



The Way

August 2011

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

About the time that I learned how to drive, I also learned two important words that every driver needs to know: preventative maintenance. It is far easier to prevent major damage to your car than it is to repair damage that has already taken place. That is not just true with automobiles, but with all of life as well. It is easier to prevent marital strife than to work through it. It is easier to keep a good GPA than it is to raise a low GPA. Preventative maintenance is especially easier when it comes to strife within the church. Consider this article preventative maintenance. I want to address what I see as a growing problem nationwide, but not necessarily a problem within our church. I'm talking about social media.

Social media is a fact of life. Many Christians simply choose not to be a part of it, but in the twenty-first century, we will all be surrounded by and affected by it. Wikipedia lists over 200 popular social networking sites, so it's kind of hard for some of us to keep up. Facebook, Twitter and MySpace are a few that you may be familiar with. Like television or the internet, social media can be a tool

or a weapon, a blessing or a curse, depending on how it is used.

As a positive illustration of how social media can benefit the church, take the Liberty University Wind Ensemble concert our church hosted this past spring. We were contacted about an opening in their schedule only a month prior. We knew that it would be a tremendous opportunity, but we needed commitments for host homes for over fifty students within days. We attempted to contact members by word of mouth and were getting very little response. With about twenty four hours left to decide, we put out a notice on Facebook. A day later, we had commitments to host about seventy students. It is understood at FBCH that if we need to get word out to our members quickly, the quickest and best way to do so is Facebook. We won't contact everyone that way, but we will contact the most people in the shortest amount of time. In this sense, it is a blessing.

While social media can be a blessing, it can also be a curse. Already, we see churches that have split over social media. When Bellevue Baptist Church called Steve Gaines as the successor to the late Adrian Rogers as pastor, some members created a website to publish their complaints about his leadership. It wasn't just the members of that church, however, that read their

rants. The media picked up on it and the controversy that resulted led to a major church split. I know of several flagship churches in the Southern Baptist Convention that had to go through the painful process of removing members who used web sites to stir dissension within the church. In two cases, shameful lawsuits resulted as well.

There is never a time when it is appropriate to use any type of public venue to criticize your church or fellow members, no matter how constructive you think your critiques are. This is especially true when you criticize your church on a blog, online discussion board, Twitter, Facebook or MySpace. This violates just about every biblical principle on conflict resolution. In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." Notice, Jesus did NOT say if there is a conflict, respond by broadcasting your problem to as many people as possible to recruit sympathizers for your side! In Matthew 18, Jesus said if you have an issue with a fellow believer, "go and point out their fault, just between the two of you." Again, Jesus did not say to begin by writing it on a scroll and circulating what you

Cont next page

have written for everyone to see (which would have been the ancient equivalent of social media)!

My wife knows of one situation in which someone criticized a fellow church member on her facebook status, but thought it was ok because she did not use the name of the person she was criticizing. Trust me, the object of her criticism was no less hurt because her name was not used. Just because something is posted digitally or anonymously does not make it any less gossip.

Not only does the abuse of social media hurt individual believers, it also hurts the unity of the church. As Jesus prayed in John 17, "I pray also for those who will believe in me...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." (John 17:20-21) Think about that. As Jesus looked into the future and thought about future believers, the one thing He prayed for was our unity. When you disrupt the unity of the church, you trample upon the one request for which Jesus prayed just before laying down his life on the cross! See how dangerous social media can be if abused? If God had handed down the Ten Commandments in the twenty-first century, I'm pretty sure there would have been eleven, and the eleventh commandment would have been, "Thou Shalt not criticize thy church online."

"When you disrupt the unity of the church, you trample upon the one request for which Jesus prayed just before laying down his life on the cross!"

Please allow me to make a few suggestions for navigating social media biblically. First of all, don't even think about writing a negative post about your church, a ministry within the church or a fellow believer as your status on Facebook, MySpace or Twitter. (Let me remind you one more time that this is preventative maintenance, ok? I don't want to wait for this

problem to come to our church to address it. Let's establish right now that this must never happen at FBCH.) Also, if you have friends who are members of other churches who do this, I believe you owe it to them to call them out, lovingly but sternly.

