

FIRSTwords

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

Each year, because of your generosity, we make bags of supplies for Martinez Elementary teachers to encourage them for the school year! We did the same this year, but it is a different year for all of us! And, the school year really looks different! We packed 52 bags with different request from teachers for Martinez Elementary this year. They needed gloves, alcohol wipes, tissues in small packages, masks, flash drives, small wipe off boards for online teaching, plastic bags, and small post it notes and a cup for drinking which they could leave at school. Quite a different list!

Our message to the Martinez teachers and staff is we are praying for them this school year as they enter a year of teaching and mentoring like no other! We pray they stay well, strong, and flexible through this time.

We are so thankful for all of them as they are a gift to the students at Martinez and our community!

THANK YOU
teachers and staff
OF MARTINEZ ELEMENTARY!



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

I offer a story which can remind us we have a great mission before us and the miraculous ways the Spirit leads. During Communion last month, I noticed Linda Neal get up and make her way to a young woman sitting by herself. Given the challenges of opening our Communion packets, I thought Linda was going to help her with the mechanics of peeling off the top. It is harder than you think.

Here is the rest of the story. As Linda watched the woman holding the communion packet, it was more than just opening it. Linda heard the Spirit say, *"She doesn't understand."* As Linda sat down by the young woman to help her open the packet, the woman said, *"I don't understand this..."* The Spirit had an appointment for Linda. It was more than opening the packet, it was the opportunity to open the love and grace of God for this woman.

For this young woman, the issue was not the mechanics, but the very meaning of that Sacred Supper which declares the forgiveness of God. I was humbled. I thought I had explained the reasons we come to the Communion Table, but there are people who do not understand.

Our challenge is to consider if the church has become a club for the insiders. We know the rituals, the secret handshakes, the lingo.... I know we want to reach out – we are a caring church. The question is: If we are going to reach a lost world, do we need to think as an outsider, a seeker, who comes struggling to understand? I have become more aware of this in my preaching as we presume knowledge of the Bible. A growing number in our TV audience think Jeremiah was a *"bullfrog"* – so titled from a *"Three Dog Night"* song. Have you thought about how your Sunday school class and lessons might be different if they were directed to those struggling to understand the Gospel?

This story of Linda reminded me of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts 8:26) Philip was given the

assignment to go south on a desert road. Doesn't sound too promising. Yet, God had an *"appointment"* for Philip. The God-arranged *"appointment"* came on that lonely desert road when it was one hundred degrees at noon. Philip was directed by the Spirit to approach the chariot of the Ethiopian. Acts 8:29 says the Spirit spoke and said to Philip, *"Stay near it."* The Ethiopian was struggling to understand scripture like the woman in worship. When Philip asked if the Ethiopian understood the story of Jesus, he said, *"How can I...unless someone explains it to me."*

This is a great time to reach people. It is more than just getting people to come back to the church, but for us to be the church. People are searching. Perhaps even you are searching to understand what it means to follow Jesus. You will have *"appointments"* arranged by the Holy Spirit – don't miss them.... Watch out for those three letters, *"dis"* that include *"disregard"* or *"disengage."* *"Disappointment"* comes from missed *"appointments."* We can miss *"appointments"* which are arranged by the calendar of heaven. During this time while we have been apart, we can *"disengage."* We can miss out on God's *"engagements"* to use us and shape us more into Jesus.

As we move into the fall, we want to do more than *"Restart."* It is naïve to think we can come back and things will be like they were before the pandemic. We are talking about more than simply *"Refreshing."* During this time we are looking at what *"new thing"* God is wanting to do. To *"Refresh"* would be like painting over old and peeling wall paper. These days call for something more. We face a time similar to Luther's Reformation of the Church in 1517. Our goal is to *"Relaunch."* To *"Relaunch"* means to go back to the reason for the Church's existence and mission. The churches who not only survive, but thrive, will be the ones who have a clear vision. Our task is to not only re-gather, but *"Relaunch"* with the goal of making disciples of Jesus.

We can have inspiring worship with large crowds and

great programs which draw people, but are we making “disciples of Jesus”? Seventy-six percent of students who were involved in the church during their high school years are no longer involved by the age of twenty-six. What about those who drift away from the church with other priorities. Revelation 3:16 warns they are “luke-warm.” The “luke-warm” say, “I am rich and don’t need a thing...” but do not realize how blind they are.” (Revelation 3:17)

Let us be attentive to God’s “appointments” and pray daily to be led by the Spirit. Let’s “Relaunch” and rediscover what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Let us “take up our cross and follow Him.” Let us find that when we “lose our lives for Him we discover life like never before.”

The Countdown to “Relaunch” has started....

