

FIRSTwords

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

PASTOR FOR EMERGING ADULTS RESIGNS

The church received the following letter of resignation and we wanted you to know about this change in the staff.

April 28, 2017

Dear Church Family,

I am writing to formally notify you of my resignation from my position as Pastor for Emerging Adults at First Baptist Church, Abilene. I was recently approached by the United States Navy and asked to consider application for the Navy Chaplain Corps. This has long been an aspect of my calling. Through much prayer and discernment, I felt God working through this opportunity. Upon my application and interview, I was selected as a Navy Chaplain and will begin Chaplain School in June. Following my graduation from Chaplain School, at the end of July, Blake and I will move to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii where I will begin my first assignment as a Base Chaplain at Joint Base Pearl Harbor. In order to prepare for this move, my last day of work at First Baptist, Abilene will be Sunday, May 21, 2017.

It is with great excitement, as well as sadness, Blake and I prepare for this adventure. I am convicted of my call to this ministry context at this time; however, I am also filled with sorrow as this new beginning means leaving our community and church home. First Baptist, Abilene is and will always be home for us. Blake and I will take the many blessings and experiences that we have gained here with us as we continue in our ministry journey. I cannot adequately express all that this congregation has meant to me. I have grown into a minister in this place where I have been so affirmed and have been offered sacred space and opportunity to pastor.

I am confident of your dedication to the emerging adults of First Baptist and look forward to watching the ways this ministry, among the many others of our church, thrives and grows in new ways. Thank you for loving us and being the church you are. I am proud to call this place home.

Sarah Greenfield



A reception will be held following the morning service on May 21 to give the church family an opportunity to say thank you to Sarah for her faithful service to the church and to wish them well on this next chapter in their life.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

Milestones...the term means an event or action which marks a stage or change in a person's life. Such marker moments can be positive or negative. Yet, be careful before judging some event as a defeat. A failure or mistake can become a memorable milestone that changes the course of our lives.

We obviously think of the milestone of graduation this time of year. Even graduation from GLO Daycare or First Friends can be seen as the milestone of finishing or closing a chapter. I watch parents with smiles, but also with tears as they realize their children are growing up and life is always changing. Milestones can seem like an ending. Graduation can also represent a threshold of possibilities, the new chapters that will be written, and the milestones that are ahead.

“Each day holds the potential for change. Each day has its own markers or milestones which define us in the choices we make. Our lives are lined with daily milestones which shape us if we will look for them.”

I realize for some of you, graduation or walking across the stage is only a distant memory or milestone of the past. Yet, some observations. Think back to the past and the ways in which you have been shaped or changed by the milestone of graduation and all of the experiences it represents. Last week, I was with seven old friends from Baylor days. We shared memories and stories. Before I prayed at our Saturday evening meal, I told those dear friends of over forty-years that it is amazing the ways God has led us, connected our lives together, and charted out a destiny for us. How did we ever get together? Yes, graduation was a long time ago, but not the milestone that changed our lives.

Milestones can happen every day. Graduation is not reserved for a diploma. Graduation milestones happen every day. Each day holds the potential for change. Each day has its own markers or milestones which define us in the choices we make. Our lives are lined with daily milestones which shape us if we will look for them. There are those significant milestones which have marked our journey forever. Take some time to think about your milestones which have marked your life and even changed you.

We would not be who we are without certain milestones. The Bible calls those significant moments an “Ebenezer.” The hymn, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” declares, “Here I raise my Ebenezer...” When I sang that hymn as a child, I kept wondering who was this guy “Ebenezer” they kept pitching up into the air.

Ebenezer is about milestones. The background of Ebenezer is found in the Old Testament. Ebenezer means “a stone of help.” Israel was in fierce battle with the Philistines. The holy ark of the covenant, which symbolized God's presence with the people, was captured by the Philistines. Later when the ark was recovered in a decisive battle, Samuel built a monument of stones to remember their victory. He named that milestone, “Ebenezer.” It was a reminder of God's power, protection, and providence. God is the “stone of help” which marks our lives.

Will you look this month for the “Ebenezer's” or the milestones where God met you, provided, protected, and even changed you? Such a marker or moment could have seemed like a defeat, but God turned it into a victory. As much as we remember milestones, perhaps it is time for you to make some “Ebenezer's” or milestones in the choices you are making.

