



The Way

October 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

As some of you may know, October marks the beginning of a new fiscal year for our church. So I decided that this would be a good time to share with you some unique commitments that we have made at First Baptist Church of Homestead. These are not new commitments, nor is everything that follows necessarily written policy. This is simply a summary of how we choose to operate. These commitments pertain to stewardship, in general, and financial stewardship, in particular.

We keep an open book.

If you come to our monthly business meetings, you know this is true. Monthly financial reports detail what we have received down to the very penny, as well as how that money was used for the Lord's work. Members have the opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions. If you think of a question after the business meeting is over, you can always ask our financial secretary or the stewardship committee. With the federal government, you have to file a "Freedom of Information Act" request to get pertinent information. At First Baptist Church of Homestead, all you have to do is say, "please." I am surprised how many churches are less accessible when

it comes to money and I am grateful that FBCH has chosen to "buck that trend."

Why do we do it this way? First, we have nothing to hide. Second, we believe that the church is the body of Christ and the head speaks through the body. Third, we have nothing to hide. Fourth, an open book helps keep all of us accountable and insures that God's money is managed as well as possible. Fifth, we have nothing to hide! (Did I mention that already!)

I do not look at your giving.

It is very important that you know that I do not know how much any of you give. On the few occasions members have told me their giving, I have politely asked them to not do so in the future. I do not know how much you give in tithes or offerings. I do not know if you are a tither. All I know is that the stewardship committee members are asked whether or not they tithe. (A person who is not practicing biblical stewardship should not be directing the finances of the church.) Also, the deacons believe in, and practice, tithing. So I can deduce that those members give a tenth of their income to the Lord's work here at First Baptist Church of Homestead. But I do not know how much they give, nor can I tell you who else is tithing or not.

There are two main reasons why I do not know what any of you give. First, the Bible explicitly warns against showing favoritism in the church towards those who are rich. James 2:1-4 says, "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" James said it is evil to show favoritism to someone based on the wealth they possess. If I examined the giving of individual members, I would be placing before me an unnecessary temptation. I would be tempted to favor those who are able to give large amounts and perhaps neglect those whose giving is less. The truth is, God has called me to be the pastor of everyone in the flock that is First Baptist Church of Homestead, rich or poor.

A second reason I do not look at giving is the biblical prohibition against pastors who are "lovers of money," along with the admonition that pastors are to be "above reproach." (1 Timothy 3:2-3) I struggle to see how any pastor is above reproach while studying who gives what. Furthermore, I am horrified to see churches in which the pastor con-

trols the church's finances or has free access to them. Pastors who have their hands in the church's coffers are begging for controversy, accusations and division within the church. I can think of no compelling reason for a pastor to do so...except for greed. It is not my intention to malign other pastors who disagree or operate differently. I do want to express my convictions on this matter, as forceful as they may be.

It is not my job as your pastor to know what you give or control how that money is used after it is given. It is my job to teach and preach biblical stewardship. It is my job to disciple you in this area. It is my job to instruct and to guide the ministries and the committees of the church (including stewardship) to operate biblically. FBCH is not a "business" in the secular sense of the word. Businesses exist to turn a profit. We exist to carry out the Great Commission. The pastor's job is to help the church understand that difference and act accordingly.

While I do not see what you give, let me remind you, God does. That alone should motivate you far more than any earthly pastor ever could.

We are committed to tithing our receipts...and then some.

Regarding the tithe, sometimes, people remind me that the tithe is an Old Testament standard and we are under the New Testament. Others will state that the New Testament standard is to "give cheerfully." (2 Corinthians 9:7) I would point out, however, that grace should always motivate us to do more than the law. This is a principle we see again and again in the Scriptures. (Romans 8:3-4) So if someone wants to argue against the tithe as being a New Testament standard, that is fine, as long as they are going up and not down. It is inconceivable that the man or woman touched by God's grace would be led to be less generous than what was required under the law. Grace never pulls us back. Grace frees us to move forward.

For that reason, yes, I mention the tithe and I preach the importance of tithing. I do so with the understanding that it is a starting point. I am aware of the fact that many people come to Christ with a mountain of debt and other financial obligations. It takes time and discipleship for them to arrive at a tithe, much less more. But the tithe is still a good barometer to use in measuring our commitment to God's work.

This is why we take more than a tithe of what we receive as a church and give it to missions. Two percent supports the Miami Baptist Association. Eight percent goes to the Cooperative Program, with a majority of that going to the Southern Baptist Convention. Thousands of missionaries use those dollars to preach the gospel all over the world. We also support six seminaries for the training of tomorrow's pastors and missionaries. We give another one and a half percent to the Florida Baptist Children's Homes. Did you know that ten percent of all of the children in foster care in the state of Florida go through us? Every time you give to FBCH, you support that. We also support five full time missionaries in Cuba, providing one hundred percent of their salary. None of the above includes the tens of thousands of dollars we give each year in special offerings for missions. There is no book, chapter or verse in the Bible that states that we as a church should do all of this. We believe, however, that it honors and pleases God for us to do, on a church level, what Scripture teaches us to do on an individual level. Thus, we are setting the example we hope you will follow.

