



FIRSTWORDS

PRAYER PARTNER SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 7, 2025

A continued priority for our church is to deepen relationships between generations. At FBC we believe that strengthening intergenerational relationships helps the faith of all ages and gives witness to God's continued work in the world. We are planning to celebrate God's work in each generation on the morning of Sunday, September 7. On that Sunday, we are asking the partnering classes to meet together for at least 15 minutes getting to know each other and spending time in prayer with each other.

We realize this effort might feel a little awkward for some, but we believe it is healthy for our church. This is an important moment for different generations from the oldest to the youngest to interact, engage, and ultimately know each other.

As we prepare for September 7, please pray for each generation and join us as we encourage each other through fellowship and prayer.

"The Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5

Dear FBC Family,

These first few months are a lot of “firsts” for our family – first Round Up Sunday, first Lord’s Supper Sunday, first day at new schools for my children, first third Tuesday marathon meeting day (is that what you call it?), first hospital visit, first staff retreat, and so many other firsts. Yet, I am grateful for all the firsts we are experiencing at First!

When this goes out for publication, we will have completed staff retreat in Glorieta. Our focus this year is on getting to know one another, hearing about Mike’s sabbatical, and some time of play as well. In some of our sessions we discussed what our staff values will be. I believe in values-based leadership. As a follower of Jesus, I want Jesus’ Kingdom values to be the center of our values. We decided as a staff what we want to value together. As we develop these, we will be using them to evaluate ourselves and our events. These values will hold a mirror up to ourselves to make sure we are practicing what we preach.

We also had a session based around the question, “what haven’t you been able to dream about for the past four years?” It is no secret that the church has functioned well over the past four years, and our staff needs to be recognized and commended for that. At the same time, the feedback I have received is that it has been hard to start new initiatives or expand ministries already started. I believe and am praying that out of this session God will begin to stir something within our hearts that will effect the next four years of ministry here.

I am honored to be your pastor and am praying for you.

Grace and Peace,

RAY P. MILLER, DMIN
Pastor, FBC Abilene, TX



STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

by Mike Greenfield

Talking about giving is a very natural part of our spiritual walk, or maybe it should be. We, as a church, believe the Bible to be the word of God and the Bible is very clear about what our relationship to our financial resources should be. We are to tithe (one tenth of our resources) to God through the local church. According to the Bible, that is the starting point. The Bible also talks about offerings which are also given to specific causes at specific times for specific reasons. Those are separate and above the tithe. Then there is support given to other worthy causes God brings into our paths. These are worthwhile and many of them are Christ-centered and do great Kingdom work. So, as you think about your tithe, offerings, and support, here are some thoughts that might help.

Giving Options to Consider

In the fast paced, high technological world we live in, writing a check and putting it in an envelope seems totally foreign to many of us now. But here at the church, we have used the same tried and true system of offering envelopes for folks to have an easy way to give their tithes and offerings for the support of the ministry budget. So as technology changes, so should the church change to keep up with what people are doing in other areas of their lives.

Online giving is not entirely new to what we have been offering as a way to give. On the church website, www.fbcabilene.org, there is a link on the top row of options that takes you to the giving page for the church. The link is in a green box and says "Give Online." Simply click on this link and it will walk you through the process. Of course, by using this method it requires a credit or debit card, both of which have a 2.2% fee associated with it and are hoping that folks will include that in their

thinking as they use this method.

Another option is to set up a bank draft that would take a set amount out of your account and put in the church account on a set time frame. This option does not have any associated fees and takes out the "remember to do it" factor. Jeannie Jowers in the finance office can help you set this up or answer questions you might have. This is really convenient when you are travelling or want to simplify your life.

For those who are in their "golden" years, a "new" option to consider if you have an IRA and the "required minimum distribution" is occurring, then you might want to talk with your financial advisor and use the "qualified charitable contribution" option. This option allows you to give directly from your account to the church and not have to incur tax liability. Several of our members have started taking advantage of this option and are pleased with it.

Gifts That Keep On Giving

Regular gifts of tithes and offerings to the church are the most important forms of giving. These gifts make it possible for the church to continue to carry out the ministries of Jesus Christ at home and around the world.

However, you may have a desire to do something special and make a gift which bears fruit year after year. If so, the First Baptist Church Foundation can help you accomplish that desire. As a result of the interest expressed by some church members to make possible long-term, deferred, or special gifts for the future ministries of the church, the Foundation was established by the church in 1993. The foundation board distributes grants from the earnings twice a year for requests which meet the purpose of the foundation.