Rising Strong,

Phil

MILE MARKER 761

By Matt & April Mercer

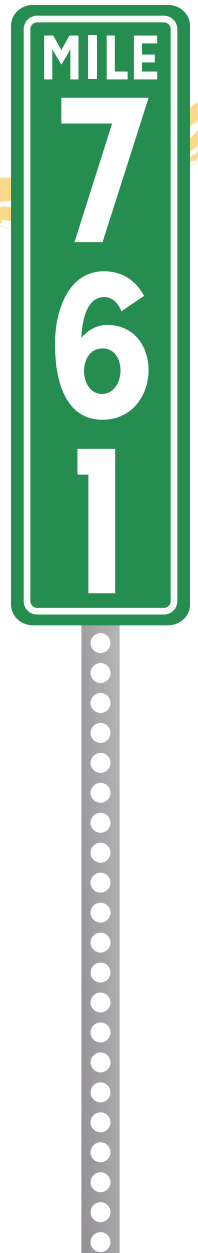
761 days have passed since our marriage imploded. Along this new journey, there have been significant checkpoints noting both successes and failures. There have been setbacks which have forced us to restart, and accomplishments which have propelled us forward. We have come to this realization: for us, it's not about the major milestones that shape our recovery; but rather, the mile markers.

There are mile markers beside most roads in Texas, but they're rarely noticed. In fact, the only reason to take note of one is when there is a problem, like a blowout or a wreck. Then, mile markers become vital as they guide helpers to the scene. Some helpers come to provide life-saving assistance, while others bring only a jack or a can of gasoline to get the travelers back on their way. A few might sit with worried passengers as they wait for a tow truck. All of those helpers are valuable, because they step up to serve a need at that mile marker.

It's much the same with marriage recovery. Sometimes an ambulance is needed – folks who are willing to have hard conversations on a very tough day. Other times, supporters can offer something much simpler like acceptance, prayer, or fellowship. These actions enable the travelers themselves to feel normal, even though their situation may be the complete opposite. Helpers who come to the rescue in this way are selflessly serving as Christ has called them. It is meaningful, and it makes a huge impact.

Here's the hard part: setbacks can come to us travelers in many forms. Examples include: condemnation or being made to feel invisible. "Did you not notice the fuel gauge? Did you not pay attention to the car in front of you?" Or, more to the point, "Did you not see the warning signs in your marriage? How could you not have known?"

So here we are at Mile Marker 761. It's huge for us and our children. It matters because it represents another checkpoint on our journey, yet not the end by any means. Along our way, we have been touched by those at Mile Marker 5,000 who have been brave enough to graciously share their stories. Perhaps as you read this, you're at Mile Marker 23. Hear this: you are not alone in a nowhere, isolated, unrecognizable spot on the highway of your life. Flash your lights, and help will come. Thankfully, too, Christ already knows your exact location.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Many of us can think back and remember the "good ole days" at Vacation Bible School. This week in the summer, or two weeks for some of you, were often very important in your spiritual growth. In our preschool and children's ministries, we still feel that VBS week is instrumental in helping our children learn more about the love of God.



VBS will be Tuesday, May 30 through Friday, June 2. We will start each morning at 9 a.m. and end at noon. This year's theme is Galactic Starveyors where we will be "Searching the Visible and Discovering the Invisible." We will start each day with a Worship Rally and then break into age groups where we will go to Bible Study, Missions, Recreation, Music, Crafts, and of course Snacks!

We will end this spectacular week on Friday night, June 2, with a Family Night where we will host a free hotdog dinner in the dining room which will start at 5:30 p.m., followed by our final Worship Rally at 6:15 p.m. in the sanctuary.

We hope you will be praying for this wonderful week and for all who are involved.

CHOICES

By Shawn Kennedy

Life is about choices...this is dedicated to all graduating seniors.

Our son, Bryce Kennedy, died in a tragic car crash on October 1, 2006. He was only 19. He was a young man full of hopes and dreams. With aspirations of finishing college, starting a family with the love of his life, and living a full, happy life.

The night before Bryce died, we spoke to Bryce about his hopes and dreams. We reminded him that life is short and we have to be careful with the choices that we make. And as Bryce usually did, he said, "Mom relax, nothing is going to happen to me."

On the night Bryce died, he had gone out with friends. He made the choice to get into the vehicle with someone who had been drinking. I remember the phone ringing late in the night. It was one of Bryce's friends saying he had been in an accident and was at the hospital. My immediate thought is it couldn't be that bad, the hospital had not called, but Bryce had not called either. I immediately called the emergency room at the hospital and spoke to a nurse who stated we need to come on and please be careful. As we got up and started dressing, I recall calling our parents to let them know where we were headed, the unknown. I recall waking our daughter and telling her and the blood curdling scream she let out, it will be forever etched in my mind. Your entire body starts to shake the uncontrollable shake as your imagination starts to wander with unthinkable thoughts and your heart races. The drive to the hospital was eerily quiet as we flew down the freeway to get to the hospital. On the way, we passed a scene with police, fire crews, and ambulances. Big lights all around the accident scene. We just kept going knowing our son was at the hospital, only to find out later that we were passing the scene where it all started. They took us straight in to see Bryce. Had it not been for the birth mark on his arm we wouldn't have thought it was him. There he was intubated with a nurse squeezing a bag for every breath he took. One nurse holding pressure on his head because of the severe open head trauma he had. Lines hanging everywhere with fluids and blood. This could not possibly be our son, the son who the night before said, "Mom relax, nothing is going to happen to me.", but it was him. Doctors, nurses, and trauma surgeons all around us telling us there was nothing more to be done, the facts were it was getting harder and harder to get a breath in and his brain injury was severe, but he was probably not in any pain. We were left with one of the hardest decisions as parents, really as a human, we have ever made. With our numb bodies, feeling empty and completely alone, we made the decision to take Bryce off life support and let him go. It has to be the single worst feeling we have ever experienced in our lives.

