

FIRSTwords

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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Pastor Search Committee and your generous participation in three community conversations and two individual surveys. In this time of pastoral transition, we are winding down the first phase of our work together, a congregational “self-study.” In order to know what sort of Senior Pastor we need, we first must ask what sort of church we are, and where we think God is leading us in the future. In our three Congregational Conversations, we have come together as a church community to discuss the important issues of our identity and calling. The dialogue has been very fruitful, resulting in clear statements of our values from the first conversation, concrete directions in which to focus our energy from the second conversation, and a sense of our trajectory, or where we think we need to go, from our third conversation. In addition to these three big conversations, we have asked you to participate in two surveys: one about our convictions as a church, and one about our next pastor.

To summarize the results from our first Congregational Conversation, where we talked about what we value most about our church, we said that First Baptist is a:

- 1. Welcoming community who values authentic relationships.**
 - 2. Missional community who values outwardly-focused service.**
 - 3. Spiritual community who values intergenerational, lifelong formation.**
 - 4. Worshipping community who values depth and reverence in music and word.**
 - 5. Traditional community who values heritage, innovation, and progress.**
- (To review fuller statements of these values, go to the February First Words, or click here: [February First Words](#).)



From our second Congregational Conversation, the most commonly discussed items about where we are focusing or need to focus the energy of our church, we said the following.

With regard to the Mirror view (looking inwardly), we said that:

- 1. Our senior membership is emblematic of our rich heritage, and we hope to increase engagement of younger generations.**
- 2. While we are concerned about a decline in Sunday morning attendance, we have maintained numbers fairly well through the pandemic, and we hope to grow in the future.**
- 3. The well-balanced budget of our church reflects our heart for missions by prioritizing externally-focused ministries.**
- 4. The people of FBC are generous in their giving, especially in the senior adult area, and we hope to encourage more generosity among younger adults.**

With regard to the Window view (looking outwardly), we said that:

- 1. Community ministries, such as City Light, GLO, FLC, and Ministry of Counseling, are hallmarks of our church's significant imprint in Abilene and the Big Country.**
- 2. Our community has a relatively high number of households made up of singles, adults without children, and single moms, and we hope to increase our engagement with them.**
- 3. FBC media ministry reaches many well beyond our church walls and can provide a springboard for even more creative engagement in this arena.**
- 4. While City Light Community Ministries serves a diverse population, we would like for the rest of our congregation to reflect more of the ethnic, economic, and overall diversity of our city.**

Between the first and second Congregational Conversations, we also participated in a survey of the convictions of our church, related primarily to theological matters, but also to broad cultural and political issues. The purpose of the survey was to gauge where our church stands on a spectrum of conservative, moderate, and progressive perspectives. The survey showed that we have folks in our church who hold convictions at all points of the spectrum, but the average of respondents indicates that we are a "center right" church, with most of us being on the line between conservative and moderate. The survey also indicated that as a congregation we value relationships with folks who have different perspectives from us, and we are open to leadership from a Senior Pastor whose perspectives are somewhat different from our own. Because 403 of us were willing to engage in this survey, we have some very helpful data to share with a future pastor about our convictions as a church and our openness to perspectives different from our own.

Our third and final Congregational Conversation occurred on February 27. Thank you for your generous involvement in the table dialogue, which produced a lot of helpful information about the trajectory of our church, focusing on where we see God leading us and what we imagine our future Senior Pastor will need to do and be. That conversation was immediately followed by a second survey concerning our future pastor. We are asking everyone in the congregation to take the Next Pastor Survey, which will be available until March 10. A link to the survey was sent out in an email from our interim pastor's organization. If you haven't seen it yet, look for an email from MattC@CHChurches.org. The emailed survey link can only be used once (and it can't be forwarded to anyone else for use), so each person in your family will need to provide the church office with an individual email to receive the survey. Most of us have already worked out individual email addresses in connection with our first survey. However, if you do not receive the Next Pastor Survey or have any trouble with it, contact Debra Clemmer in the church office at (325) 675-8116 or debra.clemmer@fbcabilene.org. The survey typically takes about ten minutes to complete, and we hope that all youth and adults in the church will complete it. As a committee, we are eager to hear your individual thinking about the sort of Senior Pastor our church needs.

Over the next 6-8 weeks the Pastor Search Committee will move into a less visible phase, as we are analyzing the data from the third conversation and the second survey. From all the data collected, we will develop two important documents: a Church Profile, which describes the nature and vision of our church, and a Senior Pastor Profile, which broadly describes the sort of leader our church needs in the future. Please pray for us in this analysis and writing phase of our work, that we will have the gift of spiritual discernment as we listen for God's direction. When this self-study phase is completed, we will share our work with the congregation and move into the search phase, where we are actively seeking the person whom we will recommend to the church as our next Senior Pastor.

