

FIRST *words*

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

SERVING IS A BLESSING

by Collin Zalesak

Serving is being able to help others. Serving is: Blood. Sweat. Tears.

I can relate the most to sweat. Habitat for Humanity is one of the current ways I serve in this fashion. I have previously been highly involved in mission trips where we have done; roofing, built ramps, and painted in a variety of different places. From this sweat, I have learned that serving also means smiles, praises, and sometimes commitment from those who have bonded with us as we help them. This is what serving is; the ability to help others and in doing so bringing the Word of Christ to them.



FBC/New Light Baptist Church Fellowship

Sunday, July 16 - 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Family Life Center

Covered dish meal with chicken strips provided. Bring a salad or side to share according to following alphabetical breakdown by first letter of last name:

A-H - Salad; I-P - Vegetable (yellow/white); Q-Z - Vegetable (green/other)

You may sign up in Sunday school, or call Debra in the church office (675-8116).



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

July's issue features the many ways of serving. Our commitment to serve is what separates an admirer or believer in Jesus from a follower of Jesus. The source of serving comes from a convicting sense of mission rather than some duty. To paraphrase Elton Trueblood, serving without a mission is like lighting a fire without burning.

Laurie Beth Jones tells the story her uncle told about the strict procedures of sentries during World War II. If an unidentified soldier appeared suddenly in the dark and could not state his mission, he was automatically shot without question. She asks, "What if we reinstituted that policy today?" Sounds pretty drastic, but it would force millions of believers to re-examine who we are and what we are about as followers of Jesus. Those of us who have never known a mission for Christ would be launched from the pew onto the playing field of ministry.

I wonder if you have a personal mission statement. They are not just reserved for churches or corporations. According to Jones, "Such a statement is, in essence, a written down reason for being." It defines your purpose. It becomes your reason to serve far beyond any call from the "Committee on Committees."

The most influential leader in human history had a mission statement that guided everything he did or said. Two thousand years ago, Jesus said, "I have come to set the captive free." He came not only to redeem us, but to release us for a mission.

I hope using the mission statement of Jesus doesn't scare you off from considering your own purpose. He is the Savior of the world, but He called us to take up His work as a part of our mission.

The words of Jesus reflect the three elements of a good mission statement according to Jones. A mission statement

should be no more than a single sentence long. It should be easily understood by a twelve year old. It should be able to be recited by memory at gun-point. Over these summer months, will you consider writing your own mission statement? I realize it is a heavy assignment for the "lazy days" of summer, but it could bring life and purpose like you have never known as you serve to fulfill it. Jones challenges the way we are living: "You are either living your mission, or you are living someone else's. Which will it be?"

Let me tell you a story of serving and one living out her mission that is hidden from most of our eyes. Many of you know Freda Megginson. What you don't know is that on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays Freda is busy serving in the basement of City Light. She serves coffee and day-old pastries downstairs to those coming off the streets early in the morning. She is in charge of scheduling showers and makes sure the rules are followed. She takes the grocery sacks of clothes and washes them - clothes which most of us would never touch. She folds the wash that will enable some to interview for a job, go to work, or just have the gift of feeling clean.

I don't know if Freda has a mission statement written down on paper, but she sure has one written on her heart. As so many search for a purpose or some waste away their lives in self-centeredness, Freda has a purpose. I feel like I am not worthy to untie her sandals. I would be so bold to suggest that in the "small acts" she undertakes in the City Light basement, she is "Helping to set the captives free." I think I have heard that before. What are you hearing that will direct your mission and serving? Isaiah 30:21 promises: "And you will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the path. Walk in it.'"

Listening for a mission,

Phil

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

On Sunday, July 9, we will once again have the opportunity to spend some quality time with senior adults who have been such a vital part of our church. Over the years, these special people have given their time and talents to the missional enterprises of First Baptist Church.

This is one of those special times in our church family when you can participate in a time to visit and thank these people for their contribution in making First Baptist Church of Abilene a great church.

Here is how you can help.

