

FIRST *words*

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

Blessed and Thankful:

A TRIBUTE TO TWO WONDERFUL WOMEN

The children's ministry of First Baptist was blessed for over a combined 75 years of service from two wonderful women.

Marylan Bacon spent over 40 years on the fourth floor and Brenda Pringle gave 35 years of service with the children. Both of these women have been amazing examples of how we are to live our lives in service to others for the Kingdom of God.

Any child who has come through the children's ministry at FBC over the past several decades has benefitted in learning spiritually from both of these women through their teaching, as well as the examples of living a Christ-led life. As a token of our appreciation, we gave each of them a canvas with a tree filled with fingerprints of our FBC children. These fingerprints also came from many of our youth as these women were instrumental in their spiritual development.

The fingerprints represent the fruit each of us are called to bear as followers of Christ. We are so grateful for these two beautiful women and the many years they blessed us with their gifts and talents.

As we will dearly miss both of them, we are thankful we have others who are following in their footsteps to help guide and teach the children in their early years. We pray that each child will become one who also bears good fruit as they follow Christ and the wonderful examples set before them.

***Thank you so much Marylan Bacon and Brenda Pringle.
Blessings to you both!***



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Last week, I did an interview with KTAB and KRBC to visit about my twenty-six-year ministry at FBC and my upcoming retirement. I can't remember all of his questions over the forty minutes we visited, but here are some reflections from the interview. But more importantly, a few memories of the privilege of serving as Pastor for these twenty-six years.

He first asked, "Why I came?" Interesting question and one the next pastor will have to answer. Obviously, I came because Mary and I believed God was calling us here even with the disruption of a senior in high school and a middle schooler. But, one thing I hope I have taught you, God often disrupts our plans with something greater. We were happy where we were - we weren't looking to uproot - but we felt there was such promise here. I came here because of you and your passion and vision for the church. I came because you have been a church who has made a difference in the world and this city.

We talked about what we had accomplished together.... I shared about the creation of City Light Community Ministries in 1997. We discussed the growing outreach of the Ministry of Counseling. We talked about the renovation of the sanctuary which has now become a gathering place for our community. The sanctuary stands as such a holy place of worship in these times when we can feel so lost and need a sacred place. We talked about our church's decision to raise \$3.5 million for missions after the sanctuary renovation. This church has always looked outward, not to become bigger, but more missional and compassionate.

The reporter asked me something like: "What benefit or what did you get out of being pastor?" I struggled for a moment to answer. After all, I came to minister, not to get. But, it was a question to think about - all of us have needs, even Pastors.

What did I get from these 26 years we have shared together? You allowed me to know your stories and

struggles. You gave me the privilege of entering into those vulnerable places of your life where most people never get to go. What did I get? I had the blessing, yes blessing, to walk with you through a crisis and what you taught me about persevering faith. I celebrated with you in times of great joy dedicating your children, baptisms, marrying your children and officiating at funerals for your parents. Now, I get to dedicate your children and baptize them even as we come to this last month - what a gift of grace.

As you think about what you want or need in the new Pastor, I thought about preaching from a Pastor's perspective. The sermon would be: "What Does a Pastor Look for in a Church?" As much as you will consider and discuss the gifts needed in a new pastor, what can you do right now to prepare for a perspective pastor who will be looking at First Baptist?

As you enter this *Interim Time*, here are things you can do. Be faithful in attendance - being together matters. Read Acts 2:42-47. Pray for God's will - nothing more, nothing else, nothing less as you set aside your agendas. Make the study of James in Sunday school a priority. Step up in your giving. Your financial stewardship is a reflection on the spiritual health of the church. As much as you will be looking at potential candidates, they will be looking at the ways you understand what it means to be and support the church.

As I retire, look to the future and let me encourage you with the lyrics from Chris Tomlin's song, "God of the City." Even in the challenges you face, we have hope and this vision: "For greater things have yet to come and greater things are still to be done in this city. There is no one like our God...." As God has guided this church for 140 years, we can trust He will guide you in the future. The greatest days are ahead of you....

