

# FIRSTwords

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

## ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTIONS

By Julie Hay

Oh how I wish I could line all of you up a few years ago so you could see my face as I saw members of our church walking around with what looked like dirt on their foreheads. I mean here I was, a girl who had spent her whole life in church. I was at every VBS, camp, mission trip, GA meeting, choir program, and of course, potluck Sunday. But yet, I knew I had never seen anything like this before. Embarrassed by my lack of knowledge, I went to an obvious reliable source, Google, lol. So I googled "Ash Wednesday." "Wait, what?!? I'm not Catholic." I started remembering things from growing up about what I had heard about Lent. I had some Catholic friends who gave up cokes, no maybe it was meat, or I think one of them didn't eat dessert...but what does this have to do with me? How in the world is it related to people having marks on their foreheads? Why is this happening at my church? So I abandoned Google and started seeking answers from church members.

Fast forward to the following year and my very first Ash Wednesday Service. I remember walking in, feeling prepared, yet still slightly unprepared for what it meant for me exactly. I listened intently, wanting to take it all in, trying to find my place in all of this. I remember after receiving the ashes on my forehead, I came back to my seat and still thought, "What now?" I wanted my first season of Lent to be purposeful. So for that year, I committed to spending time each day in scripture. Not knowing where to start, I took the verses that were printed in the Ash Wednesday program and started reading them every day. I meditated on them. I spent time thinking about the death of Christ, the sacrifice He made for us, and ultimately the resurrection. By the end of it, instead of having so many questions of what this season was, my only question was, "Why had I not done this before?"

This is a very special time in our Christian faith. We celebrate so many different holidays, seasons, and special events all year long. We spend so much time in preparation leading up to whatever the "big day" is. So my challenge to you is this: What if you spent just as much time and preparation as you do decorating your house for Christmas, or buying presents, or planning the perfect Pinterest birthday party for your child and put that energy towards preparing your heart and mind for the reflection of what Christ did for each of us? What if we replaced the TV show we can't stand to miss with devoting that time in prayer for our marriage and our family? What if we replaced an unhealthy addiction with memorizing scripture? What if we took this season leading up to Easter as a time to transform our faith? All it takes is a willing spirit, God will handle the rest. This season is so special to me. It's crazy to think how just a short time ago I didn't even understand what it was. I'm thankful to be a part of a church which celebrates and encourages me in this way. Join me and your church family as we reflect on the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior. Take the time to discover what that might mean for you this year.

*Julie and her husband, Tony, have two sons, Logan and Drew. Julie is a pediatric nurse during the week, and she and Tony serve as teachers with The Gap on Sunday mornings. She is currently serving on the deacon body and can be seen around the church helping in various activities.*



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

MARCH 2017

FBCABILENE.ORG

# words

## FOR THE JOURNEY

**Dr. Phil Christopher**  
*Senior Pastor*

Professor and preacher Tom Long tells the story about a visit to a church. When he arrived, the pastor walked him around the attractive church campus. The final stop took them outside where they looked up at the magnificent sanctuary. The sanctuary had an impressive tower (very similar to our tower, which stands thirteen stories tall.)

As Tom surveyed the height of the tower, he noticed at the top were four openings that had been sealed up with plywood. He asked the pastor to explain why the four spaces had been closed. The pastor said that the city had asked to have the openings sealed up. He went on to share that at one time there were four stained-glass windows at the top which depicted the “eye” of God – similar to what is on a dollar bill. The pastor said the stained-glass windows of God’s eye were visible from the mall, the local high school, and throughout the city.

The pastor confessed the community became nervous and anxious that God was watching their every move. The church gave into the community’s fear of God watching, and boarded up the stained-glass. The pastor went on to say that the “Eye of God” in the stained-glass was designed on the comforting words of Psalm 121: God will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber...The Lord who watches over you – the Lord is your shade...and the sun will not harm you.

The story made Tom wonder how the community saw God. It sounded like their God was harsh and judgmental. The eye of God watching over them brought shame, guilt, and fear. This raises the question: “How do you see God?” Is your God gracious and kind, or focused on your faults – out to get you? How we see God shapes everything we think and how we live. Does your God prompt fear or bring hope? The theologian Karl Barth said his work was for “God to become a cheerful word again.”

During the forty days of Lent, we take time to examine ourselves and our need for change. We confess we are like “sheep who have gone astray.” We can be selfish and spoiled. We are greedy. We judge and hurt others. We are a mess. We could go on, right?

As challenging as it is to walk through the season of Lent, recognizing our humanness and brokenness, we discover God is a good, kind, and forgiving God. We discover God sees us with compassion. Lent is the journey which leads us to the cross where the eyes of Jesus look at us and say, “Father forgive them.” Lent calls us to examine how we see God, but even more, Lent is the journey to see how God sees us. We are His beloved children and He “remembers or sees our sin no more.” Lent leads

to the garden of Easter and resurrection where we see God can accept and overcome anything.

