



# The Way

March 2014

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

### FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

We are living in confusing times. People are confused about morality. They are confused about truth. People are asking what truth is and if it even exists. People are confused about rights. Do we have rights, and if so, where do they come from and what are they? We are confused about the very things that make up the fabric of our society. I read a statement by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Al Mohler that may sum it up best. "The most fundamental values of civilization itself are threatened, and we are witnesses to one of the most comprehensive and fast-paced moral revolutions ever experienced by humanity. The velocity and breadth of this revolution are breathtaking, and the consequences are yet incalculable." Yes, we are witnessing a moral revolution, one in which values previously held dear are quickly tossed to the wind. Not only are our values changing, but the rate at which they are changing has accelerated to a degree beyond which anyone expected.

All of this is the result of the gradual acceptance of worldviews without God at the center. By "worldview," I am referring to a framework of ideas and attitudes

about the world, ourselves and life. A worldview includes the presuppositions and biases that affect the way we view all of life and reality. A Christian worldview begins with the acknowledgment that God exists and that He is the standard by which we measure everything else. It contends that God holds everything together. It holds that He has spoken through the Bible and revealed Himself supremely by Jesus Christ. A Christian worldview sees mankind's problem as rebellion against God. As a result of that rebellion, sin and death exist in the world. A Christian worldview sees the gospel as God's solution to this problem and as the only hope for mankind.

I believe that the biblical worldview is the only worldview that provides logically consistent answers for the main questions man has asked for millennia. Without God, there is no rational foundation for morality. There is no justification for human rights. Without God, "might makes right." Eventually, the powerless have no recourse against the power holders.

Throughout most of American history, the majority of the above tenants have been accepted and often without any debate. Even among non-Christians, it was widely accepted that a single Creator/God is the giver of human rights; His Word the standard for truth and

righteousness. Thus for years, no one debated things like prayer in schools or the presence of the Ten Commandments in public institutions. Even non-Christians accepted these things because, knowingly or unknowingly, they had adopted the worldview behind them. This worldview, once considered a given, is disappearing. The biblical worldview is disappearing because the church that is meant to trumpet it has been muted at best and silent at worst.

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In the absence of a Christian worldview, any truth claim is deemed equally valid because without God, there is no ultimate source of authority. Thus, when a Christian worldview disappears, the only "sin" that remains is the sin of making exclusive truth claims. For example, if one says, "Jesus is the only way to heaven," they violate the unwritten law that all ways must be equally valid. When one says, "The Bible is

the only Word of God," they offend the unspoken belief that no such authority exists. When one says, "Marriage is only between a man and a woman" or that "Sex is limited to marriage," they commit what to the world is the true unpardonable sin: Attributing moral wrongdoing to others.

I have suspected for some time that America was headed down this path. I never realized that it would come as quickly as it has. One example has been the quick acceptance of same sex marriage in our land. Just a few years ago, same sex marriage had never succeeded at the ballot box. Today, Christian businesses are being shut down if they refuse to participate in gay marriage/union ceremonies. This is the natural result of the disappearance of a biblical worldview.

Same sex marriage is just one example. As pluralism increases in America, you can rest assured there will be more. T.H. White once wrote, "Everything not forbidden is compulsory." In other words, the very things that used to be forbidden are not only allowed, they are required. There is no "live and let live" when a biblical worldview disappears. The world makes every attempt to force believers to accept and participate in the very things they oppose.

Under this line of thinking, it is not enough that abortion be legal, nor is it enough for tax dollars to support it. You, the Christian, must participate in it by paying for it yourself. There is a current debate, soon to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, regarding whether Christian business owners should be required to pay for health insurance that includes abortion inducing drugs. The government does not want you to pay for these drugs so that they will be available to the masses. They want you to pay for them so they will have power over you in forcing you to do so. By forcing you to participate in it evils, you become complicit in carrying out a non-Christian worldview.

Under this line of thinking, it is not enough for same sex marriage to be legal. You must actually participate in the same sex ceremony. In Oregon, a baker has been subjected to hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines for refusing to use his icing pen to inscribe messages on a wedding cake for a gay marriage ceremony (in a state that does not even recognize same sex marriage). After numerous protests and death threats, he was forced to move his business to his home. While the baker could be jailed for refusing to participate or pay fines for not doing so, no action has been taken against those issuing the death threats.