Brave Journey,
Phil

I thank my God every time I remember you.
- PHILIPPIANS 1:3 -

After 45 years of ministry
in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kentucky
including 26 years with us at First Baptist Church,

Dr. Phil Christopher
is retiring!

Come worship with us on
Sunday, September 26, 2021, 10:30 am
First Baptist Church
1333 N. 3rd Street Abilene, Texas 79601
or Watch Live at www.fbcabilene.org

Gather to celebrate with Phil and Mary and Family
Sunday, September 26, 2021, 2:00-5:00 pm
at the home of Jeff and Susan Braaten
1314 Elmwood Drive Abilene, Texas 79605
Valet Parking Provided



REPORT OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WITH TEXAS BAPTISTS AND THE COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Kathy Shackelford

Nancy Brock

Teresa Ellis

David Hall

Jerry Carter

Paul Irby

Paul Thames

Dick Dansby

Ken Leggett

A primary legacy of First Baptist Church, Abilene is being a missional church in our community and around the world. We have historically cooperated with other Baptist churches within the State of Texas and across the U.S. through two Baptist entities:

The Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) also known as Texas Baptist and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). Texas Baptists serve Baptist churches and needs primarily within the State of Texas. The CBF serves Baptist churches across the U.S. and provides mission personnel within the U.S. as well as globally.

The Committee met in general session on June 23, 2021. Two (2) subcommittees were formed one to look at the relationship between FBC and Texas Baptists and one to look at the relationship between FBC and CBF. The committee met again in general sessions on July 14 and August 11 and this report was produced.

The charge of the group was to examine the financial relationship between FBC and Texas Baptists and FBC and CBF as a result of a motion passed by the church on Wednesday, February 3, 2021.

First Baptist Church does not give a specific dollar amount to either Texas Baptists or CBF, rather, the Church gives 4% of its total receipts to the church budget each year to these organizations (2% to Texas Baptists and 2% to CBF).

The Committee endeavored to look at the financial stability of each organization (TB and CBF) and

investigate how and what these groups do and how that corresponds with what our Church does and what our missional vision is.

The Texas Baptist Group (Kathy, David, Jerry, and Nancy) found that Texas Baptists appeared financially stable and secure. It provides a wide range of ministries to Texas Baptist Churches as well as aid in education, hospitals, children's homes, disaster relief, etc. This group provides a valuable service to the Baptist community in Texas.

The Committee found that Texas Baptists does not have a missions' board per se (they are not a missionary sending agency) but does, through its giving, fund mission sending agencies and does fund mission activities. It no longer sends money to CBF, but is aware local Churches do so. Texas Baptists support local church autonomy of church spending decisions.

Most of Texas Baptists money is spent on worthy matters within the State of Texas. The committee believes that Texas Baptists is an organization that is worthy of our support as a Church through our annual budget.

The CBF subcommittee (Teresa, Paul Thames, Paul Irby, and Dick) met and examined CBF and its financial structure. That group determined that 43% of CBF spending is allocated to global missions and 31% of its spending is allocated to investing in training and recruiting of your Baptist Leaders and education. The CBF also appears financially stable.

It appeared to the CBF group (Teresa, Paul Thames, Paul Irby and Dick) that the core values of CBF - Soul Freedom, Bible Freedom, Church Freedom, and Religious Freedom, correspond with what members of FBC hold as core values. CBF does appear to be focused on foreign missions and that is a focus at FBC as well.

The CBF's philosophy of missions is based on everything they do is evangelism. They do not see evangelism and social ministry as separate. They look for ways the gospel can be expressed in reaching out beyond culture

Continued from page 6.

differences. The CBF's mission philosophy reflects the fulness of the gospel - committed to the whole gospel and the whole person of reaching people spiritually and physically in the name of Jesus. The committee believes that CBF is an organization that is worthy of our support as a church through our annual budget.

