



The Way

November 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Every now and then, you see something you never thought you would see. I'm sure we all felt that way on 9/11 when the Twin Towers fell. Red Sox fans felt that way when their team won its first World Series of the modern era a few years ago. Many felt that way when the first African American president was elected. In the month of October, I saw something I expected to see, but not quite so soon. I saw government officials in the United States of America attempting to erase the first amendment. They did this by intruding upon the free speech rights of pastors and the religious liberty of their churches.

Unless you've been under a rock, you know I am referring to the events of Houston, Texas. This year, the Mayor of Houston, Annise Parker, led the city council to adopt an act (dubiously named "HERO") which supposedly eliminates "discrimination" in public access places. In one part of the ordinance, transgendered persons are guaranteed access to the restrooms of their choice in almost all public locations,

regardless of their actual gender. Christians in Houston naturally objected. They objected, not out of animosity towards those experiencing gender confusion, but out of a desire to protect children. As the father of two little girls, I for one would not care to see a fifty year old man entering the ladies' room after my six year old daughter had done so. Some pastors encouraged their members to get involved. Fifty thousand Houstonians signed petitions to put the act up to a vote. This was about 37,000 more than what was required. The city clerk stopped counting after it was more than apparent the signatures were sufficient to meet the ballot threshold. The city attorney, however, came along and arbitrarily declared the overwhelming majority of signatures invalid. This meant the citizens of Houston had only one option if they wanted to protect children and guarantee the people the right to have the final say in the matter. A lawsuit was filed against the mayor seeking to have the signatures recognized and a referendum take place.

This is when things got ugly. The mayor, angry at her own citizens for opposing "transgender

rights," decided to make it personal. Knowing that most of those signing the petitions were born again Christians, she targeted five pastors believed to have been vocally opposed to her ordinance. The city issued subpoenas demanding that they turn over "all speeches, presentations, or sermons related to HERO, the Petition, Mayor Annise Parker, homosexuality, or gender identity prepared by, delivered by, revised by, or approved by you or in your possession." It should be noted these five pastors were not plaintiffs in the case. Also relevant is the fact that the subpoenas seek information not even relevant to the ordinance opposed by Christians in Houston. For example, while the main issue was not homosexuality, the mayor subpoenaed anything and everything these pastors had said about homosexuality. Why? Because the mayor is a lesbian. She wanted to find material in these communications to use in humiliating these five pastors. And I think everyone understands if you have hundreds of sermons, emails, text messages and other forms of privileged information, you can find something to take out of context for the purpose of embarrassing your enemies.

We need to let this sink in. In the fourth largest American city, pastors have received subpoenas for speaking against homosexuality and in favor of a biblical sexual ethos. Many were outraged, resulting in immediate backpedaling by the mayor. She admitted the subpoenas were “overly broad” and had them tweaked, removing the word “sermons” but leaving in place the word “speeches.” And what exactly is a sermon if not a speech? Simply put, the entire episode was an attempt to intimidate preachers. Nothing more. Nothing less. That subpoenas were involved is chilling. Ignore the subpoenas and these pastors faced being in contempt of court. Being found in contempt of court, these pastors could have faced jail. I say “could have” because last week, the mayor rescinded the subpoenas entirely. But don’t applaud too quickly. She did so while denying she had done anything wrong. In other words, “Houston pastors be warned. Speak against homosexuality and the weight of city hall may come crashing down upon you.”

Someone might ask, “Why not comply?” Besides, didn’t Jesus tell us to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s? Sure he did. But I would point out in that case, Rome had an emperor. In our form of government, “Caesar” is not the mayor who would trample our religious freedom. “Caesar” is the people. We, the people, elect officials and require them to obey the constitution of the United States. Thus, “render unto Caesar” does not apply in this case. This would be like someone falsely claiming to represent Caesar when they did not. Such a person should not be obeyed but opposed.

On a personal note, let me say that my sermons are placed online and made available for anyone in the world to hear. That being said, when the day comes and I receive a subpoena for communications with members of First Baptist Church of Homestead regarding the biblical instruction I give, I will not comply. If I am asked to surrender private communications with church members regarding the counsel I provide, I will not comply. If the time comes (and I believe it will) when government officials decide the church cannot deny same sex couples a wedding ceremony, again, I will not comply. I will peacefully resist, no matter the cost. Yes, I believe in obeying the laws of the land, when those laws do not conflict with our commitment to God. And the pulpit is not subject to government’s authority. It is subject to God’s authority alone.