I share all of this with you for several reasons. You are probably already aware of the fact that times are changing and not for the better. I tell you this because there are some decisions the people of God must make *now* in order to withstand the storm that I fear is on its way.

**First of all, decide now where you will stand.**

I don't believe that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego waited until the band started to play to decide whether or not they would bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol. They knew what was coming and their minds were already made up. It may seem strange that I write these words to the members of my own church. As followers of Christ, you have already "decided to follow Jesus." And yet, can you honestly say you have considered what the costs of following Christ might be and accepted the consequences in advance?

Let me give you an example. A member of our church is a fashion designer. She was approached by someone wanting her to design a number of t-shirts. As this prospective client described the project, it became apparent the t-shirt they wanted designed was related to Santeria. Knowing she would never use her creative abilities to design something promoting a cult, she turned down the

profit and refused to do the job. I am grateful that she took this stand, as much as she needed the income. And yet, when I think about the future, I imagine how much more difficult such a decision will be. In the future, the prospective client might report her for "discrimination." She could be fined for refusing to design their t-shirt, while being willing to design t-shirts for a local church. She could even be imprisoned if she persists. While I believe she is willing to face all of the above, what about you? What if you are the wedding singer who refuses to sing in a same sex wedding, and you are honest about your reason for not doing so? Are you willing to be fined? What if you are the school teacher given a lesson plan that includes immoral sexual indoctrination of small children? Are you willing to lose your job in order to retain your integrity?

I am reminded of one of the early church fathers who heard that members of his church were offering incense to Caesar at the workplace. When he asked them why they did this, they replied, "We have to work."

"Why do you have to work?" he countered.

"Because if we don't work, we don't eat," they answered.

"Why do you have to eat?" he asked them.

"Because if we don't eat, we don't live."

"WHY MUST YOU LIVE?" he asked them, to which there was no response.

The point of the story is that we only *have* to do one thing: Be faithful to God. Decide now where you stand. Decide now that you will pay whatever price must be paid to remain true to God's Word.

**Second, remember that the solution to this problem is the gospel.**

Some of you are convinced that

the solution to this problem is legislative. If we pass the right laws, we can legislate our problems away. For years, I have preached that it does little good to have laws in place to protect us if the individuals in office do not respect those laws and refuse to abide by them. This past week, the Attorney General of the United States informed state attorneys general they need not defend their state's laws banning same sex marriage. This is a new and disturbing development: That those responsible for enforcing the law may pick and choose which laws to enforce. In California, an amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman was made to the state constitution by a majority of voters. That law was then overturned because California's government refused to defend the law the voters approved. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the case was inadmissible because the law lacked a defender. Think about the implications. Millions of voters can pass a constitutional amendment only for that amendment to be declared null and void if those in power choose not to recognize or defend that constitutional amendment. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no law that can be written to protect you if those in power do not respect the law.

The only solution to this problem is that hearts would be changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. As spiritual awakening takes place with masses of people coming to Christ, our government and its leaders will reflect these changes. As the church of Jesus Christ expands in any nation, its influence as salt and light expands along with it. For this to happen, there must be a church that is willing to stand on the gospel, preach the gospel and spread the gospel. It means that we, the people of God, must live out the gospel, demonstrating with our lives, and not just our words, what gospel

transformation looks like. It means we also have to be willing to preach the gospel to each other and hold each other accountable to what the gospel requires of us.

### **Third, be prepared for an increase in spiritual warfare.**

Be ready to be mischaracterized. Be ready to be bullied by those claiming to be tolerant. Be ready to be placed in situations in which prayer is the only key to victory. Be ready for arrows to approach you from unlikely directions and sources. This past week was especially disheartening to me. Not once, but twice, there were articles in national publications in which Christians refusing to participate in gay weddings were disparaged. In each case, prominent evangelicals spoke in favor of legislative solutions that would *penalize* these Christians for their refusals. Making matters worse, both of these evangelicals are sons of recent Southern Baptist Convention presidents. Has it occurred to you that as we struggle for religious freedom, those attempting to take it away from us may be *among us*? Christians in the near future will have to be more discerning than ever before.