As we cooperate with other Baptist churches through the CBF, we are able to be part of sending out missionaries across the globe. Our church has had the added privilege of knowing and working directly with several of the CBF mission personnel who are making such a difference in their respective ministries: Jeff and Alicia Lee in Macedonia, David and Lauren Bass in Cambodia, Huffs in Thailand, and Lesley-Ann Hix Tommey in New York City.

Our cooperation with other Baptist churches through Texas Baptists allows us to partner with these churches in supporting a variety of institutions within the State of Texas including Hardin Simmons University and Hendrick Medical Center. Our offerings also provide scholarships for ministerial students at Baptist universities in Texas. In addition, in many Bible study classes at First Baptist we use BaptistWay curriculum (now known as GC2) which is produced by Texas Baptists.

The Study Committee understands that cooperating with other Baptist churches to better facilitate evangelism, education, and provide for the physical needs of people is a core Baptist belief. Texas Baptists and CBF are both organizational structures that do well in providing these services. Therefore, the Study Committee believes that the people of First Baptist Church should continue to support both Texas Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.



a note from:

THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee continues to prepare for the transition following Dr. Christopher's retirement at the end of September. We have made the decision to create some space between his retirement and the calling of an interim pastor. This will be approximately a month to six weeks.

In addition to our recommending an interim pastor to the Deacons for approval and then to the church for a vote, we have, in the meantime, the responsibility of enlisting speakers for Sunday worship services. For the first three Sundays of October, we have enlisted three of our own:

Mike Greenfield - October 3

Dr. Bob Ellis - October 10

Dr. Meredith Stone - October 17

Please continue to pray for unity of spirit and leadership of the Spirit in these days of transition.

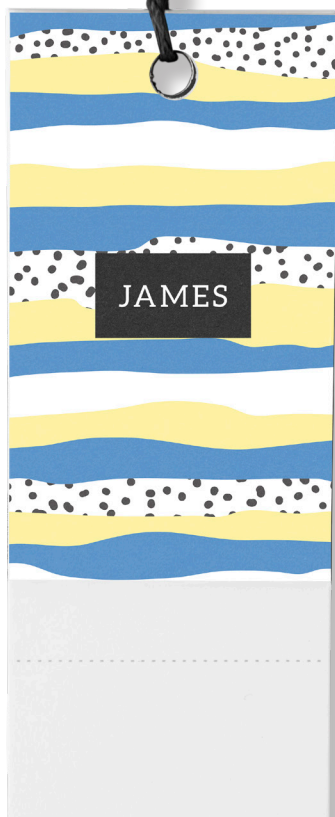
Mike Patrick, Chair

Bible Study for Fall 2021

by C.V. Blake

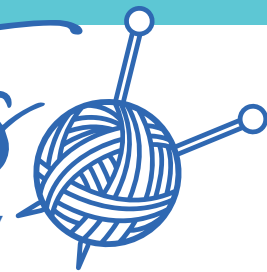
First Baptist Church has been around for a long time and has offered Sunday school for almost as long. As Baptists, we have always been people of the Book. We teach our children to know and love the Word of God. We encourage grown-ups to engage in a culture of spiritual growth and fellowship in Sunday school classes which are focused on Bible Study. For the past several years, we have provided resources and advice to adult classes for courses of study. For the past 18 months, we have been scattered and isolated because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been talking about ways to get us back together. One thing we have talked about is asking all of our classes from middle school to Senior Adults to study the same thing. Baptistway Press, now known as GC2 (Great Commission/Great Commandment) is offering a study on the book of James. So, beginning September 5, all of our youth and adult classes will be studying this book on Sunday mornings. I will also be teaching it as my online study this Fall.

