



The Way

April 2011

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

As many of you know, this past fall I attended a Monday Night Football game in Jacksonville to watch my beloved Jaguars. When I'm at a game, I find myself constantly watching the scoreboard. Who has more first downs? Who has more yards? How many picks has the quarterback thrown? How much time is left on the clock? Who has more POINTS? Unfortunately, on this particular night, all of the points were scored by the opposing team! (Our chief rival, which made it even worse. Urrrrrgggghhhhh!) Anyway, I have a feeling that I am not the only person guilty of scoreboard watching.

Churches tend to do a lot of scoreboard watching. We have certain numbers that we look at as indicators of where we are and how we are doing. For example, we monitor Sunday School and worship attendance. We keep track of baptisms and the giving. This can be either good or bad, depending on how one goes about it. When numbers become supreme, ministry suffers because sometimes,

doing things the right way, as instructed by the Bible, will not result in higher numbers, but lower numbers. For example, I can think of one church that has grown to twenty-thousand plus in weekly attendance by refusing to make mention of sin or to preach the less popular portions of God's Word. Believe me when I say that there are times at First Baptist Church when we refuse to do something that would result in higher attendance but would be done at the expense of faithfulness to the Scriptures. So numbers can be given too much emphasis.

At the same time, we can give numbers too little emphasis. For example, the Bible says in Proverbs 27:23, "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds." And there is, after all, an entire book of the Bible called NUMBERS, so apparently, numbers do matter to God. Most of all, numbers matter when they represent people who are being saved or engaged with the gospel.

I said all of that to say that there are three numbers that I like to look at that tell me a lot about the kind of church we are and what are our strengths and weaknesses. So let me share a few numbers with you that

you probably have not heard. One is very positive and other two will hopefully challenge you. First of all, I like to keep track of what visitors to FBCH are saying about our church. What is their impression? On my desk as I write these words is a stack of surveys almost two inches tall! Specifically, we send every visitor a survey asking them to rate our friendliness factor on a scale of 1-10. A ten means that we could not be friendlier. A score of one means that we could not be more cold. You would be amazed how many we get back. You see a lot of churches believe that they are friendly simply because the members are friendly to *one another*. That does not mean, however, that a first time *guest* feels just as welcomed and loved. I went through and computed our average "friendliness score." You'll be glad to know (here is that first statistic) that a whopping 59% of our visitors over the last three years told us that our church was a perfect 10. That is a good thing. That means that a lot of people are leaving and saying, "Wow, those folks really care about me!" or "That church could not be more friendly." Now, for the other side of the coin, that second statistic. The average friendliness score for our church was only 7.4. That means that

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while a lot of people leave and are very impressed, a significant portion of guests who attend are less than impressed.

I can also tell you how many times the average visitor has been greeted from the time they exit their car upon arriving to the time they enter their car upon departing. This is the third statistic. The average visitor is greeted (are you ready for this?) 2.9 times. I hope you would agree that this is pretty low. This could explain the 7.4 friendliness score. Our first impressions ministry does a wonderful job greeting those who walk through our doors. On the other hand, guests need to also be greeted by those members who are not "official greeters" but just regular people who noticed them and welcomed them to the house of God. Would you make it a priority to use those moments before the worship service starts on Sunday to make sure every person around you has been welcomed?

Some of the comments our guests wrote are also quite telling. The following are all actual statements, good and bad, made by our guests about our church.

"You do a good job."

"In my thinking you're #1 in church friendliness."

"I could tell I took someone's seat."

"I like it just the way it is."

"We arrived during Sunday School and no one was at the welcome center."

"FBCH was as friendly as most any church we have visited."

"Not many approached us and said hello."

"I felt the presence of the Lord here."

"People didn't seem to welcome us as brothers and sisters in Christ. We were just newcomers."

"We were made to feel very welcome by those seated around us."

"Everyone was so kind."

"I really appreciated the warm reception."