MEXICO CITY MISSION TRIP *report*

My medical mission trip to Tepipilli, a small community in Mexico City, was one of the most eye-opening and meaningful experiences of not only my nursing career, but in my life as a whole. I had the opportunity to use my skills to assist with pediatric exams by caring for children who often had little or no access to basic healthcare. Even with limited resources, we were able to provide care, comfort, and education—reminding me how powerful even the most basic care can be for someone.

Throughout the week, I helped Dr. Barry Moak with assessments, checked height and weight, and we supported local families with health education. It was a humbling experience that challenged me to not only adapt, but to show compassion more than ever before. I saw firsthand how deeply healthcare disparities affect underserved communities, and it reminded me not to take the tools and access I usually take for granted.

But, beyond the medicine, what made the biggest impact was how I saw God at work. I saw Him in the smiles of children who had waited patiently to be seen, in gratitude of parents, and in the strength of the local volunteers who tirelessly supported our efforts. There were language and cultural barriers, but love,

kindness, and presence spoke louder than words.

This trip reminded me why I became a nurse—to serve, to care, and to bring hope. It renewed my sense of purpose and confirmed that nursing is not just a career, but a calling. And for that, I'll always be grateful. Mexico City will forever have a place in my heart, and I am thankful for the many memories created with wonderful people!

MORGAN RAINS





A few weeks ago, a group of us embarked on an amazing mission trip to Mexico City. During our time in Mexico City, we had the opportunity to observe the local community, build relationships with the EDuk school, and grow both spiritually and personally. Our days were filled with a variety of activities, from eating lunch at the school, playing games with the kids, reading children's books, singing songs, providing medical assistance, to simply sharing laughter with the people we met. Despite language and cultural differences, we were able to enjoy our time together and share a wonderful week with one another. I am so grateful for our time in Mexico City with the sweet people we met. It was an incredible experience and I'm so thankful our church encourages and continues to support global missions.

BRITNEY TUCKER



MEXICO CITY MISSION TRIP report

I was told this week that First Baptist's Missions' outreach expenditures come to roughly 30% of our annual budget of about \$3.6 million, and for churches nationwide that number averages more like 12%. First, that seems like a good thing to me and second, it seems like you should know how at least some of that expenditure is being invested.

From August 5 through August 11, I was privileged to be part of a 6-person team who traveled to the Xochimilco District of Mexico City to work with EduK Child Strategies at its pilot program facility. EduK is a vital part of the dream of Javier and Aura Perez to lift 5,000 children in Mexico and Central America out of poverty by 2045. Javier currently serves as Director of Global Missions Programs and Impact for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

This was my second visit to EduK and my second opportunity to be involved in the facility's ongoing program of health and education for children, starting before birth and carrying on through childhood and adolescence into young adulthood; and of providing parenting, budgeting and monetary education, and job training for the community. All parts of a comprehensive program to accomplish their goal.

While a portion of our team carried out music, recreation, and education programs, as well as several hands-on projects to improve the facility and the home of one family, Morgan Rains and I provided 41 well-child exams for local kids from ages 2 through 13. We were provided an invaluable interpreter in Raul, who worked with us last year, and without whom we would have been lost. All the kids were accompanied by at least one parent and during the visits were encouraged to ask questions, and believe me, they did. Mexico, like much of the world, has a nationalized health program and we discovered that almost all the children were current on all the immunizations we were accustomed to seeing in the U.S., as well as a few we were not familiar with, given to prevent diseases endemic in that specific region. We were pleased to find that the children were generally in good health, well-fed, and happy. We also quickly realized how glad the families were to see us and how loving and open they were to our being there. It was interesting to hear their questions about advice or diagnoses they had been given by providers at the local clinics. I came to understand last year that they have a very high regard for "Norte Americano" medical care and physicians and want to know that we concur (or not) with what they have been told in Mexico.

It is very hard to maintain sanitary conditions in this neighborhood. There is no municipal water supply and all the waste is handled via often inadequate septic systems. Clean water comes at a premium and is used very cautiously. In the past, pinworms, a gastrointestinal parasite, had been a problem and through our efforts last year and ongoing work of EduK staff, the stool tests we did this year were all negative – a miracle in itself!