As you know, Dr. Christopher has been preaching from the book of James this summer. I appreciate him for giving this encouragement. As he prepares to retire and we begin the search for our next pastor, I believe it is especially important for us to study the Bible together. I am looking forward to sharing the study of this very practical book with you. We will begin on September 5 at 9:00 a.m. See you there.



Healing Hearts

by Cherry Curry



September marks the beginning of the 10th year of Healing Hearts Ministry at FBC Abilene. Healing Hearts is a Prayer Shawl Ministry created to lend prayer support to others. We gift handmade items like angels, prayer cloths, shawls, throws, and "no-sew" fleece blankets to people who are experiencing significant illness, long-term treatment, or loss of a loved one. We also make hats for the people who are served by City Light Ministries. Once an individual has received two handmade items, we send them a card as a reminder that we continue to pray for their needs.

In our first nine years of ministry, we have given 3,756 items. The scope of this ministry has really grown. In addition to meeting the prayer needs of our church family, our reach has extended to our community and has reached as far as other countries. We count it "our blessing" to be able to

provide tangible prayer support for others.

If you are interested in being a part of Healing Hearts Ministry, there are a number of ways you can serve. If you can knit, crochet, or make "no-sew" fleece blankets, you can put that talent to good use. We provide the yarn and the material for making these prayer gifts. If you enjoy scrapbooking, you can use your creativity to help document this ministry. We also need people who are willing to serve as couriers to help distribute the gifts. We welcome your prayers for us as we make and deliver these gifts.

If you are interested or have questions about Healing Hearts, please feel free to contact Cherry Curry at 325-864-1897 or dctlcurry4@yahoo.com.

Investing in the Future - Bringing Hope

by Larry Smith, Chair Give Hope Project

We have so much to be thankful for as we plan for the continued construction work at The Hope Center. As a church, we have pledged nearly \$6,000,000 of the projected \$8,700,000 cost. The Ministry of Counseling renovation is complete and is now operating on the 2nd floor of the Perry Building. We anticipate taking bids for the City Light and GLO projects this fall.

Increased construction costs have impacted our budget, but the staff, committee, contractor, and architect are all working together to reduce costs. Our hope is by the time we take bids, labor and material prices will have stabilized or come down.

We need your help in reaching our goal by first of all praying for wisdom and guidance. Secondly, we would ask you to consider extending your giving to the Hope Center for an extra year, making your first pledge, or by making a one-time gift to help us reach our goal of \$8,700,000.



MY COMMITMENT TO GIVE HOPE



**GIVE
HOPE**

FOR OUR CHILDREN
FOR OUR FAMILIES
FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I/We prayerfully commit to step out in faith and pledge the following amount above our regular tithes and offerings choosing from the 4 options listed below.

I/We will commit to continue my/our pledge for a 4th year. Pledge Amount \$ _____.

I/We will **start** a Three-Year Pledge Amount \$ _____.

I/We to give accordingly: \$ _____ per _____ for 3 years.

I/We will make a one-time gift in the amount of \$ _____.

I/We wish to commit to GIVE HOPE campaign by means of a gift other than cash.

Description and Approximate Value: \$ _____.

Signature (optional): _____

FBC MISSIONS: ACTING IN *love*

City Light Celebrated the graduates from the Culinary Academy!

Friday, August 20, the Culinary Academy students had the honor of a guest chef, Rob Allen who is the Executive Chef from Grain Theory of Abilene, to help cook the food, which was provided by United Supermarkets, and encourage the students during the day as they learned and prepared the meal for their graduation. They prepared a wonderful meal consisting of Caesar salad, braised beef short ribs, roasted potatoes with a vegetable medley, and cinnamon poached pears and praline! Our City Light Board members were gracious enough to serve the students and their families and our guests that evening for the graduation meal. Market Street of Abilene also blessed our graduates with flowers.

We would like to thank United Supermarkets and Market Street for all their help and partnership with our Culinary Academy and City Light. They have and will continue to be a great blessing!