I would also suggest that you have nothing to do with those who practice social media gossip. If you have Facebook "friends" who make this a practice and refuse to stop, it is imperative that you remove them from your friend list so that you will not even participate by reading what they write. If you know someone who blogs about his/her church's every flaw, don't visit their blog. Proverbs 26:20 says, "Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down." If you merely read someone's gossip online, you are adding wood to the fire.

A few years ago, a couple in our church approached me with complaints regarding one of our ministries. I listened diligently and was ready and willing to objectively weigh their concerns...until I discovered that my meetings with them were being reported on their blog for the entire world to see. They never told me that our conversations were, in fact, interviews. I never said or wrote anything that would embarrass me if made public, mind you, but I could not, in good conscience, continue to have any more communication with them regarding that matter. I put their complaints in my mental waste basket and they promptly left our church, which was a blessing for everyone involved. I don't know a lot, but I know one thing: I will never win with people who secretly report what I say to them on the internet. I refuse to even try and you should as well.

Speaking of blogs, here is another word of advice. I have become concerned that the basic premise behind most blogging may not be biblical. What I am about to say will come as a shock to some people, but we really don't have an urgent

need to inform the world of our opinions on every single issue out there. If you have a blog, you probably feel the need to "feed" your blog by providing a steady stream of articles and/or thoughts. The average person's life just isn't exciting enough to fill that much space, so the blog evolves into a platform of "here's my opinion on _____". Consider what the Bible says in James 1:19, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." Bloggers, on the other hand, are often quick to speak and slow to listen. Proverbs 21:23 says, "Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity." There is not much "guarding of the tongue" taking place when you write something on a public site that tears down a brother or sister in Christ.

A final word of caution is for parents. Think twice before you allow your children to have unfiltered access to social media web sites. I am not going to suggest a magical age at which point your children are ready to be exposed to social media, but it's hard for me to fathom how most teenagers and anyone younger could possibly be ready to navigate the good and the bad that social media has to offer. It breaks my heart to think about how many of our youth are exposed to things to which they should not yet be exposed.

Let's make social media, in all of its forms, a means of spreading the gospel, encouraging believers and sharpening one another. Let's not allow it to become the weapon that destroys churches and alienates believers against one another.

Pastor Howard



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

08/02 - Kaleb Acree	08/06 - Michele Catlin	08/15 - Ava Nowicki	08/26 - Dylan Breivogel
08/02 - Anthony Martino	08/06 - A.J. Ohlsen	08/15 - Randall Quick	08/26 - Katie Davis
08/02 - Richard McCann	08/08 - Jared Martino	08/16 - Jacob Anspach	08/27 - Jesus Fabian, Jr
08/03 - Shelia Chance	08/08 - Christ Short	08/17 - Ericka Lung	08/27 - Tamonlyn Hodge
08/03 - Craig Kossuth	08/10 - Lisa Powell	08/18 - Birney Layson	08/27 - Wally Williams
08/03 - Jason Rodriguez	08/11 - Danielle DeJuste	08/19 - Pat Blake	08/28 - Gwen Bradley
08/03 - Jessica Rodriguez	08/11 - Zoe Friman	08/20 - Raquel Lopez	08/28 - Cole Davis
08/03 - Joseph Roldan	08/11 - Marcelino Perez	08/21 - Cassie Tompkins	08/28 - Rodney Davis
08/03 - Sharon Shellhouse	08/11 - Clara Ziegler	08/22 - Eva Godinez	08/28 - Troy Terry
08/03 - Sue Smith	08/12 - Bettina Beall	08/22 - David Guodong	08/30 - Sherry Ader
08/03 - Mary Van Ryn	08/12 - Werner Bliumfeldas	08/22 - Liu Guodong	08/30 - Amanda Powell
08/04 - Valerie Congote	08/12 - Ahamad Francis	08/24 - Anthony Francis	08/30 - Anthony Quiles
08/05 - Beverly Denis	08/12 - Margaret Terry	08/24 - Delia Rodriguez	08/30 - Sheila Rives
08/05 - Levi Drury	08/13 - Anastasia Snyder	08/25 - Danny Gonzalez	08/30 - Rick Rogers
08/05 - David DvVarney	08/14 - Beverly Johnson	08/25 - Wanda Joy Hodge	08/31 - Hector Padron
08/06 - Bettie Cason	08/15 - Lillian S. Hudson	08/25 - Teena Short	08/31 - Naomi Smith