On a previous medical mission in a different part of Mexico, the local physician challenged us by saying: “We hope to see you return and bring your skills and training to assist our community again. If you return to serve again, it is truly a mission trip; if you come only once, it’s a vacation.” Other churches have continued that work and we have found a partnership with EduK that I hope continues until Javier’s and Aura’s dream, which has become my dream for Xochimilco and now their next facility in Tepipilli, Oaxaca, becomes reality.

The picture accompanying this article is of the primary classroom in EduK’s new facility, that they found and occupied after our first visit in 2024. This was taken at the dedication and ribbon-cutting of the room, which was provided by your tithes and offerings. The plaque on the

wall with the balloons proclaims it to be the “FBC Abilene” Room.

The practice of medicine has been my life’s work. It is a calling I began to feel as a child and has pursued me throughout my life. A calling from God and one He equipped me for and blessed me in. It was also a calling that required a lot from my family, and I will forever be grateful for their sacrifices. Some of you have heard me say I did not retire from Family Practice in 2023 because I got tired of seeing patients – it was just time to go a different direction. Weeks like this one allow me to get my hands “dirty” again and experience the smiles, hugs, and twinkling eyes of beautiful children. For that I thank you.

BARRY MOAK



MINISTRY OF COUNSELING AND ENRICHMENT

September is nationally recognized as both Suicide Prevention Month and Recovery Month. While these topics are not easy to talk about, they are deeply important for the health of individuals, families, and our entire community. Anyone can struggle with addiction and thoughts of suicide. Breaking down stereotypes helps us see these realities more clearly. Please join us in praying for those who may be silently suffering. Pray that they would feel hope, know they are not alone, and be willing and able to reach out for help.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis or needs immediate support, please call the 24/7 local Crisis Hotline at 1-800-758-3344.



Community Outreach

Tiffany Fink was very kind to volunteer to host a booth at Madison Middle School's open house on August 26 for MOCE. Tiffany was able to meet with several youth and families as she passed out informational brochures and offered waters, candy, and therapeutic stickers. She also had book suggestions on the table and was able to discuss the types of counseling services MOCE offers! We are so excited that Tiffany Fink has joined our counseling team!



ELYA WHITTEN

Director of Ministry of
Counseling and Enrichment

THERAPIST SPOTLIGHT: *Rhonda Cox*

This month, our spotlight therapist is Rhonda Cox. Rhonda has been at Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment since 1993 when she was a graduate intern at HSU. Under the supervision of Mike Stedham, her journey into counseling began and she's been faithfully walking with clients ever since.

Rhonda's path to becoming a therapist started long before her formal training. She explained that her own struggles during childhood and adolescence were likely what led her to becoming a counselor. Raised by a mother who openly shared her love for Jesus, Rhonda experienced faith, not just as a belief, but as a lived reality. "Her relationship with God was contagious," Rhonda recalls. "Even as a teenager, I believed that Jesus could heal the invisible brokenness. As an only child, He was real to me early on."

Rhonda's heart is especially drawn to working with children and teenagers who battle anxiety and depression. "No matter the circumstances, I want them to know the strength they carry and the powerful potential within them," she says. She also has a passion for walking alongside women of all ages as they navigate doubts about their worth.

When asked what was most rewarding about counseling, Rhonda underlined, "It is forever new...no two people have the same story to tell. I am honored to walk with each person toward greater experiences with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc."

Rhonda is also involved in her local church activities and a life group. She loves to read and colors every day. Rhonda explained that coloring scriptures or beautiful prints "calms me to my core." If she could share one message with the world it would be this: "You are loved beyond your wildest imagination. And God is closer than your very next breath."



HEALING HEARTS MINISTRY

Cherry Curry, Director

September 2025 begins the 14th year of the Healing Hearts Ministry. The mission of this “prayer shawl” ministry is to meet the prayer needs of members of First Baptist Church by making gifts such as shawls, throws, prayer cloths, angels, and “no-sew” fleece blankets as tangible reminders that prayer has been said for the recipient. We also make scarves and hats for our City Light neighbors. The ladies who make these gifts pray over them while they are making them, and the group prays over each gift or greeting card before it is prepared for delivery. When possible, we also gift people in our community and abroad, who are connected to our church family in some way, when they are going through significant health issues or have experienced great loss. Since the inception of this ministry in September 2012, we have taken care of 5,210 prayer needs.

