



The Way

April 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

He is Risen...

Sunrise Gathering 6:30 a.m.
Breakfast 7:15 a.m.
Contemporary Worship 8:15 a.m.
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Traditional Worship 11:00 a.m.

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

This article has been on my heart for months now and I have been waiting and praying about when I should write it. It speaks to a trend I am seeing among Christians and within churches throughout the country, ours included. Be warned. Some of you are not going to like what I have to say.

First, let me preface it by reminding you of the words of John Donne. When he said, "No man is an island," he wasn't referring to man? as sub-continental land surrounded by water. He was talking about the fact that we were not made for isolation. We were made for relationships. We were made to be connected with others. Never is this more true than in the spiritual realm. God did not create us or save us in order to be spiritual islands. He puts us in a spiritual family where we can grow. He designed us to connect with one another.

For this reason, we have the church. The church is the local expression of the body of Christ. The church is the recipient of spiritual gifts so that the church can employ those gifts in God's work. The church is given the most important task in the universe, the Great Commission. All of these are reasons to be committed to and involved in the church on a deep level.

If you want to know how much of a priority this thing called the church should be, just consider all of the "one another" verses in the New Testament. The Bible tells us that within the church we are to

"love one another" (John 13:34), "be devoted to one another" (Romans 12:10), "build up one another" (Romans 14:19), "accept one another" (Romans 15:7), "admonish one another" (Romans 15:14), "greet one another" (Romans 16:16), "wait upon one another" (1 Corinthians 11:33), "care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25), "serve one another" (Galatians 5:13), "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), "forebear one another" (Ephesians 4:2), "be kind to one another" (Ephesians 4:32), "regard one another as more important than ourselves" (Philippians 2:3), "comfort one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:18), "encourage one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11), "live in peace with one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:13), "stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24), "confess your sins to one another" and "pray for one another" (James 5:16), "offer hospitality to one another" (1 Peter 4:9), and "have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:7). This list of things we are to do with and for and unto "one another" touches upon almost every area of life.

There seems to be one word in the Bible that summarizes all of the above. It's the Greek word for "fellowship," "koinonia." Koinonia goes beyond surface level interaction and hand shakes. It requires time and commitment. Koinonia requires the immersion of our lives into the life of the church. Now the question I find myself asking is this: Can we really do these things with the token amount of time provided by the typical, weekly Sunday morning experience? I think not. Can we experience koinonia if we only gather with our church family once per week? Very

doubtful.

I am already prepared for the response of some. "There is no verse in the Bible that tells us how often we should attend church." That is true. But it's also true that the Bible gives us a list of things we should be doing as a church and it is impossible for anyone to do those things by coming to church once per week. Someone else might add, "I don't have to attend church to be a Christian." You do, however, have to be vitally connected to a church to be a *growing* Christian. This goes against the grain of how we think as Americans. There is an increasing disdain for "organized religion." The "Jesus and Me" philosophy has grown tremendously in recent years. "I don't need church. I don't need a spiritual family. I just need 'Jesus and me.'"

For an example of this line of thinking, one popular author, Donald Miller, recently wrote a blog post in which he decided he didn't need church anymore. He claims that he can "experience an intimacy with God that is strong and healthy" without involvement in a body of believers. First of all, I seriously doubt that what he is saying is true. Second of all, he fails to understand the point of the church to begin with. Contrary to popular opinion, church isn't just about you and your needs. It is about being a part of God's agenda on this earth and bringing Him glory. It is also about you ministering to the needs of others. I would love to ask Donald Miller of what church he was last a member. I would then ask how many of their shut-ins he's visited lately. I would then want to know

how many of them lost a job and knew he was praying for them. How many of them went through a trial and knew he would be there for them? Since he has decided that church is no longer for him, the answer would be "zero."

If you are a Sunday morning only Christian, your church experience will never come anywhere close to what the Bible says it should be. Your life will not impact near as many as it could. You will not reach as many or disciple as many people. When others around you need encouragement, you won't notice to be able to give it, because you aren't there. When someone needs admonishment, your voice will be silent. When someone needs a shoulder to lean on, yours will be absent. And when it's you in the valley, you will not have the strength or the support you need from others.

Sometimes, the church family desperately wants to minister to you but cannot. For example, there are many times that I have seen someone who merely attended a weekly worship service who experienced some kind of severe adversity. A life threatening illness. A marriage on the verge of disbanding. The sudden loss of an immediate family member. That person becomes disenfranchised because "the church is not there for them." But how can the church be there for them when they are not connected enough to the church for others to know when it's their hour of need?