As you can see, two people can both visit our church and have completely different experiences. Why is that? I believe that we tend to greet those who resemble us and make us feel comfortable and we have a tendency to ignore those we don't think we can relate to. For example, a teenager may not be as likely to be greeted by a senior adult and vice versa. A single male member of our church may not make the effort to greet that large family with whom he can't relate. As your pastor, I want to encourage you to step out of your comfort zone this Sunday. Find someone you might not otherwise speak to and in those moments before or after church, greet them with the love of Christ. Ask how they're doing. Ask them if they are in a small group

"Two people can both visit our church and have completely different experiences."

(Sunday School class). Ask if they have a prayer need. Tell them you are glad they're there. Offer to help them in any way. Remember the three minute rule. That means that in the three minutes immediately after the worship service concludes, attempt to fellowship with someone you do not already know. Resist the urge to immediately go to your best friend to talk about the Marlins' lack of a bullpen. Dedicate the first three minutes to reaching out to someone new. A lot

of people make a fuss over styles of music in churches these days, but I believe that if people truly feel loved, they are going to come back whether they like the music or not. And they'll probably come back even if the programs are not the best. Let's improve those numbers. Let's welcome people more than 2.9 times and let's make them say we're more than loving than a 7.4. God calls us to love people. This is part of what loving people looks like.

UPDATE

At this point, we have received most of the Building for the Future pledge cards. Those active families who did not turn one in were contacted and simply asked if they had any questions about the campaign. If by some miracle, you slipped through the cracks and were not contacted, please let us know. Currently, we are tallying the number of pledges and we are pricing the building. Once we know both of those numbers, then we will be in a position to know where we are and what we need to do to get from A to Z. Above all, I urge you to pray. There will be decisions made that will impact our church for years to come. Now is the time to fast and pray!

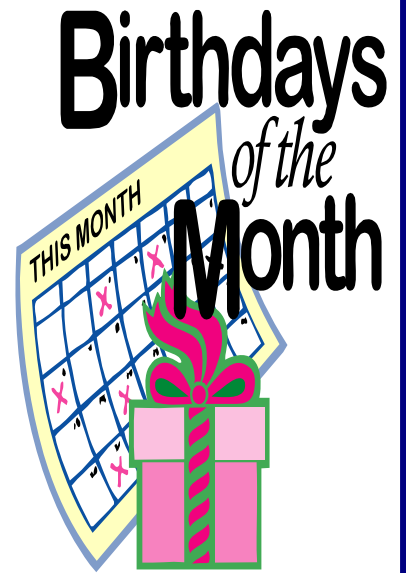
On a final note, Easter is almost here. You have the opportunity to reach out to individuals who might not otherwise attend. Take advantage of this opportunity and invite them. Our choir will be presenting beautiful music at both the 8:30 and 11:00 am services. I look forward to celebrating the resurrection with you and the living hope it gives us.

Pastor Howard



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 04/01 - Ted Williams | 04/10 - Frederick Milton | 04/22 - Steven Diehl |
| 04/01 - Kevin Zelman | 04/11 - Ryan Fleischfresser | 04/22 - Joel Guilfoyle |
| 04/02 - William Ader | 04/11 - Michael Sparks | 04/23 - Timothy Vanderford |
| 04/02 - Steven Breivogel | 04/12 - Susana Lugo | 04/25 - Monica Alvarez |
| 04/03 - Levi Harden | 04/14 - Stephanie Hill | 04/25 - Debbie Bergeson |
| 04/03 - Hannah Mills | 04/17 - Clayton Bliumfeldas | 04/25 - CJ Ramos |
| 04/03 - Karina Toirac | 04/17 - Shari Breivogel | 04/25 - Keith Sparks |
| 04/04 - Jacob Mohammed | 04/17 - Dale Curtiss | 04/26 - Brunilda Nieves |
| 04/05 - Genady Sanchez | 04/17 - Jesse Ochoa | 04/28 - Alex Arcia |
| 04/07 - James Polles | 04/17 - Hailey Zaldivar | 04/29 - Austin Diehl |
| 04/08 - Ricardo Barrera | 04/18 - Kayla DeLeon | 04/29 - Kevin Orosa |
| 04/08 - James Holland | 04/18 - Peter Quinones | 04/30 - Neftali Guzman |
| 04/08 - Jenna Morales | 04/19 - Robert Carnell | 04/30 - Debbie Pate |
| 04/08 - Hilda Patterson | 04/20 - Mayra Bladford | 04/30 - Cassandra Trujillo |
| 04/09 - Alex Toirac | 04/21 - Giselle Lucio | |
| 04/10 - Stefanie Lugo | 04/21 - Marilyn Padron | |



