

FIRSTwords

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

SEPTEMBER UPDATE FROM THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

After months of preparation, the Pastor Search Committee is now interviewing candidates. Beginning in early June, the committee advertised our search for a Senior Pastor in various state and national outlets. We also followed up on recommendations provided to us by church members and others, as well as contacting church leaders and seminaries who have close knowledge of pastoral candidates whom we might want to investigate.

Most helpful of all, Dr. Matt Cook has been working for months on our behalf through the Center for Healthy Churches and his nation-wide network of contacts to identify potential candidates for our committee to consider. His work is particularly valuable because of his service as our committee's consultant for over a year and his ministry as our interim pastor. He knows us well and is guiding us wisely.

As a result of all these efforts, the committee now has a list of final candidates whose backgrounds and gifts seem most likely to align with the needs of our congregation, as outlined in our Pastor Profile. Our next steps will focus on these candidates; however, we will also be open in the near term to the possibility of adding others to the list.

We have begun initial interviews with our final candidates for the purpose of getting to know them and allowing them to get to know us. These get-acquainted sessions will be followed by two more sets of interviews with candidates over the coming weeks, during which we will have time for in-depth conversations about experience, preparation, faith, preaching, pastoral care, leadership, convictions, maturity, and other key matters related to the expectations of our Congregational Profile.

As a committee, we are thrilled to be at this stage in the transition process, and we feel a sense of both excitement and challenge as we explore with these candidates who they are, who we are as a church, and, most importantly, discern how the Holy Spirit is leading us. We ask in particular that you will faithfully pray in these exciting days for our church, our pastoral staff, and our committee.

God, who has called our church into being, gifted us as a congregation, and guided us through the generations, will certainly continue to care and provide for us in the days ahead. As we consider the future, we can confidently say: eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered the mind of anyone what God has prepared for our church as we are faithful.

Trusting in God's abundant grace,

The Pastor Search Committee





HEALING HEARTS MINISTRY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF MINISTRY

September begins the 11th year of ministry for Healing Hearts Ministry. This ministry is a prayer shawl ministry which strives to meet the prayer needs of members of First Baptist Church by making gifts such as shawls, throws, angels, cloths, hats, and "no-sew" fleece blankets as tangible reminders that prayer has been said for the recipient. The ladies who make these gifts pray over them while they are making them, and the group prays over each gift before it is prepared for delivery. When possible, we also gift people in our community and abroad who are connected to our church in some way and are going through significant health issues or who have experienced great loss.

We currently have 17 active members in our group. We would love to have more involvement of anyone who is interested in being a part of this ministry. If you don't know how to knit or crochet, there are other ways to serve in this ministry. We have members who serve as "couriers" who deliver the gifts. We have one person who has worked tirelessly to document our ministry in scrapbooks. I'm sure she would welcome some help with that job. If you are interested in learning to knit with a loom, we could teach you how to make knitted hats. If you know how to make a "no-sew" fleece blanket, or if you would be interested in learning that skill, we could use your help. If you are not interested in any of these ways to serve in this ministry, we still would appreciate your prayers for those of us who are carrying out these tasks.

Our meetings generally happen on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month. During those meetings we talk about the prayer needs, pray over each gift, and prepare the gifts for delivery. The meeting time is 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. in Room 6 of University Place (across the street from the church). On the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month, those of us who make the gifts get together to work on our projects.

If you are interested in participating in this ministry, but can't come to the meetings, we can work with you to provide the necessary materials for making your gift at home. If you are interested in helping with the "no-sew" fleece blankets, but don't have much time, you could help with doing the edging that holds the fleece together.

Since September has 5 Thursdays, we will be having the "business" meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month. Those dates are September 8 and 22. Due to my health situation, Marylan Bacon and Suwanee Smith have agreed to lead the meetings if I need to be absent.

If you have any questions, feel free to call Cherry Curry at 325-864-1897.

Thank you, First Baptist Church for supporting this important ministry.