One of our members told me about a recent conversation he had with one of our *former* members. The former member, who was never very involved and therefore known by few people, complained because he had surgery and no one in the church visited him or checked on him. What the former member did not know was that the wife of the current member he was talking to had gone through breast cancer. The member wisely replied, "How many times did you call me when my wife had cancer? Did you visit? Did you write?" The hypocrisy could not be more obvious. The nominal former church member who complained because no one ministered to him was just as absent when his brother in Christ needed him.

The ministries of the church suffer greatly from this phenomenon. I recently heard a pastor in South Carolina say, "The average church member has no idea how much non-involvement hurts." How true! In any church, ministries are on life support due to non-involvement. Some simply do not exist due to non-involvement. I can name ministries right now that I have a burning desire to see happening at First Baptist Church that do not because of non-involvement.

One example of how this church is negatively affected by non-involvement is our deacon ministry. The truth is, First Baptist Church of Homestead has maintained a number of deacons far below what is needed, because adding deacons would mean adding men less involved in the church. Furthermore, when less

committed men become leaders, their lack of commitment has a negative trickle down affect within the congregation. For example, "Why should I come to church more than once per week if that deacon does not?" Obviously, when a church lacks the necessary deacons, the ministry suffers because needs within the body go unmet.

I have pointed out a problem, but what about solutions? Every one of us should reconsider our commitment, not just to the Lord, but to the church God has called us to as well. For example, Paul referred to himself as the church's *servant* in Colossians 1:25. This should be our attitude as well. We must also reconsider those commitments that would disconnect us from the body of Christ and times of corporate worship. I recently read an article in which a man lamented the fact that upon attending his son's Sunday morning soccer tournament, he saw no fewer than twenty other church members at the same tournament. They were all there because the soccer league stipulated that each team was required to have one hundred percent of its members in order to participate. What child wants to tell the rest of the team that *they* can't play in a tournament because *his* family is committed to church? Parents, any league that places such a requirement on your child is not a league in which your child should be participating.

I find that other Christians

have adopted the “out of town” excuse. I can’t come to church Sunday because I will be “out of town.” Your business takes you “out of town.” You vacation “out of town.” You have family “out of town.” The “out of town” weekends really start to add up. In days past, when someone said they would be “out of town” it was because they had a legitimate work requirement or family obligation that was unquestionable. As our commitment to the body has decreased, “Out of town” becomes something we do because, truth be told, we are not committed enough to the body of Christ to “stay in town” as often as we should. Your commitment to the body of Christ is something that should “keep you in town” most of the time.

At this point, I should point out that there really are folks in our church who are only able to come to a weekly service. Health or work will not allow for greater involvement. For example, the single parent nurse can’t quit the job that has her working Sunday nights. Furthermore, people get sick and need a nurse every day of the week. Police are needed to patrol our streets on Wednesday nights as well as Sunday mornings. You know who you are. Please know these words are not directed at you. I am primarily addressing those who have chosen a minimal connection to the body of Christ. I want you to know how much you are missing and how

much the church is missing you. I should also point out that what I am describing is not unique to First Baptist Church. I have preached in hundreds of churches in multiple states and countries and I have spoken to members of thousands of other churches. Out of all of them, I have only known one American church that sincerely did not have this problem. My prayer is that out of all of these churches, First Baptist Church of Homestead would one day become the second.

On another note, I am so excited about the prayer evangelism project that is currently underway. In the last four weekends, we have visited exactly 1,270 homes. We have one more week of prayer canvassing to go and then we will begin to make follow up visits wherever there is an open door. Pray for us as we attempt to individually share the gospel with hundreds of people in the coming month. And since Easter also falls within this month, we will be inviting those to whom we have ministered during this project. I truly believe we could see more first time Easter visitors this year than ever before. We’ll be giving out Easter invite cards these next two weekends. Please grab a BUNDLE and be giving them out to EVERYONE you meet!

Speaking of Easter, because of the construction taking place on the west side of our property, it is IMPERATIVE that we have good parking attendants this year. Some cars will need to be parked on the OTHER side of the construction, which means we will be using golf carts in order to transport folks to the sanctuary. I need

my core, committed FBCH members to park either west of the construction or south of the main entrance by the sign. Yes, it’s a hassle. But because of the construction, we just won’t “survive” Easter unless many of you are willing to do it. The LAST thing we want on Easter Sunday is multitudes of people driving away without ever getting out of their car because they could not find a place to park. Without your help, that is exactly what will happen. Thank you in advance for your flexibility in this matter.