Please know we are always open to suggestions. Our stewardship committee worked hard this year to bring the budget that was presented. That does not mean, however, that they are perfect. Have some suggestions? Send them to us. Put them in writing and we will put them into the hands of every member of the stewardship committee.

No budget is ever "set in stone." A budget is a guide to direct our spending,

according to what we believe God would have us to do. Circumstances may change, however, over the course of a year. And when that happens, we can adjust the budget. But we do have a budget. So would you take this time to prayerfully examine your giving? If you are not giving at least a tithe, would you pray about doing so now? Would you pray for us to make and surpass this budget?

I share these things with you, not because of any problem that needs fixing. I share this because it occurred to me that too many of you may not know how we operate. I pray that knowing how we operate will make you even more grateful to be a part of such a church. I know I am.

In case you missed it, the deacons recommended Oscar Rodriguez to serve as a deacon. He will be voted on in the October business meeting. He has been tested theologically by myself and the deacons, spending many hours answering questions about doctrine and his lifestyle. By bringing his name the month prior, you the church have the opportunity to get to know him. I hope you will do so. I am excited about serving alongside him.

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor.

Pastor Howard



Happy Birthday!

10/01 - Vivianna Catlin	10/07 - Rebeca Santana	10/15 - Bobby Conty	10/21 - Tim Ebersole
10/01 - Steve Clayton	10/08 - Suzanne Suarez	10/16 - Tiffany Seneriz	10/21 - Melissa Jabat
10/02 - Allison Bates	10/08 - Jalin Wilson	10/16 - Jonathan Sourber	10/21 - Randy Zebold
10/02 - Cristal Cruz	10/09 - Tairo Sosa	10/17 - B.J. Benn	10/22 - Catherine Botek
10/02 - Estefania Sarraff	10/10 - Chuy Delacruz	10/17 - Steve Bergeson	10/22 - Beatriz Giraldo
10/03 - Tony Baltodano	10/10 - Anaya Goedhart	10/17 - Jesus Delgado	10/22 - Pablo Rincon
10/03 - Austin Pichardo	10/10 - Abigale Vasquez	10/17 - Andres Diaz	10/23 - Pampilio Martinez
10/03 - Sabrina Pichardo	10/11 - Ralph Bellis	10/17 - Leah Lapworth	10/23 - Alex Taylor
10/03 - Mike Velasco	10/11 - Kanye Fox	10/17 - Chris Matthews	10/25 - June Thomas
10/04 - Jonathan Davis	10/12 - Jenelle Lopez	10/17 - Sarah Moak	10/26 - Jason Eldridge
10/04 - Wayne Woodard	10/12 - Ava Lugo	10/17 - Rachael Woodard	10/26 - Mariela Rodriguez
10/05 - Blair Lowe	10/12 - Trent Martino	10/18 - Leorah Norestin	10/26 - Grace Rodriguez
10/05 - Nicole Olvera	10/12 - Hannah Rogers	10/19 - Pam Helms	10/27 - David Allen
10/06 - Pat Hollinger	10/13 - Donna Case	10/19 - Xonnia Villena	10/28 - Ashton Drury
10/06 - Huguette Lundy	10/13 - Rachel Goodwin	10/20 - Lizzie Losner	10/28 - Madison McCarty
10/06 - Tracy Wilt	10/14 - Yvette Cordova	10/20 - Steven Losner	10/28 - Judy Mendheim
10/07 - Caleb Benn	10/14 - Emily Friman	10/20 - Donald Mills	10/30 - Ella Graham
10/07 - Lindsay Fox	10/15 - Amanda Barnes	10/20 - Smithy Smith	10/31 - Lani Hardiman
10/07 - Edith Ramos	10/15 - Elma Branson	10/20 - Crystyna Wright	



Music Ministry



October is here and you know what that means! Christmas isn't far away. Celebrations are soon coming each month and it's hard to consider which holiday is a favorite. Sometimes I feel like a broken record asking and telling people to join a choir. A choir of any age. Our directors are fabulous!

They make things so fun and inspiring.

Special thanks to our sound technicians and media assistances. Many hours of on the job training since you have received our new sound board. Each Sunday you continue to improve. The only thing I have learned is how to turn the board

on. Special appreciation is coming your way. Hats off to you!!