1. Plan to participate in Christmas in July on Sunday, July 9.
2. After the morning worship service, leave through the Welcome Center and pick up a gift and a name to visit.
3. Take your gift to the person's home and have a brief visit with them.

These senior adults will enjoy sitting with you for a short visit and you will leave knowing you have reached out to someone in a special way. Your family will be blessed by this investment of your time and your life.

See you Sunday, July 9!



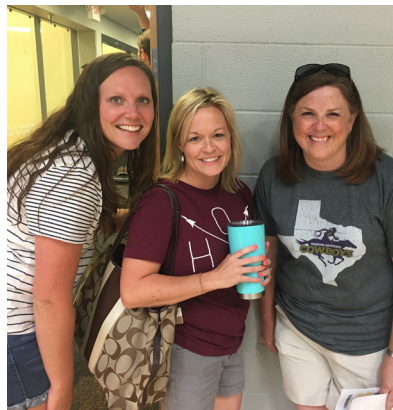
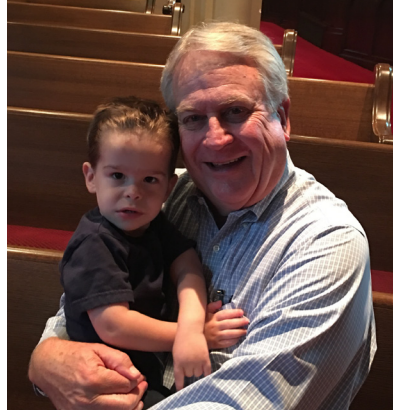
The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

the PATH to PEACE

SUMMER SERMON SERIES

The Power and Peace of the 23rd Psalm

July 9	No Fear: A Way to the High Country Psalm 23:4, with Children's Sermon
July 16	Mike Coffey, Deacon and Pastor, Preaching
July 23	The Snake of Shame & Poison of Perfectionism Psalm 23:5
July 30	Who is Following You? Psalm 23:6a
August 6	Meredith Stone, Professor Logsdon Seminary, Preaching
August 13	Can You Imagine What is Ahead? Psalm 23:6b, with Children's Sermon



TATTERED HANDS

by Alena Jo Vaughn

Laughter consumes the soul. It is the soft chuckle, the squeaking giggle, the burly belly laugh, and the timid snickering that surrounds stories and bridges humanity together. Laughter needs no translation, but rather accompanies a gentle spirit and a smiling face. As I stand amongst the Macedonian dirt, the rapid sputtering of a Poraka beneficiary greets my ears. Words, without pause, fall from his lips while his hands wave in the air telling of pride and joy at seeing his garden take fruition. Though my lacking knowledge of Macedonian vocabulary is evident, his contagious joy is not swayed. Eagerly, he attempts to explain; yet, it is his hands that draw my attention. Hands marred by the duties of heavy lifting, hands tough from strenuous acts of manual labor, hands eager to serve, and hands extended as the church.

Persons with mental disabilities in Macedonia are often institutionalized and pushed out of sight and out of mind. In an attempt to tenderly care for such persons, Poraka stands as a home which welcomes all people. Poraka is not merely a building forged by the hands of its dwellers, but rather it is a family obtained by the work of its beneficiaries. Each strives to care for another while gently seeking to maintain peace. They wait their turn to participate while cheering on their fellow friends. The beneficiaries extend love in a manner so foreign to my norm that I am overwhelmed with the realization that I must learn from them the art of being the Church. They are the Church, consumed with the intent to love and grow as a family. They are the Church, wrapped in the wholeness of caring for the least of these while inviting all to partake without seeing divisions amongst themselves. They are the Church, seeking to care for each other despite circumstances and struggles. Perhaps, it is I who has become so blinded by the divisions amongst our world that I dwell upon the differences rather than embracing my neighbors in acts of love.