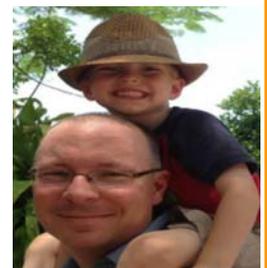
The truth is, if Christians were being the salt of the earth and the light of the world as Jesus instructed, mayors like Annise Parker would have a hard time getting elected and an even harder time issuing subpoenas to pastors who boldly preach the full counsel of the Word of God. Tomorrow, there is an election. I hope you will exercise your right to vote. When you do, I encourage you to remember the exhortation Jethro gave Moses (Exodus 18:21) regarding the qualifications of those who would lead the Israelites. They had to “fear God, love truth and hate dishonest gain.” Before you vote for anyone, ask, “As far as I can tell, does this person fear God?” A person who fears God will not promote what God opposes. They will not call evil what God calls good, nor will they call good what God calls evil. Before you vote, ask, “Does

this person love truth?” Naturally, if someone does not believe absolute truth exists, they cannot love it! If they believe truth is relative, they fail this test. You should also ask, “Does this person’s record do anything to reveal a hatred of dishonest gain?” Are they willing to change their views to make donors happy? Do they change their views in order to bring home “pork barrel spending?” Can they be bought? America is not a theocracy. And yet, Proverbs 29:2 says, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.” This is true at all times and places. Do you want to live in a land of rejoicing or mourning? The choice is yours.

On another note, most of you know I finally was able to take the oral exam for my doctoral degree. Yes I passed. No, I do not want anyone calling me “Dr. Harden.” Pastor is too beautiful a word to be replaced by any educational label. And while I am at it, I did not pursue a doctoral degree so I could be the pastor of another church. I pursued a doctoral degree in hopes that I would be a better pastor of First Baptist Church of Homestead. So thank you for supporting me through this process. Yes, it took too long, but as the old saying goes, “Better late than never.”

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor.

Pastor Howard



Happy Birthday!

11/01 - Elizabeth Perez	11/07 - Vishema Francis	11/16 - Paul Alexander	11/23 - Ann Rewis
11/02 - Ronald Byars	11/07 - Yustin Nunez	11/16 - Alvin Lucas	11/24 - Luis Martinez
11/02 - Taylor Curry	11/08 - Valerie Benn	11/16 - Victor Rodriguez	11/25 - Hilary Blaedow
11/02 - Ben McDonnough	11/08 - Daniela Hernandez	11/17 - Thomas Catlin	11/25 - Alicia Mora
11/03 - Jonathon Garner	11/08 - Jasmine Jacquez	11/17 - Alexandria Sears	11/26 - Abigail Allen
11/03 - Steven Sanchez	11/08 - Nemecio Leon	11/18 - Casey Diehl	11/26 - Tina Dispenza
11/03 - Jenny Santos	11/08 - Clara Mitchell	11/18 - Kensley Diehl	11/26 - Dana Pulak
11/04 - Anna Blackley	11/08 - Luis Sanchez	11/18 - Natty Maldonado	11/26 - Cynthia Tuzinsky
11/04 - Sheila Johnson	11/09 - Joe Friman	11/19 - Brandon Sizemore	11/27 - Chrischelle Alejandro
11/04 - David Jones	11/10 - Tyler Fox	11/20 - Gilbert Castro	11/27 - Rebekah Wright
11/04 - Lemoyne Jones	11/10 - Jack Young	11/20 - Daisy Garcia	11/28 - Doris Philpot
11/05 - Jeremy Abbott	11/11 - Daniel Rivera	11/21 - Carly Blalock	11/30 - Ray Steele
11/05 - Joan Maydak	11/14 - Marianela Salado	11/21 - Alex Jones	
11/06 - Kimberly Biichle	11/14 - John Sizemore	11/22 - Brittany Farias	
11/06 - Joyce Detres	11/15 - Bill Dees	11/22 - Sophia Farias	
11/06 - Helen Kinser	11/15 - Anita Dickson	11/22 - Dennis Kinkade	
11/06 - David Stockment	11/15 - Paula Ramirez	11/23 - Gordon Johnson	



