



# The Way

January 2015

## NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

### FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Who doesn't love new beginnings? They come in many forms. A new love. A honeymoon. The day a new baby comes home. A new school year. That new car smell. Opening day of baseball season. Since South Florida doesn't experience winter, I *almost* miss the annual newness of spring. Notice I said, "almost." The beginning of a new year offers the same sense of newness and opportunity. New Year's day is something we celebrate, and rightly so.

At creation, God divided time into days, weeks, months and years. God established for His people a calendar. Rosh Hashanah (literally "the head of the year") is referenced in Ezekiel 40:1 and signifies the first day of the ecclesiastical year. In Leviticus 23, this was listed as a holy day and set aside for rest and worship. Although we are not bound by these regulations under the New Covenant, we observe precedent for the commemoration and the celebration of a new

year.

For this reason, I believe in using New Year's Day as a time of spiritual reflection and yes, resolution making. I understand many believers do not believe in making New Year's resolutions. "Why wait for a new year to repent of a particular sin or make a needed commitment?" some will ask. I agree. When God speaks, respond. When sin is revealed, repent. When God sends, go. Do not wait. Obey immediately.

There is another side of that coin, however. The fact of the matter is we are forgetful creatures in need of reminding. To everlasting God, the turning of pages on the calendar may hold little significance. For us, however, it serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness throughout all generations. It prompts us to give thanks for God's blessings in the past year. It beckons us to consider what we would seek in the year to come. It reminds us each day is a gift from God and should not be taken lightly. Psalm 90:12 advises us, "Teach us to number our days carefully

so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts." What is a new year if not the numbering of days? And the numbering of days is wise!

This week, I have done some "days numbering." I have given thanks for 2014 and prayed about 2015 pursuits. A year ago, I could not have imagined the changes that would take place. In 2014, I finally graduated with my doctorate. My wife was led to a new school in the keys. My children, of course, followed her south. Dear friends have gone to glory but new friends have been made. My heart swells with excitement when I think about 2015. A new prison ministry is about to begin. A new prayer evangelism campaign will start in a few weeks. God willing, we will bring the gospel to thousands of homes in South Miami-Dade County. I long to see our new building completed. This will depend on the giving of God's people. Other ministry endeavors are still in the "dream" phase but will be unveiled to church council in upcoming weeks and hopefully become reality in 2015.

Plenty of personal resolutions adorn my 2015 list. Some of them are not for public disclosure, but deal with personal areas of improvement. Some resolutions pertain to the spiritual leadership of my home. For example, I have a specific number of Baptist catechisms I wish to teach my children in the upcoming year and a specific number of verses to memorize along with them. Some resolutions are financial. A couple resolutions pertain to improvement in Spanish competency.

I believe there is one resolution every believer should have: To read through the Bible in 2015. The average reader can do so in only 15 minutes per day. This is less than the time allotted to commercials in a typical hour-long television program. It is much less than the time the average believer spends on social media. So we are without excuse. I want to challenge everyone who reads this article to make it your first resolution to read all 31,102 verses in the next 365 days. That's eighty-five verses per day. You can do it!

For some of you, a good resolution would be to get plugged in to a Sunday School class or a ministry. As I mentioned above, a new prayer evangelism campaign will begin January 17. We will be visiting homes in the community asking the question, "How can we pray for you?" If last year is any indication, there will be hundreds of prayer requests received, most of which coming from unchurched persons. We need some to make the initial visits. We need others to pray over

the requests as they come in and write weekly letters of encouragement, or "prayer-grams." We need those who will make follow-up visits to present the gospel after these homes have been inundated with those prayer-grams. This year we are able to open this up to anyone who wants to participate, including youth. I hope to see a substantial number of teenagers involved. My own children will be involved as well. Believe it or not, they have been asking me when they *get* to do prayer evangelism! They enjoy knocking on doors and offering to pray for our neighbors. So this is a ministry you can do as a family.

In order to make this campaign a reality, we need specific commitments from a substantial number of members for an allotted amount of time. Visits will take place from January 17 to May 23. This will cover fifteen weekends, with time off for spring break, Easter and Mother's day weekend. Visitation will happen at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday mornings and 3:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoons. You can come at either time. Some of you cannot make visitation but you can be a prayer partner. Prayer partners will receive a weekly update of persons for whom they are to pray as well as write. For those who want training on how to do prayer evangelism, that training will be offered at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday mornings for five weeks, starting January 17.

The New Year is also a good time to examine and pray about your level of giving. If you are not already tithing, I challenge you to

imply Malachi 3:10 and *"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."* See if Luke 6:38 is not reality for your life. *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* This is not a promise of earthly wealth. It is a promise that God will meet the needs of His people as they are faithful stewards of what He has entrusted to them.

Let me also thank you for your tremendous generosity during the Christmas season. You blessed over a hundred and fifty homes with Christmas presents, as well as Bibles and a salvation witness. We're a bit short of our Lottie Moon Goal, but even as I say that, I am amazed at what a church this size is able to send to international missions year after year. Especially during a building campaign!

May God do great wonders in our individual lives and in this church in 2015. Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor.

