



# The Way

July 2016

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

### FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

As you may know, I just got back from my first trip to Haiti. About six years ago, we started a Haitian mission. I have preached for that mission about a dozen times on occasions varying from family conferences to revival services. I am accustomed to preaching in Haitian worship services and through a Creole translator. Some of you were at church last Sunday night to hear the report I gave, but let me take this opportunity to share some things that surprised me about Haiti.

1) The extent of the 2010 earthquake damage.

Our first meeting was in Mwaso, a couple hours to the south of Port-au-Prince. There you could see the cracks in the walls created by the earthquake. Surrounding that church were replacement homes built by varying relief ministries. Every one of these homes (easily identified by blue or red roofs) is inhabited by a family who lost everything. A few days later, I

preached in another town a few hours north of Port-au-Prince, this time in a church whose building was turned to complete rubble that day. Many of us understood that Port-au-Prince was greatly damaged. And whereas Port-au-Prince has the most people, there the most people were affected. But the earthquake itself inflicted damage across a path of Haiti extending hundreds of miles, extending way beyond the capital.

2) The pervasiveness of syncretism and the need for doctrinal integrity.

Syncretism is one of the deadliest threats to the church in Haiti. Simply put, syncretism is the merging of various and even contradictory faiths and/or beliefs. Syncretism is the Catholic priest who also practices voodoo. It is the person who "accepts Jesus" only to then put Him on a shelf beside the false gods they continue to worship. And syncretism is prominent in Haiti.

One can hardly drive down a Haitian "street" without seeing evidence of this. Virtually every business has a Christian themed

name. I passed by a "Thank You God Block Company." There's the "God Is Able Barber Shop." There's the bus with "Thank You Jesus" inscribed across the back. The "God is Good" convenience store. They even have a "Shalom Bar!" But do not think that these many references to God's name or biblical terminology are an indication of gratitude by sincere believers. Far from it! Instead, God's name is used more as a good luck charm by the masses. Many, for example, know the name "Jesus" but know nothing of the atonement of Jesus.

On one occasion, I found myself in the street surrounded by about twenty Haitians. (Let's just say they were curious.) I figured if I had a crowd, I might as well begin to preach. So I began to preach from Luke 15, the story of the Prodigal Son. Even though my "congregation" was (literally) surrounded by biblical references, only one person in that group had even heard the story before. When I paused and asked them how the story would end, they honestly did not know.

What does this mean from a

missions standpoint? It means that Haitians need to hear the gospel. They need to be able to articulate the gospel. The need mature believers who can come and teach them how to articulate the gospel. This, of course, is not just a need in Haiti. It is a need for Homestead, as well.

### 3) The challenge of drinkable water.

Almost wherever you go in Haiti, you see people lined up to draw water from one of many wells. Every well I saw was dug by a Christian ministry of some kind. These wells are critical for the well-being of Haiti and they save many lives.

Well water, however, is not always the best drinking water. Thus drinking water is shipped to the masses daily in small, zip-lock sized plastic bags. These bags do not come near to providing the water that is needed, especially in the heat of summer. So the quest for clean water is a challenge. More wells are needed. I met one woman of Haitian descent who spent most of her life working in the World Trade Center. (She retired a month before 9/11.) Rather than enjoy retirement in obscurity, she took her resources, went home and dug water lines in a community where many had died from drinking the contaminated water of the local river.

Missions should always lead to the proclamation of the gospel. Not every missionary, however, has to be a preacher or church planter. Praise God for the many agricultural and medical missionaries who have used their gifts to bring the

gospel to so many parts of the world.

### 4) The challenge of literacy.

I was surprised to learn that a free public education is not a reality for many Haitian children. While free public schools do exist, one must live within certain proximity of one. Furthermore, because spots in such schools are extremely limited, only the most gifted students gain admittance. Thus, many other Haitian children do not attend school or attend schools started by churches.

I visited two church run schools. One school has about nineteen students and is taught by an eighteen year old. Obviously, this teacher has limited training. The children in this school are learning basic reading and math. This is better than nothing, however. There is tremendous opportunity in Haiti for anyone interested in educational missions.

Because so many Haitians have limited educational opportunities, this affects the churches. I met with about seven or eight leaders of a church plant. This new church was only a couple of years old but already running almost a hundred in worship. I assumed many of the members might not own a Bible, but when I asked how many of the *leaders* owned a Bible, only two raised their hands! Church leaders in Haiti, including many pastors, have had little opportunity to be trained in doctrine or ministry. Thus, any chance they have to be under biblical teaching is like *gold*.

Many of you seasoned Sunday

School teachers would be wonderfully effective on a mission trip. All you have to do is take the knowledge of the Bible you already possess and go share it. This could mean going to a church and doing a two or three day class on a book of the Bible (like Romans or one of the gospels). Just give that church a grasp they didn't have before on a book of the Bible. This would be an indescribable blessing to them.