Music Ministry



Our choir has been working diligently on our Easter music. We will present excerpts of "Champion of Love" to you and our loving Savior on Easter morning, April 24th at the 8:30 and 11:00 am services. Our choir is full of dedicated servants wanting to serve. I do not know many members who attend two choir rehearsals a week. Now, that's dedication! It

is nice to see new faces in the choir, but there is always room for more. Thank you Rod Davis for joining the tenor section!

We have missed our church pianist these last few weeks. Linda Smith lost her father recently and I ask that you continue to pray for her. She stays busy here at FBC and I know when you see her, you'll let her know you are thinking of her

and her family.

Thank you for letting me be a part of your ministry here at FBC. What a pleasure it is serving our Lord Jesus Christ together!

Singing for HIM,
Pam



**Stewardship
March 2011**

Contributions for March 2011:	\$ 46,199.56
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 45,693.24
Contributions Year to date:	\$ 303,016.37
Year to date budget requirement: (Through 26 Sundays)	\$ 297,006.06

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



Saturday, April 23rd at 10:00 a.m. Ages 0-6th Grade



Coming summer 2011

Baptism class by appointment
(If you would like to take the baptism class call 305-247-1662)

Building for the Future

Have you pledged?

We are still receiving pledge cards. Please turn your card into the church office or in the chest of Joash.



7th Annual

Box Car Race

Saturday, April 16th

Clubbers Division: Inspection/registration at 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.
Race 10:00 a.m.



Adult & Teen Division: Inspection/registration 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Race 1:00 p.m.
Join the fun and get your car now!!!



Good Friday service 4/22, 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday

Early service 6:30 a.m.
Breakfast 7:30 a.m.
Contemporary Worship 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Traditional Worship 11:00 a.m.

Easter Morning Breakfast



Volunteers needed to:
Prepare breakfast casseroles, help serve, setup and clean.
Please contact Jeri Martinez 305-505-0984.



June 12-13

Sunday, June 12th 6:30 p.m.
Monday, June 13th 7:00 p.m.



ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

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



As I type this, I am *STILL* re:covering from re:NEW Weekend! What an absolutely amazing experience we had! God moved in mighty ways in the hearts and lives of students and adults alike. I am humbled and blessed to be such a part of an amazing church with such amazing volunteers! Your encouragement, support, and participation are what make re:NEW possible in the first place! I just wanted to say "Thank you." Thank you for *investing* in the lives of students! Thank you for *understanding* the importance of communicating the truths of Scripture to students! Thank you for *sacrificing* time, energy, money, sleep, and so much more. We may never know the impact this weekend had on the life of a student but we can rest assured that the seeds that have been sown will not return void but will produce what God has intended!

re:NEW has drawn to a close and now we turn our attention to our Summer Mission Trip. This year we are heading to Jacksonville, FL from July 9-15. We'll be working with Words to Works Ministries to conduct Backyard Bible Clubs, block parties, and working with local community organizations to take the gospel into Jacksonville. Cost for this year's trip is \$250. There will be an *Informational Lunch Meeting* on Sunday, April 17 at 12:30 pm in the fellowship hall to discuss details for the trip as well as possible avenues for raising funds for the trip. If your family would like to participate in that meeting, please RSVP to the church office by Friday, April 15 so we can have an accurate count as we plan for the meal. We will be serving sandwiches, chips, and a desert. I would *strongly* encourage those who are planning to participate in the mission trip to attend this meeting!

Finally, it is hard to believe but we are just under 2 months away from graduation for our high school seniors! We are planning a special service for our graduates for Sunday, June 5. Graduates, please be on the lookout for a special letter in the mail within the next week. Also, if you are or know of a high school or college graduate, would you make sure to contact us and let us know so we ensure that no one gets left out of the celebration!

Thanks for the privilege of serving you and serving with you for the glory of God! It truly is a joy!

For His Glory,

Joe