Flippant hands continue to thrash in the air, but my focus has returned to the kind face of the Poraka beneficiary. As his words cease, realization of my lack of understanding splinters across his face. His emotions contort into a smile partnered with a gentle laughter. Then the tattered hands, callused from labor, stretch in my direction. As warm arms embrace me, my heart leaps because it is his hands that represent not the severity of work, but the calling of the Church. Observe your hands, are they scarred from fighting for justice? Are they extended in an embrace of love? Are they wrapped in the bandages of humility? Are your worn hands accompanied with a presence of laughter that overwhelms the soul and welcomes all humanity? Perhaps such an invitation should reside more evidently upon my claiming to be the Church.



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

Thank you to our volunteers for your hard work on the Habitat project! So far, we have built the inside and outside framing for the Mulanda's home. Hopefully, in the next couple of weeks we will move their home to 4317 Congress St. and are looking for volunteers to help us with the move. The exact time and dates for the move are to be determined. Future build dates in July are the 8, 15, 22, and 29. Please contact Rebecca Hunt in the missions' office at (325) 675-8112 or rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org if you would like to sign up.

WHAT IT MEANS TO SERVE AT CITY LIGHT

by Wanda Sumner

Our verse at City Light, Jeremiah 29:7, calls us to "Seek the welfare of the city." This scripture echoes the Great Commission in Matthew 28:31, which encourages us to "Go into all the world," and our world in this instance is the city of Abilene. Our church is being obedient to that calling through the ministry at City Light.

I'm privileged to be a small part of that as I volunteer at the front desk on Friday morning. Until this ministry began, I knew nothing about this segment of Abilene's population nor did I know anyone who was homeless. Now, I know each person has a name, a story, and a set of circumstances that has, and may still be, controlling their lives.

They have been my teachers through the years, and I sure owe them a debt of gratitude! They have taught me about generosity as I see them share what they have, for example bus tickets and quarters, with one another. They have taught me a greater level of gratitude for my material blessings, for they carry all their earthly possessions in a bag! Their possessions are reduced to the absolute essentials. They have taught me that extreme adversities can be endured with humor, hope, and grace. I have a deep appreciation for them and their journey through struggle and hardship. They have taught me to value my past; for a home where I was taught about Christ, ethical and moral behaviors, the value of work, and how to use our resources. For many of them this was missing in their lives, through no fault of their own.

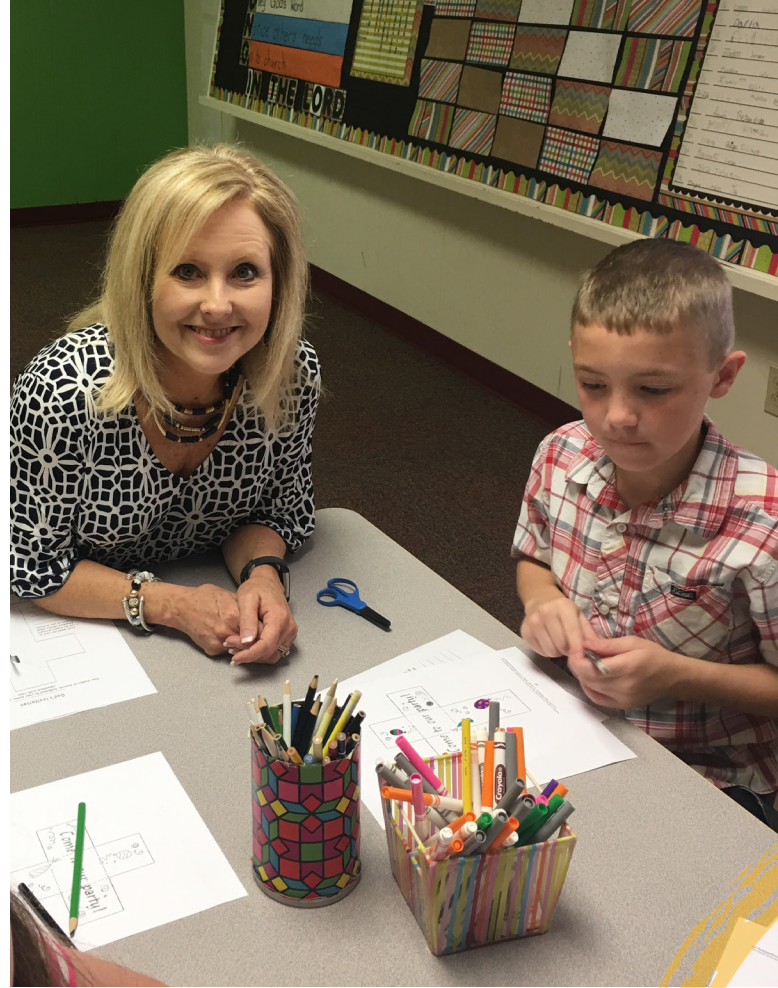
They have made me aware that as a Christian, I am to make every effort to love in a non-judgmental way as Christ does. My days are far richer and I am a better person because I have served at City Light. I am thankful our church provides this ministry. It is a beacon of hope and love where the good news of Jesus Christ is preached and lived.