Phil

FBC CHILDREN

by Becky Tucker

We have done our best to adapt to this pandemic for the last 6 months, but we have definitely missed not being able to have Sunday school, J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) on Wednesdays, as well as all the summer activities we normally have.

The last big event which was tremendously missed was Round Up Sunday, when our children promote to their new classes. Since we were unable to physically meet with our children, we had Zoom calls with each grade, Kindergarten – completed 5th grade, on Sunday, August 23. During those 7 back to back Zoom calls, our SS teachers were able to meet some of their new kiddos and say goodbye to the ones they had in class last year. It was wonderful seeing those sweet faces on the screen, but we are most definitely looking forward to the time when we can physically meet and see each other.



Until the time we feel it is safe to meet, we will continue to send weekly Children’s Bulletins and post a SS lesson each Saturday on First Baptist Abilene Children & Preschool Ministries Facebook page.



We are also in the planning phase of a virtual worship time geared for children and preschoolers. This time would include music, Bible story, and a craft, then would be posted weekly on Facebook. We will keep everyone updated as those plans are completed.

We are blessed to have a church who is so supportive of our many ministries and we are thankful for your continued prayers.



HURRICANE LAURA

Please continue to pray for those affected by hurricane Laura and the devastating effects of its landfall. Our Baptist Partners (Texas Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Disaster Relief and Texas Baptist Men) will be accessing the needs of all counties affected and how its cooperating churches can help. Several ways we can help now:

1. **PRAY** - pray for those affected by the path of this storm, those who are responding to the different areas, and future ways FBC can respond.
2. **GIVE** - currently the best way to help is to give financially. Checks can be given to our ministry partners or to First Baptist Church designated for (CBF Texas Disaster Relief, and Texas Baptist Men).
3. **GO** - There will be many needs for people to help with clean up and recovery when this disaster moves into recovery stage. Begin praying how you can join one of those teams in the future and how those teams can safely respond. If you can help, please contact the FBC Missions office (325-675-8112 or john.moore@fbcabilene.org).



A Note from:

THE PRESCHOOL DEPARTMENT

I know many of my preschool families have asked when we are starting back for Sunday school and Wednesday activities...well that's the million-dollar question right now. We are constantly talking about this decision and are prayerful we make the right one when the time comes. Our goal was to see how our public schools survived the first few weeks and go from there. So, hopefully, we may be back later this fall. I sent out letters this week to my families and teachers letting them know our plans, but I would like to share some needs we have that you can pray for. As most of you know, we have paid workers who assist our volunteers each Sunday and Wednesday. I lost about 6 paid workers due to them getting new jobs and I have not been able to replace them yet because we don't know when we will be back. So, please be in prayer that God will provide these workers for when the time comes.

Also, I will have a Sunday school teaching position needing to be filled. I wish we had a list of people just waiting to serve somewhere...but we don't! I realize many of you have "done your time," but I hope and pray you will always be open to a new challenge. These kids will bless you beyond your wildest dreams...you just have to give them the opportunity. Please pray if God is calling you to teach preschoolers. If so, call me and I will be glad to share with you how easy teaching is and how everything is so planned out for you.

I really thought with COVID-19 I would not be that busy in the office, but I feel I haven't stopped on the days I am here. It's a great problem to have! Thank you for supporting us and our ministries...more than anything, thank you for loving me!

Blessings,
Candy Rains

A NOTE FROM CV BLAKE

I “attended” a webinar on Thursday afternoon about churches and reclaiming attendance. It seems only about 6% of churches in the United States and Canada have reclaimed their pre-COVID-19 attendance. The sentiment of the leaders is the actual percentage is lower, but church people tend to inflate their numbers because it makes them feel better. One of the things I noticed in the comment section of my screen, it was interesting to note that churches are meeting differently than they were before. Some are outside, others are having multiple services, and some are having fewer services; but few mentioned Sunday school or small group Bible Studies. We are finding it difficult to figure out how to relaunch Sunday school.

Here are some questions we are asking as a staff: How do we provide Sunday school classes and adhere to social distancing guidelines? If we offer Sunday school, would anyone feel good about coming? Would there be enough teachers available? There are many, many questions and few answers.

Here are some things we are thinking about and doing regarding gathering in groups.

1. The staff agrees we will watch and see what happens now schools have restarted. We will have more information in a month.
2. I have asked Sunday school leadership to begin a conversation with their classes to see what the groups are willing to do and what ideas they may have regarding a relaunch.
3. Some of our classroom space is too small for groups to re-occupy. How can we use our space as it is to allow us to accommodate for numbers and spacing? Is it possible for groups to gather at different times and even different days?

All of the leaders I have visited with so far have been enthusiastic about engaging their groups in a conversation. I am interested to know what you think and will be happy to hear from you. My email address is cv.blake@fbcabilene.org.