I pray you will  
see the  
“Risen Christ!”

Do you see?

Phil







## GRACE FILLED LOVE STORY

*By Kathryn Clark*

Jerry and I attended The Grace Filled Marriage conference at FBC a couple of weeks ago. Dr. Tim Kimmel, from Family Matters, was our speaker. This marriage conference was different. But maybe, it's because I was different too. I had been sick the week before, which for me is rare. It was very humbling and I had to receive, instead of give. God prepared me.

Dr. Kimmel spoke about maintaining a heart connection with our spouse, but our "view" gets in the way. He used an illustration of lenses that we tend to look at our spouse through. The "Me, Love if, and Pious" lenses. These lenses skew, justify, and promote our selfishness, but he also spoke of the "Grace" lens. It's remembering to view our spouse the way God sees and treats us, through the lens of His Grace. However, this cannot be done in our own power. It's available by understanding and reflecting the Grace that's been shown to us in salvation. God's Grace is free and available to all who believe in what Jesus did by dying on the cross for us. Knowing the Grace of God can free us from the bondage of sin and shame. It doesn't mean we won't sin, but it shows there is forgiveness for our sins that have been bought by the blood of Christ. This is where we need to start with our spouse. With Grace. Through this process we can change our view and our marriage. I look forward to finishing Dr. Kimmel's book, *The Grace Filled Marriage*, and continuing to write our love story.

I am so thankful for a church who believes in marriage and is actively seeking to strengthen them. I was also grateful for the care they had available for our child and others at the FLC. It gave me great peace of mind knowing there was a safe and fun place for our child. She had a blast!

Thank You FBC, C.V. Blake, and Candy Rains for all you did for this conference.



## MOVING OUTSIDE MY COMFORT ZONE

*By Gaye Newton*

When Todd told us our Sanctuary choir would join with choirs from five other congregations for the Getty Irish Christmas at the Civic Center, I had misgivings. I was hesitant to participate, because it was such a different style of music and outside my comfort zone. However, my feelings changed as we began rehearsals. My misgivings were replaced by anticipation and excitement as we interacted and sang together preparing for the concert. I connected personally with an alto from another choir, who I had previously known only as a face I saw regularly at early morning gym workouts. I learned from this encounter and the entire Getty experience, I can trust God to take my doubts and redeem them into blessings.

# LENT

by Becky Tucker

Lent is the forty days prior to Easter, excluding Sundays and begins on Ash Wednesday. The Lenten season is a time of preparation before Easter. It is a time to reflect on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. During this time, we are encouraged to take a spiritual inventory and think about the things which hinder our relationship with Jesus Christ. In doing this, we often feel the need to give up something and replace it with spiritual practices such as increased prayer and scripture reading.

The past several years, we have provided our children with a **calendar** for the 40 Days of Lent, with suggestions each day to help them in their preparation. The calendar has been very helpful for the children, because the thought of reflecting and preparing for 40 days can be overwhelming. Having one thing daily to focus on makes it seem less overwhelming.

This year, we have also prepared a **Lenten Calendar** for adults. Each day, there is a suggested scripture and prayer or activity. These daily suggestions will hopefully spur you on to think of other ways that might help you and/or your family in this journey towards Easter.

We understand this may be something new and possibly uncomfortable, but the purpose is to set aside time for reflection on our Savior and simplify our lives during this season. We simplified these daily devotionals in the hope it will help stir some creativity within yourself or your family. Hopefully, this will be a tool that will lead to meaningful conversations about this special season and will also enhance our individual spiritual growth.

## WEDNESDAY LENTEN STUDIES

led by Dr. Christopher

The season of Lent begins on March 1, Ash Wednesday, and continues to Easter. Dr. Christopher will lead a series of studies on the season of Lent on Wednesdays, March 8, 22, 29, and April 5. This study will be held in Room 316, starting at 6:00 p.m. When asked what to expect, Dr. Christopher responded: "Our senses are powerful ways in which we learn and, especially, remember. It is easy to take them for granted. Take for example the sense of smell, which is the primary link and association with memory. We will explore the senses of hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and seeing as they vividly bring to life the last days of Jesus' life. This study of the biblical texts and stories will be more than listening, we will use the senses as a new way of learning and following Jesus."

## ADULTS ON MISSION: MARCH EMPHASIS

In the month of March, we are emphasizing our Bereavement Food Ministry. The Bereavement Food Ministry offers meals to families on the day of the funeral service of FBC members and Sunday school members (or spouses). FBC members are urged to sign up for a food or service group as we strive to make this a self-supporting ministry. We do buy cobbles, ice cream, and foil casserole pans (for use by our team members), and we provide fresh flowers for the special meals at the church. We can always accept money for these few things that we buy. Of course, the major need for our group is more team members! In the fifteen years of this church-wide ministry, many of those who started the work are no longer able to help. We encourage younger men and women to join our team. Remember! You don't have to cook the food; just provide it! If you would like to volunteer or want more information, please contact Carlene Spicer at [cspicer37@suddenlink.net](mailto:cspicer37@suddenlink.net).





