



The Way

February 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

As a pastor, I get a lot of questions. Let me tell you about one of the questions I hear most: "Is church membership biblical?" Usually, this question is asked by someone who has already decided that it is not. The answer to this question is imbedded in the nature of the church. The New Testament church is God's tool for carrying out His mission. Jesus Himself claimed to own it and promised to build it. (Matt. 16:18)

The spirit of the current age is one of individualism. More and more people would rather do away with "organized religion." I frequently hear some say, "I'm spiritual, but not religious." Or, "I love Jesus, but not the church." This way of thinking is foreign to the Bible and actually contradicts how the Scriptures tell us we should approach the church.

We know the church is described in numerous ways. The church is called a bride (Ephesians 5:31-32), the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17), a flock (1 Peter 5:2) and a spiritual building (Ephesians 2:21). Furthermore, Jesus is called the head of the church,

with the church being the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18). All of the above, however, teaches us the *importance* of the church. But what about *membership*? Some churches have done away with membership in the formal sense of the word, arguing that there is no biblical precedent for it? I propose that not only is church membership biblical in principle, it is explicitly taught in Scripture.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul expounded on the idea of the church as a body. Consider his words in 1 Corinthians 12:14-15. "For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body." Your body has many members. They are members in the sense that they belong to one another. The hand and the foot may perform separate functions, but they belong to the same body. The same is true for the "body" which is a local church. Paul went on to say a few verses later, "But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body." (1 Cor. 12:18-19) Just as the members of our physical bodies do not operate on

their one, neither should the spiritual members of this body, the body of Christ.

Thus, church membership is all about mutual belonging. There is a sense in which as members of First Baptist Church of Homestead, I belong to you and you belong to me. This is a special relationship. I am to see every man, woman, boy and girl who is a member of First Baptist Church of Homestead as part of one local, spiritual body. I am to see you this way, not because I am your pastor, but because I am a fellow church member. Every member should adopt this same attitude.

The ramifications of this relationship are tremendous. Paul stated that church membership should result in mutual care and affection for one another. He said in verse twenty-four, "But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Cor. 12:24b-27)

You know from experience that when one member of your body is hurting, it quickly receives the attention of the rest of your body. When

one member of your body experiences relief (think about your tired feet when they slip into a warm bath), your entire body is grateful. Likewise, as members of the same body, we rejoice together and mourn together. We are concerned for those things which would bring rejoicing or mourning into the lives of our fellow members.

We are grateful for the many guests God sends our way. I hope that everyone who walks through our doors experiences God in worship and the love of God's people. That being said, there are limits to our responsibility towards our guests. We are not obligated to hold them accountable for how they live. If they choose to stop attending, they are within their rights. The moment a person unites with our church, however, that changes (or at least it should). That means they have entered into mutual accountability with us as we have with them. That means we, as fellow members, have a responsibility towards each other which we do not have towards those who are visiting. We have an ever greater responsibility to love, encourage, exhort, admonish and serve one another.

"But wait a second," someone will say. "Shouldn't we care about *everyone*?" Of course, we should. Yet, as Galatians 6:10 tells us, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Benevolence and hospitality start at home. Why? That is part of us being members of one another, the same body.

I would also point out that Paul's famous words on love (known as the "love chapter" in 1 Corinthians 13) appear in the context of how members of the church should relate to one another. Yes, we practice agape love towards all people, but Paul seemed to be thinking particularly

about how members of the church love one another.

If you see yourself as belonging to your church family, this will affect how you treat them. It will cause you to be as connected to them as possible. You will want to get to know as many of them as possible. It will motivate you to show hospitality to one another. It will prompt you to encourage those who are beginning to fall away. It will inspire you to promote reconciliation when needed. Again, this is a way of thinking about church which is foreign to the world and many members of churches today. It may require a change of thinking for some of you. Some of you reading this article may need to take the step of formal church membership.

Church membership is not salvation. You can be a church member and not be saved and you can be saved without being a church member. Nothing I have shared in this article should be construed as elevating church membership beyond its proper place. But neither should we relegate church membership to a place of insignificance. It is an important part of spiritual growth for anyone who has been born again.