With gratitude for your participation and encouragement,

The Pastor Search Committee

HEALING HEARTS MINISTRY NEWS

By Cherry Curry

Healing Hearts Ministry officially began their 10th year of ministry in September, but due to unforeseen circumstances, meetings were postponed until Thursday, February 17. I was so delighted to see everyone who was able to attend that meeting.

For those of you who don't know about this ministry, Healing Hearts Ministry is a Prayer Shawl Ministry in which members create and make tangible items such as shawls, throws, "no-sew" fleece blankets, angels, and prayer cloths to give to people who need prayer, as a reminder that prayers are being lifted up for them. We also make hats for City Light Community Ministries to keep the "homeless" warm during bad weather.

There are several jobs in this ministry which don't require crocheting or knitting ability. One of those is the "no-sew" fleece blankets. In the near future, we are planning on having a "workshop" for making these blankets. It is possible that one person could cut the strips for the blanket, and a different person could pull the strips

through to complete the edging for the blanket. If you are interested in learning to do this and being a part of Healing Hearts Ministry, please contact Cherry Curry @ 325-864-1897.

Another way to serve in Healing Hearts Ministry is as a courier who delivers the gifts which are going to those in need of prayer. These people are very important to our ministry because of the personal encouragement they offer when delivering the gifts.

Our meetings will be held on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month in Room 6 of University Place from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. There is also the opportunity to come to a "knit along" on the 2nd Thursday of the month during which time we will work on knitting, crocheting, or cutting out "no-sew" fleece blankets. It is possible we could extend this to a 4th Thursday, if there is enough interest.

Please consider joining us. If you don't feel led to be a part of our ministry, we would appreciate your prayers for us as we continue to try to encourage those in need of prayer.

MEN'S MINISTRY UPDATE

By Matthew Broyles

Over President's Day weekend, our men's ministry took a ski retreat to Glorieta. There were eighteen of us ranging in age from 16-75. It was a great weekend of fun, but there were also many great conversations had. It's always good being together and experiencing life together outside of church. When you travel and stay with others for more than just an hour at church, it really helps you get to know people better.

We arrived Thursday night and got settled in. Friday morning we hit the slopes early to avoid the holiday lines. It was a great day in the mountains. The ski lifts are great places to have good conversations. Whether you're with people from your group or end up riding with strangers, conversations seem to flow. Jobs, faith, the Bible, worries and stresses of life were all topics I and others experienced while riding a lift. Skiing is fun, but those conversations make the trip meaningful and memorable.

Friday evening, Matthew led a discussion about who the influencers of our lives are. He told about a time he was invited by some parents and friends to write a letter and attend a dinner for their son he had influenced. He was among four others who were doing the same for their son. The people we surround ourselves with is important. The people we invite into our lives who will influence our children are important. If there is someone you hope your child(ren) turn out like, go and ask that person if they'd be willing to spend some time with your child(ren). What we'll find out is that both child and adult benefit from that relationship.

Saturday evening, C.V. led a discussion around the song "The Living Years." We tend to blame the generations before us for all our troubles. Often, instead of having conversations about the issues that exist and working together toward solutions, we resort to finger pointing and blaming. We talked about the importance of taking time to talk with those who have gone before us and those who are coming up behind us. It was a great conversation to have since it was such an intergenerational trip and we are an intergenerational church.

Much more can be accomplished in the world through the love of Christ if we model the way of Christ and "consider others better than ourselves" as Paul writes in Philippians 2. As we continue on our faith journeys, may our attitudes be the same as Christ Jesus so the world will know the transforming power of the Christ.





DISCIPLE NOW 2022 - WOVEN

by Austen Winfrey

Disciple Now weekend events have always focused around two values. We have an opportunity to show students what God's love means for their lives. We also get to show students how following God with their lives is done together. Even though this is a basic formula, this is always what Disciple Now has been about.

I am happy to report to you, church family, that Disciple Now 2022 was a fantastic success for our student ministry. We were able to serve a great group this year which consisted of 38 students, 7 Bible Study leaders, 10 Host Home Leaders (5 different host homes), a great band put together by The Well's Jake Rosser, and my friend Dan Stewart who was our Guest Preacher for the weekend (Dan is the Senior Pastor at FBC Stamford). This has been our most well-attended event since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am beyond grateful for how well our students have responded to the weekend. Joy has been celebrated at Disciple Now!