We share our story because Bryce could be any of you, if you choose to drink or if you choose to get into the car with someone who has been drinking. We talk about choices because you make that choice, nobody else. Remember the choices that you make, not only affect you, they affect those around you.

Bryce is forever 19. The impact Bryce has on other's lives is not how he wanted to make an impact. Bryce had dreams, dreams which will always be just that, dreams. You, you have the opportunity to carry out your dreams, you have the chance to choose the perfect path, make good choices, choose not to participate in underage drinking or impaired driving. If you take the time for just a brief moment to think about the choice Bryce made that night and how we, Bryce's family and friends feel about Bryce's death on a daily basis, then you could understand what underage drinking and impaired driving can cost you and your family. Please stay safe.

As a family, we went through all of the stages of grief. When it comes to the anger stage, well it lasted a very long time. Anger toward so many things, including God. The questions of why are still a constant, but we realized with time we were not on this journey alone. God had been there all along, holding our hand and guiding us through the biggest event we have ever been through. We realized we needed to put God back to the top of our list, make Him first. We needed to surround ourselves with others who needed the same thing in their lives as well and that is the choice to put God first. With a 'lil nudge from friends, we were able to do just that. At First Baptist Church, we have found a sense of belonging and community.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Shawn and Don Kennedy

Shawn and Don Kennedy have been attending FBC for the past couple of years. In response to the tragic death of their son, Bryce, they wanted to help and hopefully prevent other families from going through the same journey they have been on. The Bryce Kennedy Memorial was established in 2008 to remember Bryce and to touch the lives of others through education regarding underage alcohol use, drugs, and drinking and driving. Shattered Clays for Shattered Dreams is an annual event that raises funds for educational programs as well as a scholarship in memory of Bryce.

SENIOR SUNDAY

by Cody Favor

The rhythm of the church year often intersects with the rhythm of our own lives. This time of year we see that as the church calls us to focus on the season of Easter, we also will mark endings and new beginnings for many young people and their families. Ending a school year, especially for seniors and their parents, is a time of both celebration and mourning. It is a time to give thanks for what God has provided and to look expectantly for what is to come. These moments are important for families marking transitions and for the community who has nurtured them and is invested in their future.

As graduation and Senior Sunday approach, I am grateful the young people of FBC have had the opportunity for their faith to develop in a place where they are loved, encouraged to ask questions, and participate in the life of the church alongside people of all ages. This isn't to say our church or youth ministry are able to raise perfect disciples. I still wonder what will these graduates and emerging adults pray when they don't have youth workers or parents there to tell them what, when, or how to pray. I want to know how will they read and engage scripture when no one from their childhood or adolescence is there to guide them. The answers to these questions largely center around the faith practices, or "rhythms," kids establish in the teenage years, with the help of youth leaders and parents in their lives. These questions help shape how we do ministry and how we approach the Bible, worship, service, and community. When we look at the stage on senior Sunday, may we remember that we all belong to each other and just as many adults have invested in this group of seniors, they give life to our church as well. We celebrate them not out of duty, but because it is a testimony to what God is doing among us.

This month, we will celebrate alongside a group of seniors who will soon be graduating. This church has been important to them and their parents. These seniors have been important to this church. In times of transition, we can see more clearly how God has been faithful in the past and we trust God to be present in the future. As we recognize this transition for these seniors and their families, we pray our eyes are opened to God's faithfulness and our hearts are opened to God's possibilities.



ACTING IN *love*

MCALLEN FAMILY MISSION TRIP JULY 23 - 28

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. This year we need a garden bed team, exterior painting team, and a warehouse/bed team. Now is the time to sign up! The cost is \$25 plus lodging and transportation. For more information or if you would like to sign up, please contact Rebecca Hunt or John Moore in the missions' office (325-675-8112) or rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org or john.moore@fbcabilene.org.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY & FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, ABILENE

by John Moore

Please be in prayer for our FBC Habitat House. Our ministry project is nearing and we want you to know about some important dates.