Music Ministry



If you happened to miss our last Everybody Sing, you missed a true blessing! Our members sang and played to an audience of one.

God has blessed so many of our members with talent of all ages! Music was sung and played that covered various delight. I am sure heaven will be a little like last Sunday, music enjoyed with a mixture of

styles and genre. Thank you to all who participated!!

Special blessings to our sound crew!! THANK YOU Jane McMillan, Russ Philpot, Steve Burgeson, Dean Holland, and Ryan Fleischfresser. These people have complete control of the sound produced. Please do not think it is an easy job. Have you ever looked at the sound board? There

are too many buttons that can be pushed and I am glad they know what they are doing. Thank you sound technicians - keep up the good work!!!!

**Singing for HIM,
Pam**



Stewardship	
July 2011	
Contributions for July 2011:	\$ 53,481.93
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 57,116.55
Contributions Year to date:	\$ 504,281.44
Year to date budget requirement: (Through 44 Sundays)	\$ 502,625.64

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



All Cubbies®, Sparks®, and T & Ters are invited to join us Wednesday, August 24th. This includes everyone 3 years old through 6th grade. The fun begins at 6:30pm. You don't want to miss this night that will mark the beginning of our Awana year.



All choirs start Sunday, August 28th, 5:30 p.m.

Preschool - Little Melodies
Children's Choir - Grades 1st - 6th
Youth Choir - Grades 7th - 12th

Church Council



August 25,
Pot-luck 6:30 p.m.
Meeting 7:00 p.m.



August 14th during the
6:30 p.m. service.



Classic Car Show

FBCH parking lot



August 6th
12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

FREE Hot dogs,
refreshments, bounce
house.

Ministry Fair



Plug into the Kingdom

August 28th 6:30 p.m.



Saturday, August 6th, 8:00 a.m.
in the fellowship hall.

Church Softball

Begins Monday, August 15th at 7:15 p.m. at the Homestead Sports Complex
Anyone interested between the age of 15 - 109 years, contact Steve Diehl 786-208-7782.

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!**



It is hard to believe that summer break is rapidly drawing to a close for our students. It seems like it was only last week they were getting out of school and celebrating the beginning of summer. In just a few short weeks classes will begin and students will return back to routines. My prayer is that we are sending missionaries out into the mission field and not merely teenagers back into classrooms. Last week we began a new message series called **SEND**. The series is drawn from the book of Exodus and the story of Moses. There are numerous applications from the story but the focus of this series has been that God has a mission for each of us, namely the Great Commission, and He has equipped us to carry out that mission. I am challenging our students

to embrace that mission and view this school year as an opportunity to serve on a very challenging mission field—their school campus. Parents, let me encourage you to make sure your teenager is here on Wednesdays to hear about the challenge and how they are equipped to fulfill it. Church, let me encourage you to join me in praying for our students as they live **On Mission** each and every day of their lives.

Speaking of mission, we had some pretty amazing experiences this past month on our annual Summer Mission Trip. I hope you were able to be a part of our testimony service and hear from the mouths of our students themselves about how God used them to take the gospel into inner city Jacksonville, FL. In spite of the different challenges we faced

during the week, the trip was an incredible blessing for myself and everyone else who participated. I wanted to say a special thank you to all of you who prayed for us and who contributed financially to make it possible for us to go. Let me assure you that your investment will reap Kingdom dividends!

The fall season will see several new opportunities for our students. Make sure to keep an eye out for word of those different opportunities as they arise! 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