Basically everywhere we went, we were asked when we would be back. Not wanting to promise what I could not deliver, I replied that I would return and seek the Lord. We have had a twelve year partnership with Cuba. That continues to be a blessing. I also realize that some of you who might not be needed in Cuba would be needed in Haiti or other places like it. So it is good to branch out and send missions teams to other parts of the world.

It's amazing how a trip to another country can teach you so much about your own and so much about yourself. Thank you for your prayers and thank you for your patience with me taking time away every year to preach the gospel and train believers in another nation.

As always, thank you for the privilege of being your pastor!

*Pastor Howard*



## Happy Birthday!

07/01 - Claudia Alfonso	07/10 - Sherri Jackson	07/20 - Melissa Breen	07/27 - Martin Ortiz
07/01 - Rachel Kinkade	07/10 - Patti Sourber	07/20 - Nora Coule	07/27 - Diego Torres
07/01 - Tristan La Rosa	07/11 - Joseph Lucio	07/20 - Robbie Dolan	07/27 - Catherine Viera
07/02 - Cassidy Alzamora	07/11 - Gladis Martinez	07/20 - Victoria Duenas	07/28 - Alex Harman
07/02 - Brence Davis	07/11 - Christian Theodore	07/20 - Jenna Friman	07/28 - Sean Ramos
07/03 - Rachel Hernandez	07/12 - Tracy Keith	07/21 - Victoria Apparicio	07/29 - Dallas Davis
07/03 - Alessandra Vargas	07/12 - Michael Sosa	07/22 - Lourdes Alonso	07/29 - Indy Drury
07/04 - Theresa Diaz	07/12 - John Tompkins	07/22 - Sarah Ecklof	07/29 - Zachael Eldridge
07/04 - Jessie Garcia	07/13 - Krystal Borrego	07/23 - Dedrick Bailey	07/29 - Alberto Guzman
07/05 - Alyssa Ritfeld	07/13 - Stefan Rhoades	07/23 - Suzy Davis	07/29 - Edwin Hadden
07/06 - Katherine Carroll	07/15 - Melinda De La Cruz	07/24 - Riley Joyce	07/30 - Sabrina Delgado
07/06 - Robert Jones	07/15 - Michael Grimes	07/25 - Stan Cason	07/30 - Marlene Jackson
07/06 - Marilyn Maldonado	07/16 - Ryai Giddins	07/25 - Jovany Lopez	07/30 - Lesley Sytsma
07/07 - Ryana Lewis	07/17 - Wayne Bell	07/25 - Emiliano Silva	
07/07 - Aiyana Morris	07/17 - William Bender	07/25 - Megan Wells	
07/07 - Brittany Davidson	07/18 - Cindy Castro	07/26 - Michael Biichle	
07/08 - Deison Demosthene	07/18 - Kameron Fox	07/26 - Peter Chen	
07/09 - David Catlin	07/19 - Jorge Perez	07/26 - Miriam Gonzalez	
07/09 - Jacob DeVary	07/19 - Brooke Story	07/26 - Elijah Lucas	



## Music Ministry



Vacation Bible School was totally *SUBMERGED!* We may not have broken attendance records, but all who attended had a wonderful time. Thank you to all those who helped paint, set up, build, decorate, clean, put away, drive the bus, run the sound board, computer, counted money, take pictures, put the slide show together, help lead in the worship rally, run the registration tables, bring food in for snacks, plus teachers, walkers, and youth. This is just a small picture of the many things that went on

for over a week of VBS. It's funny to overhear one of our youth state, "Remember the time we came to VBS and thought this happened over night? Now here we are, on the other end helping." Many children may believe Bible School happens magically, and that's just fine, but we adults know better (wink, wink)! Again, hats off to our workers! Next year we will be in space - *Star Surveyors!*

Choirs are on a sabbatical for now, but don't stay away too long. Enjoy your short vacation

and rest. Hard, enjoyable work is ahead with Steve Green who will be here in concert, August 21st. Our adult choir and children's choir will be participating as backup for several songs. How exciting! Mark your calendar.

Singing for HIM,  
*Pam*



## Stewardship

June 2016

<b>Contributions for June 2016:</b>	<b>\$ 42,278.69</b>
<b>Monthly budget requirements:</b>	<b>\$ 46,278.69</b>
<b>YTD Contributions:</b>	<b>\$ 465,769.69</b>
<b>YTD Budget:</b>	<b>\$ 454,301.25</b>

# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



28205 SW 125th Ave, Homestead, FL 33030

Join us Thursday, July 28, 11:30 a.m., as we serve meals and distribute Bibles to the homeless.