We currently have 19 active members in our group. If you are interested in being a part of this ministry, we would love to have you visit one of our meetings to see if this is where God would lead you for service. You don't have to knit or crochet to serve in this ministry. We have members who serve as “couriers” by delivering the gifts. Previously, we had some ladies who helped document this ministry by creating beautiful scrapbooks for us. We are also very happy to help you learn to “knit” a hat using a loom. We can teach you to make a “no-sew” fleece blanket, as well. We are happy to work with you to learn any of these skills,

so that you can participate in this ministry. However, if you are not interested in any of these ways to serve in Healing Hearts Ministry, we still would appreciate your prayers for those of us who are working in this ministry.

Our business meetings generally happen on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month. During these meetings we talk about prayer needs, pray over the prayer gifts or cards and prepare them for delivery or mailing. On the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, we have a “Knit-Along” where we get together to work on our projects or learn a new skill. All of our meetings are in Room 6 of University Place from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. **When there are 5 Thursdays in a month, we sometimes have the “business” meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month. I will send out “Reminder” emails about each meeting.

If you're interested in serving in this ministry, but can't come to the meetings, we can work with you to provide the materials necessary for making a prayer gift at home. Also, if you would like to help with the “no-sew” fleece blankets, but have limited time to help, we can arrange to let you finish the edging that holds the fleece together. We can teach you how to do that.

If you are interested in being a part of Healing Hearts Ministry, or have any questions, feel free to call Cherry Curry at 325-864-1897.

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

hello

First Baptist Church family!

For those of you whom I don't know my name is Keathley Roan, and I am stepping into the role of Preschool Director here at FBC. I'd like to take a moment to tell you a little about myself. I grew up here in Abilene and, along with my family, joined First Baptist in 2002 after coming from another denomination. This church has been a place of spiritual growth and community for me ever since. My husband, Aaron, and I were married at FBC in 2010. We have two wonderful kids, Hayes (12) and Collins (9), who are both products of our fantastic preschool ministry. Professionally, I have a background in teaching, and spent several years in the classroom before stepping away to focus on raising our children. During that time, Hayes and Collins were part of the preschool ministry and we saw firsthand the love, care, and faith that was poured into each child who came through the preschool doors. FBC is fortunate to have such overwhelming support for all of our ministries! Over the past year, I've felt the pull back into the world of education. When the opportunity arose to return to teaching in this way—within a church and program which means so much to me—I

knew it was the Holy Spirit's nudging. First Baptist Church has always been a special part of our family's story. For that reason, I look forward to working with the teachers, volunteers, and families to continue to provide a faith-filled environment where children are nurtured, loved, and encouraged to grow in every way.



MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT:

CITY LIGHT

Community Ministries

SUNDAY BREAKFAST: 646

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST: 514

COMMUNITY LUNCH: 2,408

PRODUCE: 664

VOLUNTEER HOURS: 549

SHOWERS: 255

CLOTHING ITEMS: 403

CALLS AND VOICEMAILS: 466

MAIL CHECKS: 370

FRONT DESK WALK-INS: 2,439

DINING ROOM WALK-INS: 2,661



SHEAR JOY: Sierra's Back!

City Light is thrilled to welcome Sierra back after a short break. She's once again helping our neighbors look and feel their best. A fresh haircut does wonders for self-esteem, and we are so grateful for all that she does.



To Our Amazing City Light
Volunteers,

Your willingness to give your
time, energy, and heart to
help others is truly inspiring.
Every act of kindness—
whether it's offering a smile,
serving a meal, lending a
listening ear, or simply being
present—makes a difference
far greater than you may ever
realize.

Because of you, people feel
seen, valued, and cared for.
You remind our community
that love, and hope are alive
and thriving. Please know how
deeply appreciated you are—
not only for what you do, but
for who you are.

Thank you for showing up,
for pouring out compassion,
and for being the hands and
feet that bring comfort and
light to others. You are a gift,
and the impact you make is
immeasurable.