Sunday, June 4 – Our ceremonial start to the project will begin in your Sunday school class. Please be present in Sunday school to pray for your 2X4 and write your prayers, favorite scriptures, and name on your stud. You will need to assign a leader to take it to worship and bring it down front as an act of worship at the designated time in the morning worship service (let the missions' office know if we can arrange someone to help carry the 2x4 for your class...675-8112). Please make this celebration an important part of your worship on this day.

Wednesday, June 7 – Our Crew Leaders for the project will be trained on Wednesday at 7 p.m. in room 220. We are in great need of more Crew Leaders (someone who is willing to lead a team of volunteers to accomplish a particular construction task and learn a new skill). You will be paid in a free t-shirt and all the water you can drink.

Saturdays, June 10 & 17 – Our first major work days in the South Parking Lot. We start at 8 a.m. and will finish at 2 p.m. each day. We need 20 -30 people willing to help begin the framing for our project. It's really important that we know if you are coming to help on these work days (we do not want to waste your time by having too many volunteers).

Future Dates – Future work dates are being planned. Watch for these dates and sign up in the missions' office. Also begin recruiting your small group, Bible study class, softball team, and golf foursome to work on this project.

If you have any questions or would like to sign up, contact either Rebecca Hunt or John Moore in the missions' office (325-675-8112) or rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org or john.moore@fbcabilene.org.

Thank you for being a church who cares! God is at work in our community because of you! Don't miss an opportunity to be His hands and feet!

EASTER EGG HUNT SUCCESSFUL!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our FBC Friendship House Easter Egg Hunt a success! Together we surpassed our goal and collected 6,448 filled Easter eggs. Through your generous donations, we were able to donate 500 eggs to GLO Daycare and 1,500 to the College Heights Friendship Easter Egg Hunt! Thank you to the Wednesday night classes, Sunday school classes, and individuals who helped fill the Easter eggs, as well as the volunteers who helped hide the eggs for the hunt. A special thank you to Janet Mendenhall for helping organize the hunt and bringing cookies for the kids. There were around 75 children who showed up and found all the eggs in less than 10 minutes. It was a great day! THANK YOU!



FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY IN KIGALI, RWANDA

Update from Venantie Uwishyaka

Our church is pleased to support Venantie and her efforts in the Family Life Ministry in Rwanda. Here is an update from her about an open house in April:

The preschool open house went well! Many parents and children came and we had three volunteers who led the workshops on child development and cognitive development. I explained the role of family counseling as a system where parents and children need to function together. To help a child with problems, a counselor has to work with every family member, especially parents. After the workshop, some parents approached me to ask for help with troubled children. These parents are all single mothers! My heart was broken to see that these mothers can't even afford the tuition for their children to attend the school because they are very poor. However, the founders of the school expect that we might meet with these mothers to minister to them and give them some insight on parenting. It will be on a Saturday afternoon because there is no school on Saturdays. I am glad the school can be open for the ladies in the community. Please pray for God's guidance on how to help these single mothers with their children.

Blessings,
Venantie

Senior Adult Day

Tuesday, May 9, 2017
Big Country Baptist Assembly -
Lueders
9:00 a.m. to Noon

Mark Bishop in Concert
Dismiss after the noon meal
An offering will be taken for
the programming and meal

Call 675-8107 to sign up to ride the minibus
Bus will leave the North parking lot at 8:15 a.m.

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

May 1, 21 years
Daphne Garcia
GLO Teacher

May 23, 5 years
Sarah Greenfield
Pastor for Emerging Adults

May 5, 3 years
Tina Pyburn
Counseling Receptionist

May 26, 17 years
Teresa Garcia
GLO Cook

May 10, 18 years
Tanya Rhodes
GLO Teacher

*Welcome to our newest staff
member, Mike Brady as
associate director at the FLC.*

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU

May 3	Chicken Spaghetti
May 10	Baked Potato & Salad Bar
May 17	No Wednesday Night Activities
May 24	No Wednesday Night Activities
May 31	No Wednesday Night Activities
June 7	Summer Fun Nights at the FLC begin

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

April 2017

<u>Budget</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Required	\$252,000	\$1,038,311
Given	\$303,212	\$1,071,381

EVENT CALENDAR:

MAY

- 6 H. S. Senior Family Cookout
- 7 H. S. Senior Recognition (A.M.)
Children's Choir Program (P.M.)
- 9 Senior Adult Day (Lueders)
- 10 Music Friends Program/
Open House
- 16 LLL
- 18 GLO Graduation
- 21 Ordination Service for
Candy Rains
- 29 Church Offices Closed
- 30 - 6/2 Vacation Bible School



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