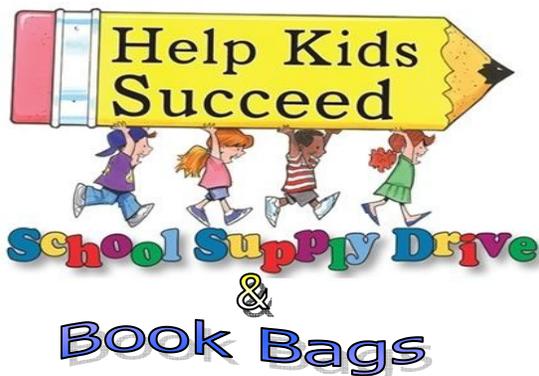


Senior Adult Pot-luck Luncheon

Saturday, July 16th

10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

FBC Fellowship hall



It's that time of year! We are collecting school supplies and book bags for children in our church and community who are in need of assistance. Please give generously!

- Composition Books
- Notebook Paper & Dividers
- Pencils, Pencil Pouches
- Blue and Red Pens
- Erasers
- Spiral Bound Note Books
- Colored Folders with Pockets
- Washable Markers
- Dry Erasers & Cleaner
- Hand Sanitizer

- Colored Pencils
- Glue Sticks, Rulers
- Backpacks
- Highlighters (Yellow, pink, blue & green)
- Blunt Tip Scissors
- Graph Paper
- Index Cards
- Construction Paper
- Copy Paper

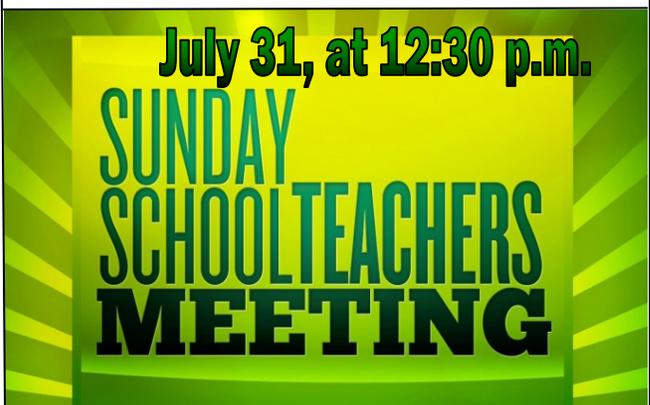


If you know of a child in need, please contact the church office (305) 247-1662.



Steve Green

**Free concert!**  
**August 21, 6:30 p.m.**  
**First Baptist Church**  
**of Homestead**



ONLINE:  
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH OF  
HOMESTEAD, FL

29050 SW 177th Ave  
Homestead, FL 33030



As I type this article, I'm in Lookout Mountain, GA with our students and adult volunteers at Mission Camp. We have had a challenging, but very rewarding week of camp so far as we have been ministering to children at a backyard bible club in Chattanooga. I have been *extremely* proud of our students! They have stepped up and led in serving, whether that was working with children at crafts, recreation, music, and even leading the bible study for the kids! We have some *AMAZING* students and I am truly honored to serve as their Student Pastor!

We also have a *phenomenal* team of adult volunteers here with us also! They don't do what they do for public recognition, but I want to take a moment to honor the ones who have come on this trip with us—Lou and Jeri Martinez, Randy Olvera, and Sarah Roldan. These guys are rock stars and heroes in my book and I count it a privilege to serve with them! They have loved and led our students well and have truly helped me by sharing the load! There's no way in the world our ministry could minister to teenagers as effectively as we do without the selfless, sacrificial service of volunteers just like them! I hope you'll take the opportunity to join me in expressing your

appreciation for their service.

I also need to take a moment and say "Thank You" to all of you who gave financially and made it possible for students to come to mission camp and serve. The financial need for many families was tremendous this year and, quite honestly, I was concerned about whether or not we would be able to provide the funds for all of the students who wanted to go. I was absolutely blown away by your generosity! Not only were we able to provide the funds for the students that requested it, we had individuals who expressed a desire to contribute even after we had met our required goal! God truly did above and beyond all we could have asked or imagined! Thank you for giving to make it possible for us to go! You have a part in all of the spiritual fruit that comes as a result of camp!

Also, to those of you who were faithful to pray for us daily, I want you to know how grateful I truly am for you! We have encountered numerous obstacles this week and I know the enemy has been hard at work attempting to thwart our work here. I can only *imagine* what the opposition would have looked like had we not had faithful prayer warriors lifting us up day in and day out! Your serving may have been behind the scenes, but I truly hope you know that it did ***NOT*** go unnoticed! I

am so very grateful for those of you who are faithful to pray for us! You are a treasure to me!

Summer is in full swing and events are happening all the time. To stay up to date on the latest happenings, parents and students can subscribe to our text-based remind system. If you are a student or a parent of a student in our ministry and you are interested in receiving text message reminders of Student Ministry events, simply text the message "@633sm" to the number "81010."

Finally, let me just remind you that one of the core values of our Student Ministry is that we aim to be *Family Focused*. What that means is that we understand that God designed the family to be the primary teachers of spiritual instruction and it is the responsibility of the church to assist families in that endeavor. If there is anything that I, or our ministry, can do to help you as you seek to lead your teenagers spiritually, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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

For His Glory,  
*Joe*