Singing for HIM,
Pam



Stewardship September 2016

Contributions for September 2016:	\$ 39,923.04
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 46,595.00
YTD Contributions:	\$ 594,330.63
YTD Budget:	\$ 605,735.00

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



28205 SW 125th Ave
Homestead, FL 33030

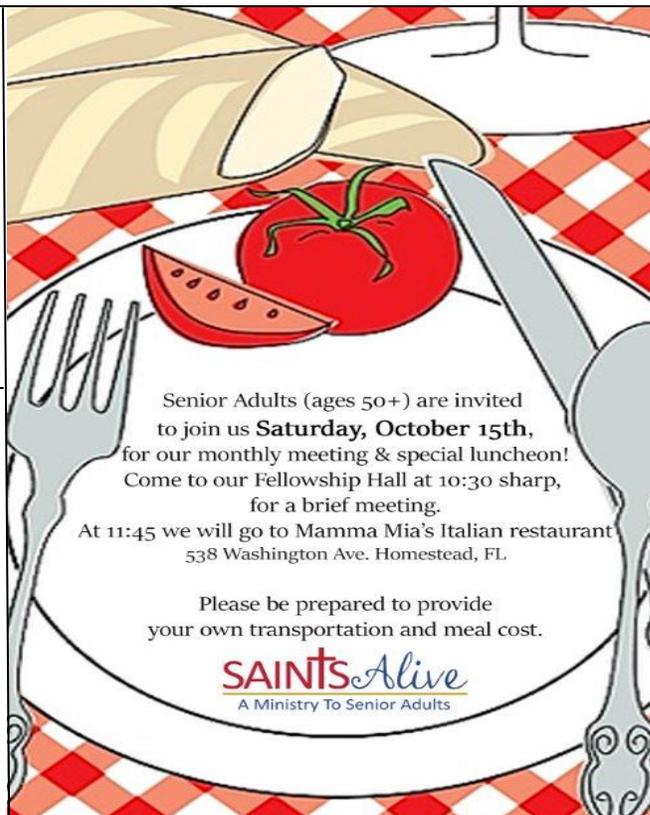
Join us October 27, 11:30 a.m., as we serve meals and distribute Bibles to the homeless.



Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center
November 10 - November 13

Deadline to register
10/19/16 \$150.00

If you are able to sponsor
a student, please contact Joe.



Senior Adults (ages 50+) are invited to join us **Saturday, October 15th**, for our monthly meeting & special luncheon! Come to our Fellowship Hall at 10:30 sharp, for a brief meeting.

At 11:45 we will go to Mamma Mia's Italian restaurant 538 Washington Ave. Homestead, FL

Please be prepared to provide your own transportation and meal cost.



Thanksgiving Food Drive

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 16th



Join us Saturday,
October 29, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
in the fellowship hall
as we enjoy food and fellowship.

Help the Women on Mission kick – off our Thanksgiving canned food drive.

Prizes will be awarded for: *Best Tasting Chili
*Hottest Chili.

ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

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29050 SW 177th Ave
Homestead, FL 33030



Within the past year, two of my family members have dealt with medical conditions that required them to have open-heart surgery. Each of those occasions has come with its challenges and anxiety-inducing moments. Thankfully, both family members seem to be doing pretty well now. These major surgeries have caused me to stop and contemplate and evaluate my "spiritual heart." You see, just as our physical hearts sometimes require attention from a physician, so too can our spiritual heart require attention from the Great Physician. From time to time it is helpful for us to stop and contemplate the condition of our spiritual heart. Why don't you set aside some time this month to do just that? The benefits of doing so are a tremendous blessing!

Here's a look at what's taking place this month in our Student Ministry.

First, at our Wednesday night **ENCOUNTER** services we are kicking off a new message series called *Where Is God When Life Hurts*. Life's disappointments have a way of arousing questions in the life of disciples of Christ. We're going to take the next 2 months and explore what the Scriptures have to

say about where God is and what He is doing in the midst of some of our most difficult seasons. We'll tackle topics like: Where is God when I'm betrayed; when I've lost everything; when I fail; when someone I love dies; and more. This might be one of the most beneficial sermon series we've studied all year and I would love to encourage all of our students to join us on Wednesday nights as we join together to worship.

Second, on Saturday, October 22, from 2 – 7 pm, we are having a **Family Field Day**. This is an event for all of our students and their entire family. There will be games, food, and some fantastic fellowship with other families within our ministry. I hope all of our students and their family will join us for an opportunity to build and strengthen the bonds of fellowship. In order for us to adequately make preparations for the meal, we are asking families to RSVP to the church office by Wednesday, October 19. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Also this month is the registration deadline for our 11th Annual Fall Retreat, called *Metamorphosis*. This has become one of the highlights of the year for our Student Ministry as we get away to beautiful Lake Yale Baptist

Conference Center for a weekend of Bible study, worship, recreation and fellowship. *Metamorphosis* takes place this year from November 10-13. The cost is \$150 and the deadline to register is October 19. We do have students who are in need of scholarships to make it possible for them to attend this year's retreat so if you are able to help out with any amount, please see me and let me know.

Finally, let me just remind you that one of the core values of our Student Ministry is *Diverse Fellowship*. This core value highlights the truth that Christ has destroyed the walls that once separated us and has made us into a family. Our ministry is a ministry to and for **ALL** students and their family regardless of any characteristics that this world insists must divide us. We believe that diversity in the membership of our student ministry is a reflection of the diversity we will see in heaven and we welcome and celebrate any and all students that have surrendered to the Lordship of Christ no matter what their background.

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

Joe