I would also like to point out that I was a faithful church member for years before I was ever a salaried pastor. And if the day comes when I can no longer serve as a pastor, I will continue to be a member of a local New Testament church. And so should you. I encourage you to join FBCH in one of the three ways we receive members: 1) Transfer of membership for those who are already members of churches of like faith and order, but you are no longer able to fellowship there, 2) Statement that you have confessed Christ as Savior and Lord, and that you have been baptized by immersion (if you do not have membership to transfer), and 3) baptism (for

those who have been saved).

Encourage your friends who attend FBCH to attend our Membership Information Class. This is not required for membership, but it is a good way to learn more about FBCH and what membership entails.

On another note, thank you for the wonderful turnout at our recent prayer canvassing. We visited about two hundred and fifty homes on one Saturday morning. We will now focus on follow-up for those who have responded. Another prayer canvassing will be scheduled soon. Also, thank you for your generosity in helping us pass our Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal.

I mentioned in last month's Way that it is a prayer of mine that we will be able to start a service at the local women's penitentiary. At the moment, it appears likely that such a service would take place on Monday mornings. If you are interested (you do not have to be a woman), please call the office and ask about this ministry.

Thank you, as always, for the privilege of being your pastor.

Pastor Howard



Happy Birthday!

2/01 - William Jacobsen	2/08 - Paul McBeth	2/14 - Kayla Main	2/22 - George Gonzalez
2/01 - Riley Krepcho	2/08 - Ivette Roldan	2/15 - Anjanette Diaz	2/22 - Brittany Lee
2/01 - Jesse Mendheim	2/08 - Michael Tavarez	2/15 - Brittney Eichler	2/22 - Emily Leonard
2/01 - Michael Velez	2/09 - A.J. West	2/15 - Angel Bryant	2/22 - Emilia Lugo
2/02 - Latavia Battles	2/10 - Frankie Farias	2/16 - Julius Mora	2/22 - Joe Maldonado
2/02 - Carolina Del Rio	2/10 - Rick Lapworth	2/16 - Yvonne Orosa	2/22 - Christine Orosa
2/02 - Marie Eduard	2/10 - Herminia Ritfeld	2/16 - Samantha Sourber	2/23 - Kayla Davis
2/02 - Grace Hobden	2/11 - Damian DeVary	2/18 - Gabbie Del Toro	2/25 - Amanda Bridwell
2/02 - Danielle Martinez	2/11 - Susan Sanchez	2/18 - Mary Johnson	2/24 - Bart Davis
2/03 - Kayden Fox	2/11 - Jay Shellhouse	2/18 - Yamaira Lopez	2/25 - Ronald Mercedes
2/03 - Deanna Melton	2/11 - Don Fox	2/19 - Lili Godinez	2/25 - Fred Rhodes
2/04 - Verina Blaylock	2/12 - Matthew Mullings	2/19 - Matt Krepcho	2/25 - Larissa Vazquez
2/04 - Debbie Hall	2/12 - Joseph Rodriguez	2/20 - Raquel Davis	2/26 - Woodrow Brown
2/04 - Bryson Orosa	2/12 - Safirre Soto	2/20 - Lucy Serna	2/26 - Karla De La Cruz
2/05 - Manda Jarrin	2/13 - Gaeldesh Demosthene	2/21 - Alan Davis	2/26 - Ethan Martin
2/05 - Morgan Wells	2/13 - Dolly Francis	2/21 - Carrie Fernandez	2/26 - Ruth Peebles
2/06 - Winona Nutter	2/13 - Brian Lugo	2/21 - Clifton Gardner	2/28 - Audrey Carter
2/07 - James Easom	2/14 - Hailey Crawford	2/21 - Samantha Perez	2/28 - Samantha Santos
2/08 - Joyce Baxley	2/14 - Savannah Drury	2/21 - Alma Santos	2/29 - Geneva Byars
2/08 - Lisagay Khan	2/14 - Randi Heisterman	2/21 - Ti Santos	2/29 - Vickie Clayton



Music Ministry



It's that time of year where we are drumming up choir members. Easter comes early this year, so if you have giving any thought to join our choir, now is the time. We can use you, don't keep your talent to yourself, share it! Our Easter cantata is titled, "Champion of Love."