### **Fourth, prepare to love your enemies.**

Jesus did not tell us to love our enemies because we would never have any. The homosexual who curses you for refusing to condone his/her lifestyle is to be loved. The angry atheist who litters any and all online Christian videos is to be loved. We do not love your enemies by belittling them or by name calling. We love them by serving them. This takes humility, more humility, I fear, than most Christians in America have today. Some of you reading this article need to humbly repent for a failure to love your enemies. Some of you need to remember that *we* were once enemies of God.

In closing, let me remind you of the

story of Jonadab. Jonadab is a little known character from 2 Kings 10. He helped Jehu eradicate much of Baalism from Israel. Jonadab was a righteous man who saw the spiritual decline around him. In the pattern of Joshua 24, he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He trained his family to be set apart. He handed down some rules. He said, "Here is how we will live our lives. Here is what we will and won't do." Over the next 250 years, as Israel declined spiritually, the descendants of Jonadab, known as the Rechabites, stood strong. They stood strong because they followed the instructions and the example of their ancestor. They created a counter-culture of righteousness. While other Jews drifted farther from God, the Rechabites remained true. Finally, God told the prophet Jeremiah to make them a promise. God promised that Jonadab would always have a descendant standing before Him, serving the Lord. Even in a nation that is turning from God, you can be a modern day Jonadab and your children can be modern day Rechabites. You can remain true to God and experience the showers of blessings that are unknown by those around you. Even in the darkest of times, the Bible says, "It will be well with the righteous" (Isaiah 3:10). So don't be discouraged! Keep your eyes on Jesus and know that His kingdom will prevail and we will prevail with Him!

Thank you for the privilege of letting me lead you in these difficult days.