Please continue to pray for these graduates, Deb, Dan, Sienna, Izzy, Maddie, and Elizabeth as moving forward they use the life and food preparation skills they learned during this past 12-weeks.



CITY LIGHT CASE MANAGEMENT MINISTRY MOVING FORWARD

Please continue to pray for our volunteer Case Managers and those involved in the new Case Management Ministry! Barbara, LuAnn, Carolyn, Richard, Kathy, Dawn, Stan, Stephanie, Hillary, and their trainers Megan and Maura, will soon complete their initial training and begin to work with our neighbors in crisis, helping them find stability and hope in a loving Christian environment.



BIG A DIRECTOR POSITION OPEN

FBC is seeking to fill a part-time paid position for Director of Big A, a City Light ministry for elementary kids. If you are interested in leading this ministry, contact John Moore at john.moore@fbcabilene.org or 675-8112.



FRIENDSHIP HOUSE UPDATE

Trevor, Gina, and their boys are almost moved into the Friendship House on Orange Street and have already begun to minister to that neighborhood and others in the community by building relationships. Pray for them as they work to build this new ministry with our neighbors.

You will enjoy getting to know this family! They love the Lord and this community. In the picture, Trevor also plays the role of Gus and leads the Abilene Downtown Walking Tour.



Begin watching for news as we work on scheduling a House Blessing for the Allen family where the church can be a part of helping this ministry and discovering what it is all about. This might be a place for YOU to help minister!

UNIFIED MISSION OFFERING 2021

We can change the world one community at a time!

SEVEN MISSION OFFERINGS COMBINED INTO ONE

GOAL: \$75,000 YEAR TO DATE: \$25,250

BGCT World Hunger - 15%

Supports projects across the world which feed the hungry and help the hungry help themselves in the context of holistic Christian ministry.

Community Transformation - 12%

Provides resources for responding to specific ministry opportunities and needs right here in Abilene. These resources help to transform families, neighborhoods, and ministry partners within the Big Country.

Baptist World Aid - 10%

The compassionate arm of the Baptist World Alliance provides help for persons in need globally through disaster relief, alleviation of hunger, medical assistance to those affected by HIV/AIDS, and community development.

Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions - 7%

Designed by Women's Missionary Union of Texas, this offering provides funding for the Texas Baptists' missionaries including: language ministries, work with international students, camp scholarships, African-American ministries, church ministries, bi-vocational/smaller church ministries, and associational missions.

BGCT Disaster Relief - 3%

Serves as an information network working directly with Baptist churches and associations to assess needs, disburse resources for those affected by disaster, and facilitate connections with Baptist Partners.

Lawrence Trott Offering for Associational Missions - 3%

Provides support for the Abilene Baptist Association including: Hope Camp for at-risk teens, Social Ministries - food and clothing for the needy, Hospitality House - lodging for families of incarcerated loved ones, strengthening churches, Big Country Baptist Assembly, and Christian Women's Job Corps.

You can give to the Unified Missions Offering through the church office by mail or in person, or by putting it in the offering plate Sunday mornings.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

By Mike Greenfield

September is packed with various events and reflect almost every area of our church. It is easy to see that we are not just a one-dimensional church, but rather a church which is very diverse in its makeup and tries very hard to include everyone in the life of the church. From our first graders receiving their Bibles to recognizing those who have been members for 50+ years. Both are vitally important to the life of our church and have much to offer each other.

So, on Saturday evening, September 11, Becky Tucker will host the first graders at her home and Dr. Christopher will have an opportunity to spend some quality time with each child as they receive their Bible. Because of COVID-19, Becky had to adjust how the Bibles were given and it was such a special time that she decided to continue to do it this way. But, we do think it is important that the church be able to celebrate with these children, so the next morning, Sunday, September 12, during the morning worship service the children will be highlighted during the service.