CALLING ALL GOLFERS *(or want to be golfers!)*

In cooperation with the Abilene Baptist Association, we are going to have a FBC golf tournament as a part of the Hope Camp Golf Tournament. On Friday morning, September 16 at Maxwell Golf Course, we are going to have a "meet your fellow church member and draw teams out of the hat scramble golf tournament." The goal of this tournament is to provide scholarships for "at risk" middle schoolers to attend Hope Camp at Big Country Baptist Assembly in Leuders in July. Entry fee is \$47 (includes cart), of which \$20 goes to the scholarship fund.

So, in order to set tee times, I need you to sign up by contacting me by Monday, September 12 at 3:12 p.m. You can call (675-8116), email (mike.greenfield@fbcabilene.org), fax (675-8189), mail (1333 N. 3rd Abilene 79601), carrier pigeon (corner of N. 3rd and Hickory), or smoke signal (check burn ban first)!

This is a great opportunity for you to play golf with someone you probably do not get to play with regularly, fellowship with them, and help out some kids at the same time. If you would like to bring a guest and play with them, just let me know.



1ST GRADE BIBLES



Sunday, August 28, may have been a very hot day, but that did not keep us from having a wonderful evening as our First Graders received their new Bibles. These Bibles are gifts from the First Baptist Family. Each child received a bookmark with a scripture, referencing God's Word along with their Bible. These children will be recognized on Sunday, September 11, during the Worship Service. This will allow our church family to see these children with their new Bibles and show the children how much they are loved and supported by our congregation. We are so grateful we belong to such a caring and giving church family!

***Thank you for being
that church to our
children!***

STEWARDSHIP

By Mike Greenfield

The word stewardship brings to mind all kinds of thoughts and feelings. In the church, it typically is equated with money, followed quickly by time. We hear sermons about being a good steward. We see in scripture numerous pictures and stories about what it means to be a good steward. (See Matthew 20, Luke 12 & 16) We hear statistics that Jesus talked about money more than any other topic except for His Father. So, it must be an important topic and one that we too should investigate.

You cannot talk about stewardship very effectively without talking about tithes and offerings. There is a clear difference between the two and in order to understand one, you need to look at both. According to Dictionary.com, the word *tithe* means:

the tenth part of agricultural produce or personal income set apart as an offering to God or for works of mercy, or the same amount regarded as an obligation or tax for the support of the church, priesthood, or the like.

Now, here at First Baptist, we do not see the tithe as an obligation or tax, but lean towards the offering side of the definition. In scripture, the tithe was the first 10% of the whole. In an agriculture society, it was the first one-tenth or 10% of the harvest. It was brought to the storehouse (Malachi 3:10), or in today's understanding the church. The tithe was just a normal part of life for the Jews. They understood that everything belonged to God and giving back the tenth was just what they were supposed to do. They also understood that to not give was in essence robbing from God. (Malachi 3:8) In the New Testament, we then hear Jesus tell His listeners in Matthew 6:1-18 that when they give, they are to do it a certain way; when they pray, do it in a certain way; and when they fast, also do it in a certain way. Give, pray, and fast, all activities the Jews were familiar with and activities Jesus assumed they would be doing. However, Jesus showed them a better way to understand their relationship with God through those acts. They were to be private, not on display. So, just as Jesus instructed, we hold to that same understanding when it comes to our giving to the church. We do not assess or tax members, but rather totally rely on the members to live their lives according to God's instructions and His understanding of giving. Tithing is between you and God, but the understanding of how it works in your life must be tested against scripture.

What still amazes me is how God takes a group of folks who come from a wide variety of backgrounds, live in all parts of the city, work in every imaginable type of occupations, earn different levels of income, give out of what they have been blessed with, and He adds all of that together to accomplish what His plan is through First Baptist Church, Abilene. Kingdom work which occurs each week through City Light, First Friends, GLO, Family Life Center, Counseling Ministry, ladies Bible studies, men's prayer breakfast, Sunday school, worship—both in the sanctuary and by television, recovery groups, discipleship classes, funerals, weddings, and the list goes on and on. So, from the dime that you give from the dollar you have, God is able to do enormous amounts of ministry! And, He adds all of those dimes together to allow us to support a budget close to 3.5 million dollars. Wow, that is a lot of dimes, but with every dime ministry is accomplished.

