second request from Buildings and Grounds was one they have been discussing for several years. How do we replace the aging 14-year-old church vans? So, another part of the overage will be used to replace 4 of the fleet of vans. This will ensure safe vehicles for all of the different church programs who utilize the vans.

The personnel committee also had a request that is spelled out in the policies of the church. If there is an overage, then the personnel committee can request that a year-end bonus be given to the staff. Because there have not been any salary increases in the past two years, the committee wanted to thank the staff for their part in how the church ended the year. Those bonuses will be given this week and I am confident they will be appreciated by the staff.

Finally, the finance committee was able to sock away the rest of the overage to be used by Buildings and Grounds in future upkeep of the church. Apparently, 90-year-old buildings require constant upkeep and this will help with that effort.

So, how did we end the year? We ended the year fantastic!

ADULTS ON MISSION: MARCH EMPHASIS

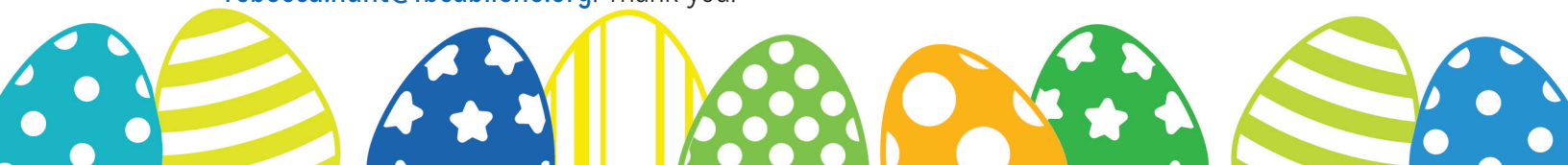
Filled Easter Eggs

We are in need of 4,001 filled Easter eggs (no chocolate). We will have a meeting on Tuesday, March 20, in room 220 from 1-4 p.m. to fill the eggs and pray over them. If you are able to help with donations, candy, eggs, volunteer to fill the eggs, or volunteer for the Easter egg hunt please contact Rebecca Hunt (675-8112) or rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org. Thank you!

FBC EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, March 24
10:00 am at Cobb Park

Ages 1 - 12 (preschool and elementary)
Sponsored by FBC and the Friendship House



HOLY WEEK 2018

As in years past, First Baptist Church will participate with the other three downtown churches and Highland COC in the Holy Week luncheon series. This year, FBC will be hosting on Wednesday, March 28, and as in years past we will be meeting in the FLC. Full schedule of speakers and locations will be provided in morning worship soon.

On Thursday, March 29 at 7:00 p.m. we will have our traditional Maundy Thursday service led by our Sanctuary choir and Dr. Christopher. This service will also include the observance of the Lord's Supper as we remember that it was on this night that Jesus gave us a new command. Then of course on Sunday, April 1, we will all celebrate together on Easter morning.



The March LLL luncheon will be held on Tuesday, March 20, at noon in the Dining Room. The speaker for the meeting will be Eric Bruntmyer, President of Hardin-Simmons University. Mr. Bruntmyer became President of HSU in February of 2016. He previously served as the Vice President for Financial Affairs for Dallas Baptist University. Prior to his position at DBU, he was in private practice as an attorney. He did his undergraduate work at Texas Tech University, earned his Juris Doctor Degree from Baylor School of Law, and also earned a Master of Business Administration from Dallas Baptist University.

A meal will be provided at the cost of \$5 per person. Please make plans to attend for an enjoyable lunch, program, and fellowship.

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

March 15, 23 years
Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

February 2018

Budget	February	Year-to-Date
Required	\$245,000	\$515,803
Given	\$223,236	\$497,364

EVENT CALENDAR:

MARCH

- 3 Dessert Reception for Matthew Broyles
- 4 Personnel Committee
- 7 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 11 Foundation Board Meeting
- 14 No meal/activities - Spring Break
- 20 LLL
Finance Committee
Deacons' Meeting
- 21 GLO Board Meeting
- 22 Healing Hearts Meeting
Blessed Family Night @ FLC
- 24 Martinez Elementary Easter Egg Hunt
- 25 McAllen Mission Trip Info Meeting
- 26-30 Holy Week lunches:
FBC will host on Wednesday, March 28
- 28 No meal/activities - Holy Week
- 29 Maundy Thursday Service
- 30 Church Offices Closed - Good Friday



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

1333 North 3rd, Abilene, TX 79601
fbc@fbcabilene.org | www.fbcabilene.org
325-673-5031