# DISCIPLE NOW 2017

by Haley Stuckey

Hello, my name is Haley Stuckey. My parents are Jennifer and David Stuckey, and my little brother is Jayton. I'm a senior at Abilene High School and will graduate this May. Friday, February 3, I began what would be my last Disciple Now as a high school student.

To be honest, for a while I wasn't sure I wanted to be part of that weekend. I had a few friends taking a road trip and really wanted to join them. I can say now, I am so blessed to have the friends and family in this church who convinced me to stay; because I didn't think I needed it, yet they knew I was supposed to be part of Disciple Now before I did.

Before the weekend, my dear friend Mackenzie Coffey had contacted some of my other close friends and asked them to write letters of love and encouragement to me. Over those few days, she handed them to me one by one. The first letter was from Mackenzie herself, telling me that there was a reason I was supposed attend and she encouraged me to keep my heart open and humble. Those letters had a vital role in my conversations and time spent with God during the weekend. I was able to reflect, take a step back, and be reminded that I was not in control. During worship, Casey (the preacher) said, "We are controlled by the power of control." I think there is so much truth in that statement. When our security is in ourselves, it's really hard to trust God with the big things in life.

Mark 5:41 is one of the verses that has stuck with me after Disciple Now. "He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!") Talitha Koum was a call to reality for me. It was God telling me it was time to live real with Him, and to remind me that this life isn't supposed to be lived for me, but for Him. No matter how much we hate the idea of sacrificing our ideas for God's vision, we can't ignore it because God's vision becomes our vision when we are one with Him. Our theme for the weekend, Back to Life, reminded me that I need to keep seeking God first in whatever comes with this new chapter of my life.



## Join Us!

**March 30**

**4:30-6:30 pm**

**Family Life Center**

## Blessed FAMILY FUN EVENT

Spread the word! On Thursday, March 30, First Baptist will host the second FREE community-wide Blessed Family Fun Event, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Family Life Center. Special needs children, youth, adults, and their families are invited to an afternoon of fun and games with lots of adapted activities which includes bowling, skating, art, games in the gym, and visits with therapy dogs. Pizza and snacks will be served. All our special needs children, youth, or adults must be accompanied by parent, guardian, or caretaker.

Come join the church family for a blessed family fun time together and share the blessing with our special needs community in Abilene.

# ACTING IN *Love*

## SHORT TERM MISSION TRIPS FOR 2017

### May 19-28 Skopje, Macedonia

Skopje, Macedonia – Please be in prayer for the team going to help support Jeff & Alicia Lee and their work in Skopje, Macedonia.

### June Habitat for Humanity Abilene, Texas

Please pray about the organization and construction of our 2017 Habitat House. If you are interested in being a crew leader, please contact John Moore.

### July 23-28 Family Mission Trip McAllen, Texas

Would you be willing to participate in the second Family Mission Trip along the Texas border? FBC has another opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center just outside of McAllen, Texas. Please begin to pray about this mission project and how your family can be involved.

If you are interested, or have questions, please contact the Missions' office (675-8112) or John Moore at [john.moore@fbcabilene.org](mailto:john.moore@fbcabilene.org).

## CBF (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship) & FBC ABILENE

Our Church is pleased to support CBF Global Missions in moments like these where bearing witness to Jesus Christ takes form through support and outreach to refugees on the move throughout Europe.

*My wife, Alicia, and I have partnered with the Jesuit Refugee Service to help at the asylum center in Skopje, Macedonia. We have been serving tea and coffee there as well as in Tabanovce. We recently got to share in the success story of two girls who were in the system and have been looking for their family for 9 months. They have just recently traveled to Greece to reunify with their parents. We love being able to be a part of such stories.*

*- Jeff Lee, CBF field personnel,  
Skopje, Macedonia*

FBC Abilene provides support to CBF through our Unified Missions Offering, making a difference in our world. Please help FBC Abilene reach its \$67,000 goal and contribute to this important offering by placing your offering in the offering plate or bringing it by the church office.





# HELLO FROM SCOTLAND!

by David Pearson

It is hard to believe I have now been living here for almost 4 months. Sometimes I forget where I am. I have started to get used to things like cars driving on the opposite side of the road, constant tea and coffee, the occasional castle, and it being completely normal to see a man wearing a kilt.