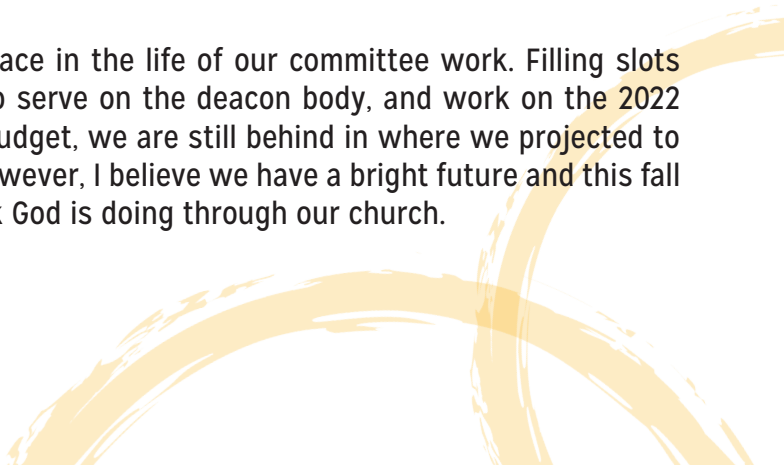
Having celebrated the future of the church, we then will pause to honor those who have helped get us to where we are. On Sunday, September 19, we will honor those who have been members for 50+ years and welcome the class of 1971. The list of names represents countless hours/days/years of ministry/committee work/teaching and overall commitment to the work God has done, is doing, and will continue to do through First Baptist Church.

On September 12, we will also hear from the Senior Pastor Search Committee and will have a special time of commissioning. This group, chaired by Dr. Bob Ellis, has been hard at work and Bob will share some of their progress and the direction the committee is headed as we look for a new senior pastor.

Then on September 26, we will celebrate with Dr. Christopher on his last Sunday as Senior Pastor here at First Baptist Church. By now, you should have received an invitation to a reception being held in his honor at the home of Susan and Jeff Braaten. This will be a come and go reception and you are free to come as your schedule permits. A copy of the invitation is also here in this edition of First Words. The service that morning will allow time for us to honor him, but he will also preach and lead us in the Lord's Supper one last time. This will be a special day in the life of our church.

Of course, COVID-19 continues to rear its ugly head and keeps making life more and more difficult to deal with. Here at the church, we continue to be cautious, but are working to not have to shut things down or cancel programming. We certainly want everyone to come at their level of security and acknowledge the differencing opinions about the wearing of masks. So, we encourage anyone to wear a mask and respect that decision. We will be limiting the greeting time during worship and not encourage folks to walk around. We will continue to use the disposable all-in-one communion cups as a way of preventing possible spread of the virus.

As we move into the fall, several annual things take place in the life of our committee work. Filling slots on the various committees, seeking 20 new deacons to serve on the deacon body, and work on the 2022 Ministry Budget just to name a few. In looking at the budget, we are still behind in where we projected to be at this time (see financial numbers on back page). However, I believe we have a bright future and this fall will be an opportunity for us all to recommit to the work God is doing through our church.





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September

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

September 1, 6 years

Sheryl Doss

GLO Teacher

September 5, 42 years

Lee Curiel

Custodian

September 8, 11 years

Merri Roberts

Music Ministry Assistant

September 15, 2 years

Austen Winfrey

Pastor for Students

September 16, 2 years

Jamie Ramos

GLO Teacher

September 30, 2 years

Matthew Fahlender

Custodian

- 6 Church Offices Closed for Labor Day Holiday
- 8 Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
- 11 First Grade Bibles given (Tucker Home)
- 12 First Grade Bible Presentation in morning worship
- Personnel Committee Meeting
- 14 Women's Night (Bunco)
- 19 Senior Adult Recognition
- 21 Finance Committee Deacons' Meeting
- 26 Lord's Supper
- Retirement Celebration for Dr. Christopher
- 30 Blessed Family Fun Night @ FLC

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

August 2021

Budget	August	Year-to-Date
Required	\$295,000	\$2,216,980
Given	\$229,826	\$1,911,851

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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