With heartfelt gratitude,

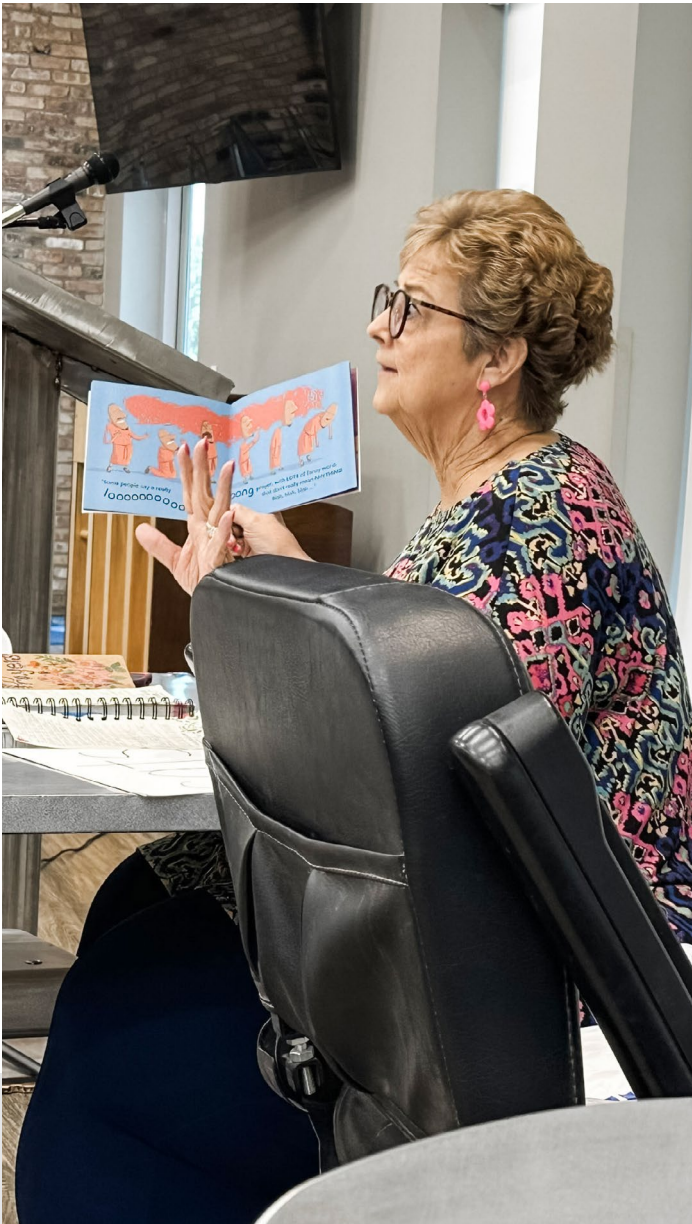
City Light Staff



A WONDERFUL GATHERING AT *The Sisters' Table*

We were thrilled to have 20 ladies join us for a special time of prayer at our recent Sisters' Table gathering. Ann Mayhall led a meaningful discussion on the importance of prayer, reminding us of the power it has in our daily lives. Each participant also decorated a prayer journal, complete with the Lord's Prayer inside—a beautiful keepsake to encourage ongoing prayer.

We invite you to join us for our next Sisters' Table meeting on Monday, September 15, at 10:00 a.m. in the City Light dining room. Our topic of conversation will be "Growing in Christ." During this time together, we will also create dried flower bookmarks to place inside our prayer journals as a reminder of God's ever-blooming presence in our lives.





FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE ON ORANGE STREET

FBC Abilene is happy to welcome back the Adams family to the Friendship House on Orange Street. David will be leading the efforts of "intentional neighboring" in the College Heights Neighborhood. The Adams family are returning to the house and ministry position that they served previously with another organization. FBC Abilene was blessed to continue this important community ministry and to have the Adams family providing leadership. Be watching for how you can join in and help with this effort. Lift them up in prayer as they start this new journey and find out how you can help.

**Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and
with all your soul and
with all your mind.' This
is the first and greatest
commandment. And the**

second is like it:

**'Love your
neighbor
as yourself.'**

Matthew 22:37-39



STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

September 30, 6 years
MATTHEW FAHRLENDER
Custodian

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

August 2025

Budget	August	Year-to-Date
Required	\$372,020	\$2,241,130
Given	\$409,178	\$2,166,430*

* This includes the 4th Sunday in July

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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SEPTEMBER

- 7** Prayer Partner Sunday
Personnel Committee Meeting
- 9** Women's Coffee & Conversation
- 10** Buildings & Grounds
Committee Meeting
- 16** CLCM Executive Board Meeting
CLCM Full Board Meeting
Finance Committee Meeting
Deacons' Meeting
- 18** Men's Ministry Brown Bag Lunch
- 21** Lord's Supper
New Member Lunch
Missions' Committee Meeting
- 22** MOCE Board Meeting
- 23** GLO Board Meeting

OCTOBER

- 2** Blessed Family Event
- 5** Personnel Committee Meeting
FBC Night at the Zoo