For those who like to

plan ahead, our Vacation Bible School will be June 20 - 24. Public school releases late this year, therefore throwing VBS a little later. Deep Sea Discovery is our theme. Plan now and help get the word out. Of course, if you would like to help, please contact Lynda Melton or myself. This is always a wonderful week of fun and excitement at

FBC Homestead.

Many thanks to those who participated in our Everybody Sing. The service might have ended up a little late, but it was well worth it.

Singing for HIM,
Pam



Stewardship

January 2016

Contributions for January 2016:	\$ 83,088.72
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 58,243.75
YTD Contributions:	\$ 232,403.24
YTD Budget:	\$ 209,677.50

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Men's Cake Bake Off March 6, 7:30 p.m.



All men are invited to bake a cake. Cakes will be judged and rewarded on the basis of style, design, taste and creativity. Women...no helping!



*Special guest speaker
From the Miami Baptist Children's home. Sunday, February 28, 5:00 p.m.*



Adult Volunteers Needed Saturday, February 20

We are in need of adults who can (1) drive teams of students from site to site; (2) serve as a site coordinator to give instructions to teams when they arrive at the site; (3) help us prepare and serve lunch.



Men's Prayer Breakfast

All men are invited to join
Saturday, February 6,
8:00 - 9:30 a.m.



Church work day will follow.



We are planning a mission trip to Haiti, June 25 - July 1. For more details contact Pastor Howard 305-247-1662.



Disaster Relief Training: Training for Disaster Relief teams will be held at Urban Impact Center, Hialeah, on Saturday, March 5. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. with training from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. First time volunteer registration fee \$35.00. Returning volunteers registration fee \$20.00.

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



“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

The month of February finds all kinds of thoughts and talk of love. Unfortunately, most of the thoughts and talk about love that we see and hear in the world today fall *far* short of the Biblical understanding of love. As followers of Jesus, we have an opportunity to live out the love of God so that this world might see and be drawn to Him. Let's be intentional about pursuing that this month!

Here's a look at what's taking place in our Student Ministry during February:

First, on Wednesday nights at **ENCOUNTER** we're going to begin a new message series called **The Struggle is Real**. We live in a sex-saturated society that has warped the biblical picture of God's design for relational intimacy. Living a life of moral purity in that type of world is a *tremendous* struggle. Throughout the month of February, we'll be taking a look at how Scripture teaches us to live pure in an impure world. This is a *timely* topic for today's

teenagers and I hope all of our students will take advantage of this opportunity!

Second, on Saturday, February 6, we're having a Guys/Girls' Night Out. Girls will be meeting at the home of Lou and Jeri Martinez and the Guys will be meeting at the home of Robert Diaz. If you need directions to either location, please contact the church office. This night will be an opportunity for our girls and guys to deepen those bonds of fellowship with one another and our adult volunteers. If you have any questions, please give me a call.

Third, on Saturday, February 20, our Student Ministry will be hosting an event called **The Amazing Race**. Patterned after the game show on CBS with the same name, this game challenges students to work together to piece together a set of clues and complete a series of challenges as they race against other teams of students to be the first to finish! This event requires *numerous* adult volunteers. We are in need of adults who can (1) drive teams of students from site to site; (2) serve as a site coordinator to give instructions to teams when they arrive at the site; (3) help us prepare and serve lunch. If you are

interested in volunteering, please contact me ASAP! Also, if students are planning on participating, they need to sign up in the youth room by Sunday, February 14.

Finally, this month I'd like to highlight the core value of **Cultural Relevance**. This core value emphasizes the importance of contextualizing the gospel for our teenagers. The world in which they live is constantly changing at a very rapid pace. While our ministry leaders and volunteers are firmly convicted of the unchanging truths of the gospel; we also realize that we need to communicate those truths in ways to which our students can understand and relate. For this reason, we are constantly asking questions about whether what we are doing and how we are doing it is relatable to the students to whom we are seeking to minister.

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

For His Glory,
Joe