*Pastor  
Howard*

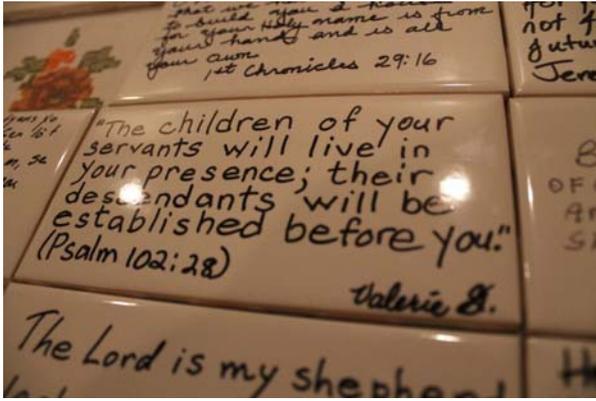
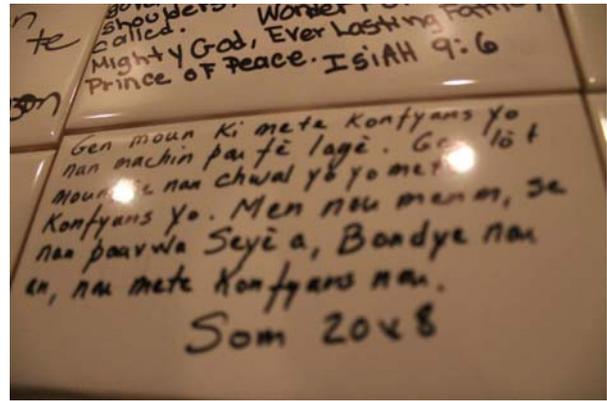
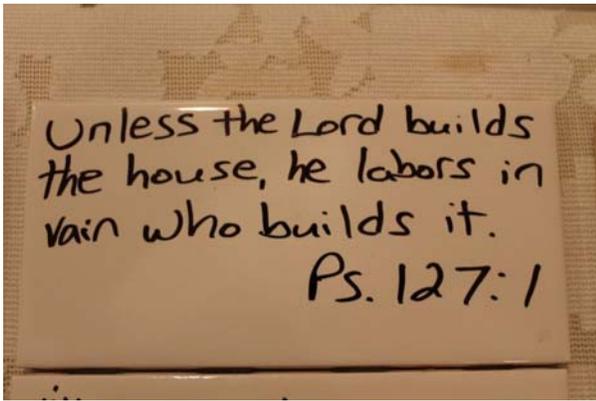
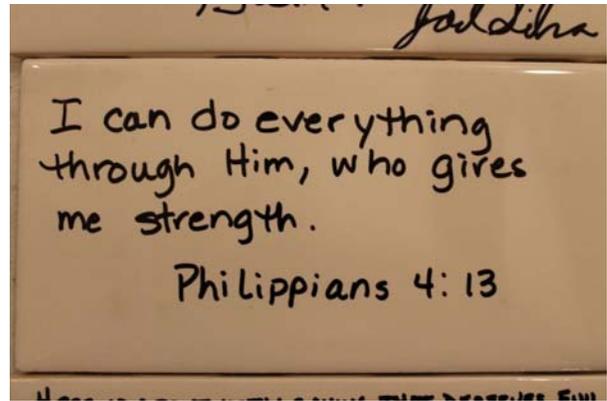
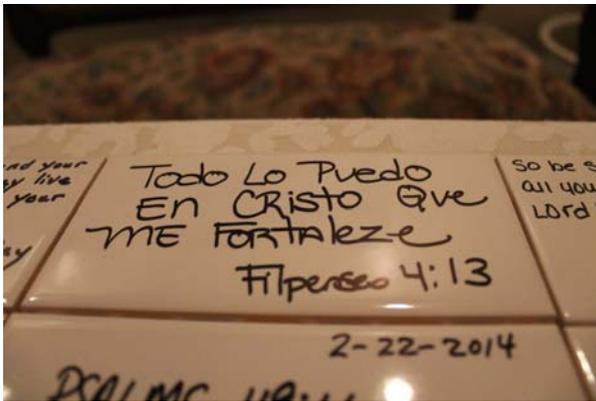
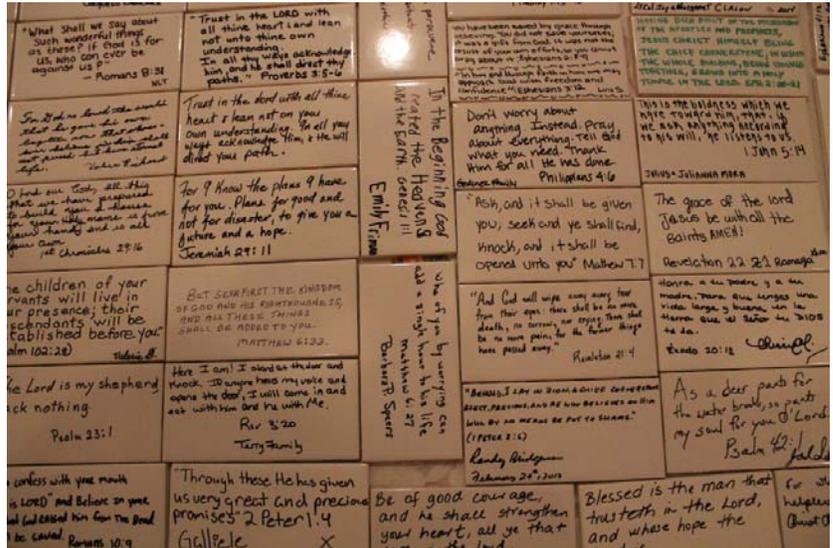


# *Moving on Up!*



## Standing on the Promises

F BCH members were asked to write Scripture verses containing promises from God to claim as part of the Advancing the Kingdom emphasis. Hundreds of Scriptures were written on tiles and literally placed inside of the foundation around the perimeter of the youth/educational facility. Here are some of the pictures of these Bible promises.



## Happy Birthday!

3/01 - Wayne Boynton	3/09 - Camille Wright	3/21 - Valerie Goodwin	3/28 - Kaelynn Sears
3/01 - Eleanor Grant	3/10 - Anita Powell	3/21 - Meg Morris	3/26 - Jason Garner
3/01 - Victor Santana	3/11 - Jared Allen	3/22 - Lani Shellhouse	3/29 - Gregg Powell
3/02 - Kristin Benn	3/11 - Tatyana Hills	3/22 - Weslee Strickland	3/29 - Clarissa Robles
3/02 - Mary Jones	3/11 - Sebastean Medich	3/22 - Ronald Monday	3/30 - Dyland Goodwin
3/02 - Craig Nowicki	3/12 - Kelly Friman	3/24 - Robin Decker	3/30 - Brenda Harden
3/02 - Sunshine Zioui	3/13 - Jordan Bejarano	3/24 - Ramaya Khan	3/31 - Luis Mejia
3/04 - Luis Cartaya	3/15 - Carole Boyett	3/24 - Erin Burrichter	
3/04 - Mylinda Drury	3/16 - Elizabeth Barrera	3/26 - Jasmine Oquendo	
3/04 - Lenna Taylor	3/17 - Lacie Faktor	3/26 - Charlene Richard	
3/05 - Kevin Sweeney	3/17 - Timothy Martin	3/27 - Kayla Badillo	
3/06 - Mason Howes	3/17 - Otto Toirac	3/27 - Alicia De Marco	
3/07 - Cooper McMillan	3/18 - Kendrick Jones	3/27 - Robert Diaz	
3/07 - Sarah Roldan	3/18 - Ruby Vasel	3/27 - Riiah Durante	
3/08 - Lola Irizarry	3/20 - Helen Day	3/27 - Nicholas Sourber	
3/09 - Lee Sweeney	3/20 - Melissa Hobden	3/28 - Ralph Holland	