Pastor Howard



## Happy Birthday!

01/01 - Laycon Castro	01/11 - Jane McMillan	01/23 - Omar Lugo, Jr	01/29 - Brett Sharpe
01/01 - Randy Diaz	01/12 - Sandra Jones	01/25 - Jessica Glass	01/29 - Desiree Veras
01/03 - Paul Dimare	01/14 - TJ Meury	01/25 - Jerry Dickson	01/29 - Jason Castro
01/03 - Bonnie Moran	01/14 - Valera Rickard	01/25 - Margaret Edwards	01/29 - Destiny Gray
01/03 - Leslie Olvera	01/15 - Guy Blaedow	01/25 - Omar Lugo, Sr.	01/30 - Brad Davis
01/03 - Jimmie Tabor	01/15 - Randy Olvera	01/26 - Judith Santos	01/30 - Karen Dees
01/04 - Cesar Berrones	01/15 - Ryan Orosa	01/26 - Steve Breivogel	01/30 -Susie Ebersole
01/04 - J.D. Van Ryn	01/15 - Thor Peterson	01/26 - Amanda Clayton	01/30 - Zaida Gonzalez
01/05 - Jocelyn Oliva	01/15 - Madison Wells	01/27 - Cathy Lamb	01/31 - Rebecca R. Gonzalez
01/06 - Geri Davis	01/15 - Peggy Wells	01/27 - Elizabeth Toirac	
01/06 - Morgan McDonnough	01/16 - Melissa Nowicki	01/27 - Betsy Byars	
01/07 - Kelly Davis	01/17 - Rose Marie Nazon	01/27 - Ruth Garner	
01/07 - Rachel Jones	01/17 - Elias Olvera	01/27 - Jeri Martinez	
01/07 - Doug Smith	01/20 - Eddy Dickson	01/28 - Terry Tompkins	
01/07 - Carolyn Sprinkle	01/20 - Jack Luff	01/28 - Eric Zdancewicz	
01/08 - Jeovany Torres	01/20 - Sandra McBeth	01/28 - Phyllis Bridges	
01/09 - Michael Mann	01/21 - Ruben Toirac	01/28 - Annah Monismith	



## Music Ministry



Happy New Year!!!! 2014 is gone, and 2015 is just beginning. Thank you adult choir, children's choir, bell choir, and their directors. A fabulous and an outstanding job on all occasions! What a tremendous celebration of music through the eyes of all ages. Let us not forget Russ Philpot, our narrator, Tony Hall and Joe Cordova, our sound technicians. These are the

men that usually go unnoticed and play a vital part of our musicals. Hats off to you gentlemen!

I want to congratulate Pastor Howard for becoming Dr. Howard Harden. What a costly, timely and remarkable accomplishment. Please know how proud we are of you and your achievement. Thank you for being a God filled pastor.

As we count our blessings and our family continues to grow, Benny and I wish you a wonderful new year. Please take time this year to pray more, read more, laugh more, and sing more!

Singing for HIM,  
*Pam*



### Stewardship

December 2014

<b>Contributions for December 2014:</b>	<b>\$ 55,211.40</b>
<b>Monthly budget requirements:</b>	<b>\$ 46,491.16</b>
<b>YTD Contributions:</b>	<b>\$ 163,522.73</b>
<b>YTD Budget:</b>	<b>\$ 151,096.27</b>

# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



*Women on Mission would like to thank our church Family for providing gifts for 104 needy children.*



**Club will resume**  
**Wednesday, January 7, 2015**  
**6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**



28205 SW 125th Ave, Homestead, FL 33030

Join us January 13,  
1:30 p.m. as we serve  
meals and distribute  
Bibles to the homeless.



## FIRST THING FIRST



**MEN'S  
PRAYER  
BREAKFAST**

All men are  
invited Saturday,  
January 3, 8:00  
a.m. in the  
fellowship hall.

## Midweek Service

All Midweek Bible studies resume  
January 7, 6:30 p.m.

- \*Ladies Bible Study
- \*Men's Bible Study
- \* Prayer Gathering
- \* Encounter (Youth)

## 2015 Tithing Envelopes



**Pick up your tithing envelopes They are located in the front foyer by the church office.**



ONLINE:  
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH OF  
HOMESTEAD, FL

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



HAPPY NEW YEAR CHURCH FAMILY! I am so grateful for the past year and all God has accomplished among, in, and through our students, adult volunteers, and our ministry. 2014 was a *great* year of ministry and I can't wait to see what God has in store for us in 2015!

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

First, on Wednesday nights at **ENCOUNTER** we're going to begin a new message series called **Tools for Transformation**. We'll be talking about key spiritual disciplines and how they can be used by God to empower us as disciples to live for the Lord.

Second, on Friday, January 16, we'll have our next Friday Nite Live! We'll once again be competing in Minute to Win It challenges.

This month, we'll be dividing the participants up into teams and the winning team will win a lunch meal at Dairy Queen on January 18! Friday Nite Live will take place from 7-10 pm. While we will have snack items available, students should eat dinner before arriving at the church. The sign up deadline for Friday Nite Live is Wednesday, January 14.

Third, on Friday, February 20, our Student Ministry will be attending the Love Ran Red Tour with Chris Tomlin, Tenth Avenue North, and Rend Collective. This concert is *sure* to sell out fairly quickly. The sign up deadline for attending the concert with our Student Ministry is Sunday, January 11. Tickets are \$35.40 and must be prepaid in order to secure your spot. If you have any questions about this event, please feel free to contact me.

Finally, this month, I'm highlighting the core value of **Cultural Relevance**. This core value emphasizes the importance of contex-

tualizing 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 who 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! I pray that 2015 would be our greatest year of ministry yet!

For His Glory,

*Joe*