Music Ministry



The December calendar usually fills up quickly and you will want to remember these dates: December 5th and 7th our Sanctuary Choir will present “Unspeakable Joy” at 7:00 PM both evenings; and on the 14th, our Young Musicians will present “An Unplugged Christmas” in our evening service as well. We are going to start the Christmas season with

fantastic music from all ages. Our cantata will be dedicated to the memory of Wally Williams, a bass singer, chairman of deacons, served on many committees, a wonderful husband, father and grandfather to his family. A superb Christian man with brilliant leadership. Wally is, and he will be missed greatly, but we rest assured in our Father’s hands. Heaven became a little

sweeter on October 19th.

Thank you Linda Smith, our director, and ladies for enrolling in our bell choir. We can’t wait to hear from you this Thanksgiving and Christmas!

Singing for HIM,
Pam



Stewardship

October 2014

Contributions for October 2014:	\$ 49,515.31
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 46,491.16
YTD Contributions:	\$ 49,515.31
YTD Budget:	\$ 46,491.16

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



*"I was in prison and you came to visit me."
Matthew 25:36*

If you want to volunteer in our Prison Ministry, training will be by appointment. Please contact the church office (305) 247-1662.



CHAPMAN PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

28205 SW 124th Ave



Tuesday,
November 11,
11:30-1:00 p.m.

*Church-Wide
Thanksgiving Luncheon
November 23, after the
11:00 a.m. service.
Please bring two large
side dishes.*



Help us provide a thanksgiving feast to families in need.

Items needed: Stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, instant mashed potatoes, corn, chicken broth, canned sweet potatoes, green beans, rice, pumpkin pie filling, pie crust (boxed), dry beans, evaporated milk, cream of mushroom soup, flour and oil.

"Gift cards and monetary gifts are appreciated and needed to purchase turkeys and perishable items." Deadline November 19th



All ladies are invited to join us November 30 at 5:30 p.m., for our monthly meeting in the fellowship hall. We will be electing new committee members and discussing our Christmas projects.



Sunday
6:30 p.m. (Youth)
Come Learn: What we believe.
Why we believe it. How to defend it.

ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

PO Box 900428
29050 SW 177 Ave
Homestead, FL 33090
Office: (305) 247-1662
Fax: (305) 247-0117
E-mail: fbchoffice@bellsouth.net
Web: www.fbchomestead.org



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



The month of November brings with it a tendency for people to pause and consider what they are thankful for. As I have done that in my own life, I have found **MUCH** to be thankful for! James 1:17 tells us that **“Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father or lights...”** All we are and all we have are gifts from God and should lead us to praise Him! I pray that you would take time this month to do just that! Here’s a look at what’s going on in our Student Ministry this month.

At ENCOUNTER we’re kicking off a new sermon series called **Gratitude**. We’ll spend the next several weeks examining passages related to the topic of being grateful. If your student hasn’t gotten plugged into ENCOUN-

TER, this would be a **great** time to encourage them to come worship with us!

On Friday, November 21, we’ll be having our next Friday Nite Live! This month we’ll be playing Minute to Win It games! This is **ALWAYS** a fun time for both students and our adult volunteers, so I hope you’ll make plans to join us. The event will take place from 6:00 – 10:00 pm. We will be serving dinner so we need an accurate count of how many to plan for. Please sign up on the sign up sheet in the youth room or call the church office to RSVP your spot!

I also want to let all of our students and parents know that the deadline for initial deposits for next summer’s mission trips has been extended to Sunday, November 30. This is the deadline to register and submit the deposit for either the Pompano

Beach mission trip or our international trip to Belize.

This month’s core value I’d like to highlight is **Compassionate Ministry**. This core value highlights the truth that believers have been given a spiritual gift that God wants them to use to serve others in love. Regardless of age, gender, social status, income level, physical limitations, etc., **every** believer has been gifted to serve. Our ministry wants to help students discover their gifting and then provide them with an outlet to use it to serve others. Every member is a 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