Also, if you haven’t seen the progress on the west side, you should take a look. Pretty soon, it will be a beautiful, completed building – on the outside. Then we’ll be out of money! But being halfway there after only a few years is nothing to complain about! THANK YOU for being so generous. And don’t forget the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North Americans. For over 5,000 North American missionaries, this is their primary means of support.

I am so glad that my church is my spiritual family. I look forward to celebrating the living hope we have through the resurrection of Christ with all of you in the days ahead.

*Pastor
Howard*



Happy Birthday!

4/01 - Stephanie Torres	4/08 - Jessica Porco	4/17 - Hailey Zaldivar	4/23 - Curt Schmidt
4/01 - Kevin Zelman	4/08 - Melissa Pound	4/18 - Aisha Christen	4/24 - Lupe Berrones
4/02 - Billy Ader	4/08 - Jenny Waggoner	4/18 - Kayla DeLeon	4/25 - Monica Alvarez
4/02 - Steven Breivogel	4/09 - Alex Toirac	4/18 - Lyla Irizarry	4/25 - Debbie Bergeson
4/02 - Ryan Lott	4/10 - Fabian Hernandez	4/18 - Elisha Kinkade	4/25 - CJ Ramos
4/03 - Isaiah Cornelius	4/10 - Stefanie Lugo	4/18 - Peter Quinones	4/26 - Brunilda Nieves
4/03 - Levi Harden	4/11 - Ryan Accursio	4/19 - Robert Carnell	4/27 - Korey Cayford
4/03 - Hannah Mills	4/11 - Ileana Dickson	4/19 - Danielle Lamb	4/28 - Margaret Clason
4/03 - Karina Toirac	4/11 - Blake Dorman	4/19 - Tyler Sangbush	4/28 - Hanah Do Vakke-Lopez
4/05 - Genady Sanchez	4/12 - Michelle Cordova	4/19 - Raul Sarduy	4/29 - Austin Diehl
4/07 - Noah DeJohn	4/12 - Susie Lugo	4/19 - Emilee Vasquez	4/29 - Kevin Orosa
4/07 - Maria Macerllas	4/14 - Navaeh Whiddon	4/20 - Mayra Blandford	4/29 - Alejandro Perez-Morell
4/07 - Jim Polles	4/16 - John Messenger	4/21 - Giselle Lucio	4/29 - Marco Romero
4/08 - Ricardo Barrera	4/17 - Jesse Ochoa	4/21 - Marilyn Padron	4/30 - Neftali Guzman
4/08 - James Holland	4/17 - Dayna Perez	4/22 - Steven Diehl	4/30 - Devin McGuire
4/08 - Hilda Patterson	4/17 - Dylan Perez	4/22 - Joel Guilfoyle	4/30 - Debbie Pate



Music Ministry



Thank you FBC members and friends who opened their hearts and homes to the students from Liberty University. Below is a letter I received from Dr. Kerr, Liberty University Wind Ensemble director;

Thank you for recently hosting the Liberty University Wind Ensemble. I trust you enjoyed our ministry as much as we enjoyed the fellowship of your fine congregation and host families. Please extend our warmest regards to all those involved. And, the breakfast and gift bag items to-go were especially great! Our tour was very successful and your courtesy was contributory to the attainment

of a fulfilling experience for all involved. I believe our ministry begins within our band families and extends to all those we come in contact with during our travels. We had many opportunities to witness for the Lord from our formal performances to rest stops along the way. Please pray with me that the seeds planted within and outside our band will grow and bring glory to our Lord. Thank you for your hospitality. I look forward to opportunities in the future to renew our acquaintance. Sincerely,
Dr. Stephen Kerr

Easter is sneaking up around the corner which will soon be here. Please plan to attend our Good

Friday / Lord's Supper worship service on April 18th at 7:00 pm. Our sunrise service, is literally "A Sunrise" service this year, 6:30 AM for our first Easter worship service, followed by breakfast, our 8:15 am service, then off to Sunday School 9:45 AM. We are still in need of volunteers for parking, cooking, serving, and much more. Please call the church office for more details 305-247-1662

Singing for HIM,
Pam

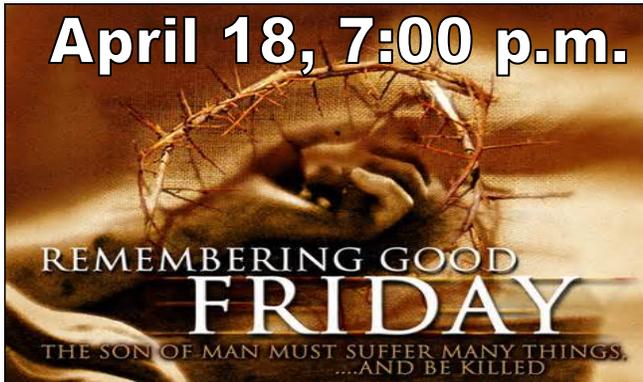


Stewardship March 2014

Contributions for March 2014:	\$ 59,956.88
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 57,784.60
YTD Contributions:	\$ 318,997.60
YTD Budget:	\$ 300,479.92

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

April 18, 7:00 p.m.