March is here and it's bringing great and exciting things for our Student Ministry! Here's a look at what's taking place in our Student Ministry during March:

On Wednesday nights at **ENCOUNTER** we're continuing the message series called **Friends Don't Let Friends...** We've been taking a look at biblical principles for healthy friendships. In my opinion, this is one of the most important message series we do all year simply because of the powerful influence friends have in the

lives of teenagers. I'd love to take the opportunity to encourage all of our students to join us for worship on Wednesdays.

Also, we began our training for our New Orleans mission trip last month and will continue it with training dates on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. We'll also kick off our training for our New York mission trip this month on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Please be praying for our students and adult volunteers as they prepare their hearts and minds to enter these mission fields with the gospel.

I'm very excited about what has been happening at The CORE on Sunday nights! We have had some **GREAT** discussions this past

month about some very important doctrines and some of the challenges the world today is throwing at them. It's not too late for your student to jump in and learn some of the core doctrines of our faith, why we believe them, and how they can defend them in today's world.

Speaking of defending our faith in an antagonistic world, there is a movie that will be released later this month called **God's Not Dead**. The movie follows the life of a college student who is challenged by an atheist professor about the existence of God. While show times have not yet been released

Continued on p. 8



### Stewardship February 2014

<b>Contributions for February 2014:</b>	<b>\$ 42,660.68</b>
<b>Monthly budget requirements:</b>	<b>\$ 46,227.68</b>
<b>YTD Contributions:</b>	<b>\$ 259,040.72</b>
<b>YTD Budget:</b>	<b>\$ 242,695.32</b>

# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



*spring forward*

**March 9**

*don't forget to set your clocks forward this Sunday*



**March 23, 5:30 p.m.**

*Liberty University  
Wind Ensemble*



**Play Ball!!!**

**FBCH Softball league**



**For details contact  
Steve Diehl  
786-243-7640**

**IN CONCERT  
MARCH 12, 6:30 P.M.**



Volunteers needed to host a booth at the Fair to distribute Bibles and pray for visitors.

Please contact the Church office for details.  
(305) 247-1662.



**MEN'S  
PRAYER  
BREAKFAST**



All men are invited to join us Saturday, March 1st, 8:00 a.m.



*Feeding the homeless*



Join us March 11, 11:30 - 1:00 p.m., as we serve meals and distribute Bibles to the homeless.  
28205 SW 125th Ave,  
Homestead, Fl 33030

ONLINE:  
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

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

Continued from p. 6

for our area, we are planning on taking a group to see it on opening night. As soon as we have more details, I will pass them on to you. If you'd like to preview a movie trailer, you can do so at [www.godsnotdeadthemovie.com](http://www.godsnotdeadthemovie.com).

Also this month, we are planning some mission projects for the week of Spring Break (March 24-28). While we have a couple of projects already lined up, we are still looking for a couple more to fill in the gaps. If you know of an elderly person who needs help with yard work or clean up around the house or simply one who needs to be

visited and ministered to; or if you know of a family in need of some type of assistance, please let me know.

A few months back I began highlighting one of the core values of our Student Ministry each month. This month I'm highlighting the core value of *Lifestyle Worship*. This core value high lights the truth that all of our life is an act of worship! In fact, the only thing we can't do as an act of worship is sin! Our ministry strives to teach students *how* to live lives of worship in addition to giving them opportunities to worship

with other believers on a regular basis.

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

For His Glory,

*Joe*