THANK YOU!

Thank you for your gifts which helped purchase 48 backpacks full of supplies for the kids starting school this year at the IRC. The assistants in the church office helped stuff and label the packs and Trevor from the Friendship House delivered them to the IRC. They were so thankful for them and the kids were excited to have new school supplies and a new back pack to start their 2022 school year!





RANDOM THOUGHTS

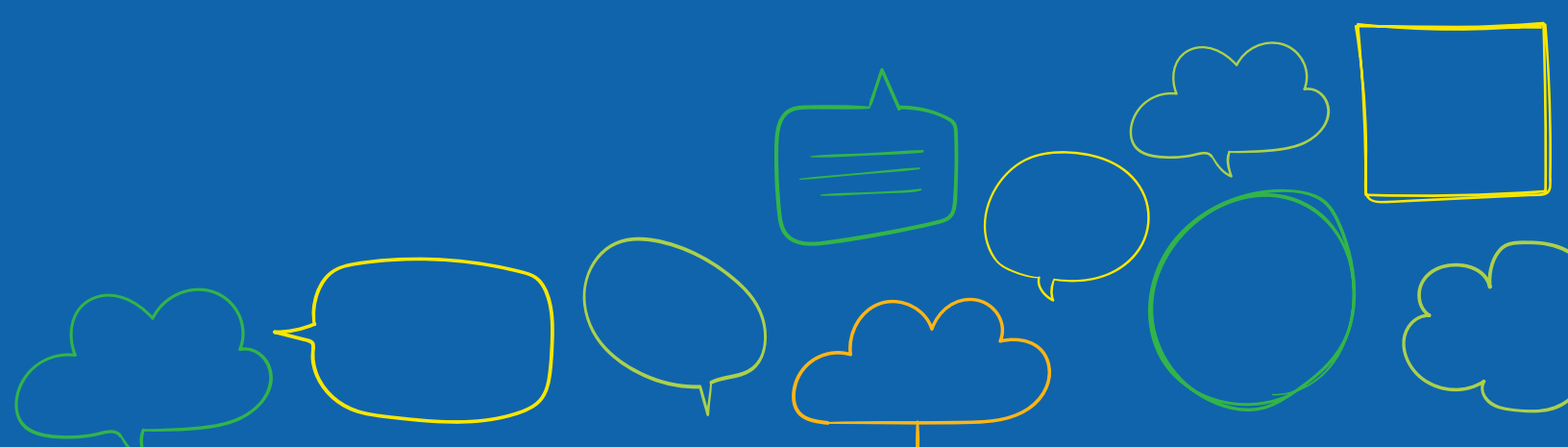
by Mike Greenfield

September marks the one-year anniversary of Dr. Christopher having retired as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church. One year ago, we were busy planning that celebration and how we, as a church, could honor him for 26+ years of faithful service to Kingdom work here at FBC. At that time, I knew there would be numerous situations which would arise where simply walking down the hall to his office and asking advice/answers would no longer be an option. Add the education building flood which made his office unusable for several months and the point was driven home even more. Not only was he not there, but his former office was not even usable. For 25 years, 18 of those as Pastor for Administration and Spiritual Development, I worked and walked along side of Phil. I had his back and I know he had mine. I often told people that my job was to do all the things necessary to keep things running so he could do what he was called to do without worrying about those issues.

So, after he retired, my job did not change. I still was tasked with keeping things running and hopefully running smoothly. But, over the past year, what I have been reminded of more and more each month is how blessed I am to have the people around me who help to make those things run smoothly. Those folks tend to fall into two categories, employees of the church and lay people who serve on the various boards, committees, and as deacons. I am privileged to serve alongside of some of the best people in the world. Every pastor, director, ministry assistant, custodian, teacher, whether full-time or part-time does their job with excellence and grace. They are a joy to be around and make the work environment an enjoyable place to be. The tenure of many of our employees gives testimony to the type of work environment we have. On September 5, Lee Curiel is marking his 43rd year of employment here at FBC. Jeanne Jowers just passed the 30-year mark and we have 8 others who are over the 20-year mark. So, either they have no where else to go (don't think that is the reason!) or they have found a place to work which feels like home! So, to all of the employees of FBC, I salute you and say a very heart-felt thanks.