The weekend's theme was Woven: Together as One. Our students learned from the Book of Acts how the early church was built on action. This action was caused by the way Jesus changed people's hearts. It is a great thing to be inspired by Jesus to live differently, but life is difficult if we only trust ourselves. We learned that our lives can be built on the foundation of Jesus's love and then we can support each other and grow towards the life God has set apart for us. The Holy Spirit can "weave" our lives together in a way so we can reinforce each other when things get tough. Life lived together is where we can fully experience the power of God's love!

Disciple Now cannot happen without the help of this church family and many faithful leaders. Your offerings go towards a budget so we can plan a ministry of empowering youth through the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Our Bible Study leaders sacrifice their personal time to share the weekend with students and teach them from the Bible. Host Home Leaders volunteered their weekend and their entire homes for the benefit of our students. We had a faithful guest preacher and guest worship leaders who encouraged our students to live into the love that God has given to us. We had great volunteers who served our students out of the love in their hearts.

I am grateful to serve at FBC Abilene and the wonderful students we have here. I am proud of how they live out their faith in God in unique ways. I find joy in their friendships and in the ways they look after one another (no matter what age). I am encouraged that God is leading us on this journey together. Remember this church family, our God has Woven us together on purpose. Let us live out the love of God and the love of our neighbor every day!



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



First Baptist is partnering with Houses for Healing in Abilene to build a tiny house. Houses for Healing offers “no cost” temporary medical housing to patients and their family members while receiving medical treatment in Abilene.

FBC will begin building this house Monday, March 14 through Friday, March 18 (Spring Break). We are looking for a limited number of volunteers (10-15) for this project. Contact the Missions’ Office at 325-675-8112 (Melinda or John) for more information or if you are able to volunteer or would like to know more about Houses for Healing.

Please begin praying for this project and the volunteers involved and the lives it will bless!

housesforhealing.com



Family **MISSION TRIP** **MCALLEN**

We would love to have you join us in McAllen this summer on the Family Mission Trip in collaboration with Buckner Border Ministries,
Sunday, July 10 - Friday, July 15!

The sign-up deadline is Sunday, May 1 and there are limited spots available.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Melinda at 325-675-8112 or John at 325-675-8114.

BIG A DIRECTOR POSITION OPEN



Would you please begin to pray for the Big A Ministry. Big A is a City Light Ministry for elementary kids. We would like to get this important ministry started again after it's suspension due to COVID-19.

We are needing a director for Big A.
This is a part-time paid position.

If you are interested, or know someone who would be interested, in leading this ministry or need more information about Big A or the job description, please contact John Moore at
john.moore@fbcabilene.org
or call the church office at 325-675-8112.



Look what's happening at the Friendship House!

So many good things are happening at the Friendship House on Orange Street! The mission is simply to be a friend in these neighborhoods. In a short time, Trevor and Gina have made many friends and helped neighbors help neighbors.

Together, with others in the community, we have painted an elderly man's 100-year-old home. (See before and after pictures!) They hosted potlucks and other gatherings at the house and holiday events like a Christmas Parade! They have also delivered food boxes and other necessities to help families. Another important part of this ministry is building relationships with small businesses in the neighborhood and using their talents to help this community.

In all of this, our hope is to point ourselves and others to our Lord Christ Jesus. We truly have open hands to what God wants to do for this year. Thanks for being a part and sharing in the blessing of serving the College Heights Neighborhood.

Watch for opportunities to serve this ministry! Spring and summer plans include an Easter Egg Hunt/Party and a Backyard Bible Club!



BUNCO NIGHT at FBC

By Tiffany Hammer

The room was full of smiles and laughter and just what this girl needed. The women's Bunco night was a huge success. I walked in the door exhausted and not sure if I had the energy, but the moment I walked in the room I knew I was in the right place. I was greeted with smiles and began to feel myself relax and the craziness of the day just didn't seem to matter. I chatted with precious women I knew, and ones I got to know throughout the evening. It was a night of yummy snacks, yelling Bunco, and so much laughing. I walked away with a full heart and so thankful I am part of a church who provides opportunities for us to fellowship. Thank you to the ladies who made this night possible. You are a blessing! If you were unable to join us, I encourage you to put these two dates on your calendar, Monday, April 4 and Tuesday, May 10. You will not want to miss out; and, if you are lucky enough to win, the prizes are amazing!



March

- 6 Personnel Committee Meeting
- 9 Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
- 16 No Meal/Activities (Spring Break)
- 20 Foundation Board
Missions Committee Meeting
- 22 Finance Committee Meeting
Deacons' Meeting
- 27 Lord's Supper

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

March 19, 4 years
Matthew Broyles
Pastor for Young Adults

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

February 2022

Budget	February	Year-to-Date
Required	\$262,020	\$554,040
Given	\$232,501	\$530,744

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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