SERVING

by Debbie Langford

Serving. It is something I find easy to do. I easily say “YES” to lots of things I’ve been invited to take part in. Sometimes, I will admit, I have said yes to too many things at the same time. I remember the time Stella Fogle asked me to work in 2nd grade Sunday School with her. I told her I would do it for one year, because I liked teenagers, and at the time I was a high school teacher for Abilene ISD. I didn’t have any experience with 2nd graders and I didn’t feel like I had an interest there. So, I did my one year and quit. Every time I saw Stella at church she would ask me to come back to 2nd grade. So, I finally said YES to her and it is actually one of the best things I have ever taken on. I had 3 kids at home, a traveling husband who wasn’t home much, a full time job of my own...and I said YES. Somehow God helps you make time to fit everything in. That was years ago and I am still in 2nd grade. Whether I am teaching Sunday School, serving on a church committee, or involved in our new PLACE ministry, I know while I am serving others I am serving God. It has helped to grow me as a church member, grow my prayer life, and it has grown me as a Christian. I’ve had to make time to serve, but it has made me better in so many ways.



THREE YEAR OLD SUNDAY SCHOOL

by Bob Fink

So I get this phone call Sunday night from the grandfather of one of the children in Katrina’s and my Sunday School class of three year olds who, when asked by his grandfather, “What was Doctor Bob’s bible story about today?” said, “These guys fished all night in a boat and didn’t catch anything and then saw a man on the shore who told them to throw their net on the other side of the boat and they did and caught a whole bunch of fish and almost sank and it turned out the man was Jesus and he had a fire going and cooked fish for breakfast and everybody ate all they wanted and then they had pie.”

Of course they had pie. All happy endings include pie or jelly bears or goldfish crackers. So why would anyone choose to attend grown-ups Sunday School when you could be instructed by three year olds—the little ones Jesus called to him, bolting past the grownups busy shushing the kids, shaming their mothers for interrupting Jesus’s sermon? You know what Jesus told his ignorant disciples then gathered the children to him and tried once more to explain why his kingdom is only for children.





Tuesday, July 18 ~ 12:00 PM
FBC Dining Room
Speaker ~ Keith Post
“Recreation for Senior Adults”

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

July 7, 4 years
Debbie McClarty
Children's Choir Coordinator

Summer
FUN NIGHTS
at the flc
5:45 PM – 8 PM
Dinner Served from 5:45-6:45 | \$3 per person

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

June 2017

Budget	June	Year-to-Date
Required	\$240,000	\$1,542,311
Given	\$247,426	\$1,549,408

EVENT CALENDAR:

JULY

- 5-8 Youth Mission Trip/Arlington
- 9 Christmas in July
Personnel Committee
- 10-14 City Light Building
Maintenance
- 12 Buildings/Grounds Committee
Preschool Fun Day/Zoo
- 16 FBC/New Light Fellowship
- 18 LLL
Finance Committee
Deacons' Meeting
- 20 3rd Thursday @ the Park
(Children)
- 23 Lord's Supper
- 23-28 Family Mission Trip
- 31-8/3 Children's Camp

AUGUST

- 9 Last Summer Fun Night
- 27 Round-Up Sunday
- 30 Fall Wednesday Night
Activities Begin



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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