REMEMBERING GOOD FRIDAY
 THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER MANY THINGS, ...AND BE KILLED



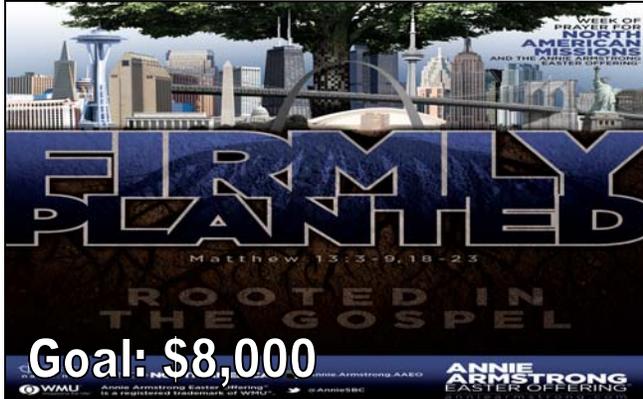
Easter Breakfast
 Volunteers needed to bring breakfast casseroles, cook pancakes, clean and help set up the Sunday School Classes.

Senior Adult Luncheon
 Thursday, April 10, 10:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
 Please make reservations with FBCH
 305-247-1662.
 \$7.00 Per person.



Seek the peace and prosperity of the City ... Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

Join Us!
First Things First Men's Breakfast April 5, 8 a.m.

FIRMLY PLANTED
 Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23
 ROOTED IN THE GOSPEL
Goal: \$8,000

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10th Annual
Awana GRAND PRIX



Saturday, April 12 at 10 a.m.
 Trophies will be awarded to the 3 fastest and top 3 best designs. Cars are on sale for \$5.00.

The Hunt for the Easter Story
 April 19, at 10:00 a.m.
 Ages 0-12 years



We are in need of the following items individually wrapped candy, small toys, stickers, that will fit in the eggs. Donation needed by April 13. Volunteers also needed to help on April 19.

Easter Sunday Schedule:

April 20, 2014
 Sunrise Service 6:30 a.m.
 Breakfast 7:15 a.m.
 Services 8:15 & 11:00 a.m.

No evening service

ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

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FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

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**Building bridges...empowering
people...changing lives!**

Six⁺Thirty³ Student Ministry

April is an exciting month as we prepare to celebrate Easter together. While I love that this season brings an opportunity for a special time of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, I pray that our lives would testify that the resurrection is a reality *every* day of the year! Here's a look at what's taking place in our Student Ministry this month.

On Wednesday nights at **ENCOUNTER** we'll be kicking off a new message series called **Love Life**. Through this series, we'll be exploring the biblical principles of love as they are expressed in the various relationships in our student's lives. This would be a great opportunity for all of our students to join us for worship on Wednesdays as we begin this new series.

We are well into our trainings for our two mission trips we have planned for this summer. Our students and adult volunteers have been studying and preparing to engage the various mission fields they will

serve and have learned how they can be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as He directs them in communicating the gospel through their speech and actions. Please continue to pray for our students and adult volunteers as they prepare for these trips. We also have several students who are in need of financial assistance for these trips. If you have any work that you would like to have a student complete or if you would just like to make a donation to help make it possible for them to go, please don't hesitate to contact me.

This past Sunday night at The CORE we had what I believe was one of the greatest discussions and interactions since we began meeting. I left so encouraged to see our students engaging these important doctrinal truths and wrestling with how to respond to some of the objections the world in which we live presents them. If your teenager hasn't been to The CORE yet, or if they haven't been in a while, I really feel like they are missing out on a *tremendous* opportunity and I would like to use this opportunity to encourage you

to do whatever you can to make sure they attend.

This month's core value I'd like to highlight is the core value of **Worldwide Evangelism**. This core value expresses the truth that God has commanded us to take the gospel to our community, the ends of the earth, and everywhere in between. We want our students to understand that they are *always* on mission—no matter where they are or what they are doing! We want to do everything we possibly can to equip them to live out that mission of making disciples of all peoples!

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you and to serve with you for the glory of God!

For His Glory,
Joe