Two things I do know— I miss you and I am looking forward to what God has in store for us. Let's go there together.



First Baptist has again joined in an effort to help the kids at Martinez Elementary and others in the Abilene and surrounding area by supplying a Care Pack for the weekend. An estimated 1500 students in the Abilene ISD alone struggle significantly with very little food over the weekend. The schools are able to feed them a quality breakfast and lunch on school days, but on the weekend the kids struggle.

We are asking for volunteers to pack Care Packs every other Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. along with other volunteers who are sponsoring other schools in the area. About 1,200 packs are packed each week. It is very organized and time goes quickly! You can sign up for one time or multiple times. At this time, we are only signing up as far out as October. You will be required to wear a mask to be able to volunteer and it will be set up so you will be social distanced.

We also are needing a few volunteers to deliver the Care Packs to Martinez every other week on Thursdays.

Please call Melinda in the church office at 325-675-8112 to sign up or for more information.

ACTING IN *love*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR CITY LIGHT MINISTRIES!

The City Light Ministry is adapting to this new way of life. For a time, we thought we would slowly go back to serving and helping with personal assistance within the building. However, for the safety of our staff and guests, we are still handing out to-go hot lunches 3 days a week, Sunday morning breakfast, and providing personal assistance via phone. We are also still handing out or delivering non-perishable food boxes for those in need.

A few volunteers have started to come back to help in the kitchen and with the City Light office duties. Chef Kay and her team are continuing to provide thank you meals for the community, church staff, and GLO. Please continue to pray for our staff and volunteers as they minister to those who the City Light ministry provides services.

For the months of July and August, City Light has handed out more than 6,600 meals and packed over 560 food boxes. We have provided personal assistance to 156 people these past two months using your generous funds and completed United Way Grant monies.

What a blessing!

UNIFIED MISSIONS OFFERING

We can change the world one community at a time!

OUR 2020 GOAL IS \$80,000

Seven Mission Offerings Combined into One

CBF

BGCT WORLD HUNGER

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

BAPTIST WORLD AID

MARY HILL DAVIS OFFERING FOR TEXAS MISSIONS

BGCT DISASTER RELIEF

LAWRENCE TROTT OFFERING FOR ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS





Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

THE HANDS THAT FEED

Volunteers! Helpers who come alongside to carry the load with you—that's who volunteers are!

We are so fortunate to have people each month who help us with the food distribution program to low income senior adult families in Edgecombe county, North Carolina. People who help us with driving to Raleigh (some 150 miles round trip) to helping load the 50-pound boxes in cars, to adapting to drive through distribution during this pandemic where folks don't even have to get out of their vehicles when they come for boxes, to the paperwork involved from the Food Bank of central and eastern North Carolina.

Each and every bit is a huge help. All of it matters so much to us! We are so appreciative, and we hear from people every month who say, "you just don't know how much this food helps out." We're grateful for the support and so happy to have helpers in this ongoing ministry to those experiencing poverty.

-Anna and LaCount Anderson, CBF field personnel in eastern North Carolina



FALL SPIRITUAL FORMATION CLASS

"Soul Keeping: Caring for the Most Important Part of You" by John Ortberg will be one of our Spiritual Formation classes offered this Fall. Ortberg says, "The health of your soul isn't just a matter of saved or unsaved. It's the hinge on which the rest of your life hangs. It's the difference between deep, satisfied spirituality and a restless, dispassionate faith." Join this study, led by Gene Hendrix, beginning Wednesday, September 16 at 6:00 p.m. on Zoom. The book can be purchased from Amazon for \$12.99.

To participate, email Gene at genehendrix2019@gmail.com so he can send you the invitation to the Zoom meeting.



CITY LIGHT IS STILL NEEDING YOUR PLASTIC BAGS!

We are still handing out lunches and using more than normal.
Please drop them off in the vestibule at the church office entrance.
Thank you for your continued support!

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

September 1, 5 years

Sheryl Doss

GLO Teacher

September 5, 41 years

Lee Curiel

Custodian

September 8, 10 years

Merri Roberts

M. A. to Pastor for Worship

September 15, 1 year

Austen Winfrey

Pastor for Students

September 16, 1 year

Jamie Ramos

GLO Teacher

September 30, 1 year

Matthew Fahrlander

Custodian

STAY *connected*

Remember to join us live for worship each week at 10:30 a.m. on KRBC or stream the service by going to the church website:

www.fbcabilene.org



#fbcabilene

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<https://twitter.com/fbcabilene>



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
ABILENE, TX**

<https://www.facebook.com/FirstBaptistChurchAbileneTx/>

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

August 2020

Budget	August	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 295,870	\$ 2,212,659
Given	\$ 205,657	\$ 2,068,437

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



**FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE**

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