Moving away from home is not easy, but the congregation at Ladywell Baptist welcomed me with open arms. Within 20 minutes of being in the country, I found myself being served a full Scottish breakfast at someone's home, and the meals have not stopped since. I know for a fact I have built life-long relationships here already. The congregation is amazing, and it has been amazing to see how well, and how deeply they care for their young people. Without a doubt, the young people in our youth fellowship are the best part of my job. We have a group of about 20 of the coolest Scottish youth you will ever meet. Once a week, I have all the guys in our fellowship up to my flat for guys Bible study, which we have been referring to as "Man Night." We eat meat with our hands, laugh, drink Irn Bru (the official soda of Scotland), and talk about Jesus. It's become such a special time.

Another part of my work is heading up our "Joy Club," which is our kid's club. It is a time each week for elementary-aged kids, both from the church and the community, to come play games, sing songs, and do crafts. While we have the kids, we offer tea and coffee for their parents, which has proved a great way to connect with other people in our community. Every Friday, we meet as a youth fellowship at McDonalds for lunch. Not my first pick of restaurants, but they love it. Sundays have proved the busiest day of the week. I do a children's sermon almost every week, which has been an absolute blast, and play drums in the worship band. Sunday nights we have our youth time, which is held either at the church or in someone's home. We play games, eat food, sing songs, and either have small group discussion or a teaching time led by me.

There is no separation of church and state in the UK, so a lot of schools are very open to some sort of Christian influence. There is a school directly next door to our church, which has welcomed us in. Once a week, I have been asked to come in at lunch times and get to know the kids. The school also has a ukulele group, which I have had the privilege of participating in on Friday mornings. Both of these activities have proved to be a great way of strengthening the relationship between the school and our church, as well as building relationships with the students and staff.

I speak for all of Ladywell in sharing our immense gratitude for First Baptist Abilene's support for my work here. On a personal note, I want to thank First Baptist for the influence it has had in my own life. You have loved me very well my whole life. Words cannot accurately portray the depth of my gratitude. Please pray that our church and youth fellowship would continue to be places of health and goodness, in which people know that they will be loved, cared for, and supported. Please pray that in all of this, Jesus would be glorified, and more people would come to know they are loved.



## ADULTS ON MISSION: APRIL EMPHASIS

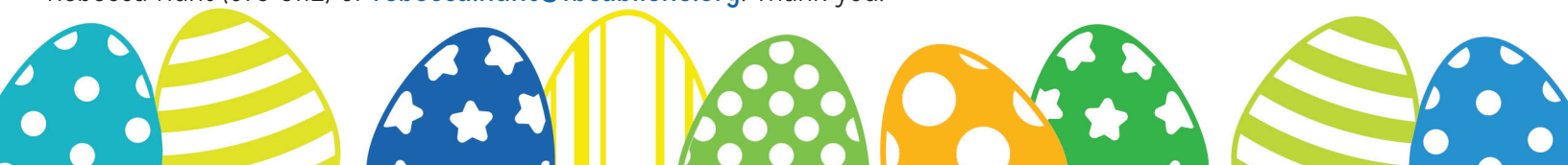
### *Filled Easter Eggs*

We are in need of 4,000 filled Easter eggs (no chocolate). 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](mailto:rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org). Thank you!

## FBC EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, April 8 at 10:00 am  
Cobb Park

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





COME TO THE MOUNTAIN, Songs of Worship, Hope, and Encouragement, the latest CD project recorded by the Sanctuary Choir and Celebration Orchestra, will be available Monday, March 6. The recording features arrangements of timeless hymns: It Is Well with My Soul; Great is Thy Faithfulness; and How Great Thou Art, plus newer songs: I Am Not My Own; Blessings; and Jesus, Only Jesus. The songs were chosen to reflect the hope and encouragement we share in Christ.

Each note was sung and played with the prayer that we could all be reminded, "If you hunger, if you thirst, if you're weary, if you are lonely or hurt, someone's calling you today, He says come away. Come to the mountain, be made whole."

# STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

**March 14, 1 year**  
**Heather Johnson**  
*GLO Teacher*

**March 15, 22 years**  
**Phil Christopher**  
*Senior Pastor*

## EVENT CALENDAR:

### MARCH

9-10 Everlasting Choir Festival

13-17 Spring Break  
No Wednesday Activities

30 Blessed Family Fun Event

### APRIL

10-14 Holy Week  
11 - FBC Hosting Lunch

16 Easter

13 Maundy Thursday Service

30 RA/GA Racer/Bake Sale

## WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU

March 1	Baked Potato & Salad Bar
March 8	Fried Chicken
March 15	Spring Break
March 22	Tacos
March 29	Chicken Spaghetti

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

February 2017

Budget	February	Year-to-Date
Required	\$234,000	\$514,311
Given	\$296,228	\$507,318



**FIRST BAPTIST**  
CHURCH ♦ ABILENE

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