The other group of folks who I have really come to appreciate this past year are all of the members of the various committees which I have the privilege of serving with. A few of those really had their workload increase because of the lack of a senior pastor. The personnel committee, under chair Mike Patrick last year and this year with Ed Harris at the helm, has been such a support and given wonderful guidance as we have navigated this "between senior pastors" time. The finance committee has kept the church in a solid fiscal position in spite of some decrease in giving. They have ensured that all the bills have been paid and ministries are able to continue, though on a scaled back basis due to the shortfall in funds.

However, the greatest joy comes from having two families who love and support me. My family which comes from my bloodline, and my family which comes because of the blood of Jesus Christ shed so that we could have life abundant and life eternal.



FBC UNIFIED MISSIONS OFFERING 2022

We can change the world one community at a time!

SEVEN MISSION OFFERINGS COMBINED INTO ONE

GOAL: \$75,000 YEAR TO DATE: \$13,907

Please continue to pray about how you can be involved in reaching our FBC Unified Missions offering goal of \$75,000. These offerings bring together seven different mission offerings which literally reach around the world.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions - 50%

Promotes leadership, ministry, and development of the local church among the least evangelized. Provides Bible translations and digital resources to reach international refugees, immigrants, and students. Seeks justice/reconciliation for the most marginalized and works to end extreme poverty through development and transforming communities to restore natural environments.

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.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CITY LIGHT

We are, as always, focused on meeting crisis needs, feeding the hungry, building biblical community, teaching children, and helping people move out of poverty!

September 2022



7,894 MEALS SERVED

Includes MWF meals, Sunday Breakfast, Continental Breakfast, Sack Lunches, and City Light Market*



445 VOLUNTEER HOURS



ROCKIN' MOMS

will meet again in September.



PERSONAL ASSISTANCE:

51 HOUSEHOLDS

helped with rent and utilities



92 WALK-INS

bus passes, clothing and other



139 MAIL

Delivered and checked



454 PHONE CALLS



79 SHOWERS

The following was submitted by Olga Gaona about her granddaughter, Jasmine Rangel, who has been active in City Light and the church youth ministry when she was younger.

Next time someone, especially at church, asks how I am doing, you can tell them great! Tell them that I am working with elderly people in a nursing home. I think helping out at City Light made me realize that I like working with adults, those in need who either don't have much family, or any at all, and making sure that they have everything they need, especially a meal they can enjoy in a safe place. I help out in the dining hall almost every day at work, serving soup, drinks, or lunch trays. It all makes me think about City Light a lot!

Messengers needed!

Are you interested in being a messenger to the Baptist General Convention of Texas?

The annual convention is November 13-15 in Waco, TX

If you are interested, please contact:
Suzanne Shaw - 673-5031

September

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

September 1, 7 years

Sheryl Doss

GLO Teacher

September 5, 43 years

Lee Curiel

Custodian

September 8, 12 years

Merri Roberts

Music Ministry Assistant

September 15, 3 years

Austen Winfrey

Pastor for Students

September 16, 3 years

Jamie Ramos

GLO Teacher

September 30, 3 years

Matthew Fahlender

Custodian

- 5 Church Offices Closed
for Labor Day Holiday
- 11 1st Grade Bible Recognition in Worship
Personnel Committee
- 14 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 16 Hope Camp Golf Tournament - FBC Day
- 18 Senior Adult Recognition
FLC Board
Missions Committee
- 20 Finance Committee
Deacons' Meeting
- 21 GLO Board
- 25 Lord's Supper

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

August 2022

Budget	August	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 232,020	\$2,173,160
Given	\$ 204,564	\$1,930,083

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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