



# First LIFE

## FROM THE PASTOR...



*The One-Item Agenda Prayer Group*

*There is a small group of us, usually*

*5-7 guys, who get together every Thursday morning in a small room in the back of a coffee shop to pray for First Baptist Church. That's it. That's all there is to it. There is no program. No study. No food. (Yes, Baptists can meet and not eat!) We don't try to solve all the problems of the world. We simply ask what needs or decisions are facing our church and we pray for God's guidance and blessing on First Baptist. We repeatedly say that we want nothing except to know and do God's will for our church. After prayer we finish our coffee, pick on one another a bit, laugh a little, and then leave.*

*Sound boring? Does it sound like something worth getting up*

*very early to do? (We meet at 6:30.) We don't meet because we are a bunch of insomniacs. We don't gather because our meetings are exciting or particularly enlightening. So, what gets us out of a warm bed at such an early hour to meet together?*

*Here's why we do it: We do it to be shaped by God, and hope that God really does become The Leader of our church. We do not want our own desires, plans, schemes or egos to set the agenda for First Baptist. We want God to do it. So we pray for this constantly. "God," we pray, "let Your Spirit guide us. Let Your Spirit of love, grace, forgiveness, and forbearance pervade our church fellowship. Show us Your will and give us the courage to follow You."*

*And we think this makes all the difference. The difference in a church that is prayed for versus a church that is not prayed for must be enormous! Oh, we know that we will continue to*

*make mistakes in our church, but one mistake we will not make is the mistake of neglecting to pray to God for the health and direction of our church. We can't control much, but we can control this: we can make sure our church is prayed for by simply getting together and praying for our church. It is a one-item agenda and we check it off every week.*

*Hey, the more, the better! Start a group. Keep it small, but keep it consistent. I think 5-7 is just the right size. Find some good friends with good hearts for God and for First Baptist and pray. Here, let me supply you with the entire leader's guide: Pray for First Baptist Church Hickory. That's it. And it makes all the difference.*

*Phillip*  
Dr. Phillip Reynolds,  
Senior Pastor



## IN THE PULPIT...

**February 3** - 8:30 and 10:55am

*Five Things Worth Praying About: For What We Need*  
- Dr. Phillip Reynolds

**February 10** - 8:30 and 10:55am

*Five Things Worth Praying About: For A Hurting World*  
- Dr. Phillip Reynolds

**February 17** - 8:30 and 10:55am

Guest Speaker

**February 24** - 8:30 and 10:55am

*From Ashes to Easter: Dust and Ashes*  
-Dr. Phillip Reynolds

## WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

Wednesdays 6pm

*Prayer and Bible Study*  
Dr. Phillip Reynolds

**DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR DEACON IS?** The Committee of Deacons has received their new family ministry assignments should be contacting their "family" shortly to introduce themselves. In the meantime, please call the office if you need to know which Deacon or Deacon Family Minister will be serving your family.



## MUSICAL NOTES

**IT'S FESTIVAL SEASON!** Three of our musical groups will be participating in festivals during the next five weekends.

- ◆ **February 9** - Singers from our Young Musicians will be a part of the NC-CBF Children's Choir Festival.
- ◆ **February 22-23** - our FBC Bells will be participating in the NC Baptist Adult Handbell Festival.
- ◆ **March 1-2** - our Refuge Youth Ensemble will attend the NC-CBF Youth Choir Festival.

These are wonderful opportunities of challenge and growth in spirit and in skill for our FBC musicians. Contact Jim Davidson or Ronny Skinner for more details.

### FROM RONNY...

Thank you to everyone for making Ashley and I feel so welcome in our transition into the ministry life of First Baptist. I am amazed at the love found within these walls and the smiles that are present on so many faces.

I would like to extend an invitation to any children seeking an opportunity to worship God through singing to check out our various children's choirs on Wednesday evenings. If you, or someone you know, has a young singer please assist me in extending this invitation to them.

God has given me a passion for music and outreach. I am so blessed to be a part of the work that God is doing through FBC. God indeed has "Greater Things" in store for our church in the future.

## SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

Sunday, February 5 t-here will be opportunities to give at both worship services to the Souper Bowl of Caring. All monies donated will support the Hickory Soup Kitchen ministry.

## WOMAN TO WOMAN

For all ladies who purchased a ticket to the Woman to Woman Conference on February 8-9: Tickets will be available on Friday evening as you load the bus in the bus lot of FBC. The bus will leave at 5:15pm on Friday and at 7:30am on Saturday. Please contact Sandra Foster (828) 322-3313 if you have questions.

**THE REST OF THE STORY...** It has been my pleasure to put together our Advent Devotional guide these past two years. I love the authors' honesty, passion, and their love for God as pen meets paper. One author, and good friend, Thomas Hand wrote about his relationship with his father. The problem is, you did not get the whole story. During the editing process, a snafu caused the end of Thomas' story to be deleted. So as Valentines Day approaches and as the season of Advent still remains in our hearts, may you hear these words of Love from a son to his father. - Chris Gillespie



It was late at night in October of 2007 and my father called. To most, this might seem normal but to me it was a rarity. My father and I had quite a few differences over most of my adult life. Most of those differences were because of bad choices my father had continued to make. My dad was a hard-working man, Vietnam veteran, an electrician for the IBEW union. He was also an alcoholic. His alcoholism had led to two divorces, broken relationships with his children, and a lifetime of poor decisions. Over the years he quit drinking only to start back again. The constant disappointment pushed me further and further away. We talked occasionally. Maybe one or two awkward phone calls a year, but throughout my adult life, that was pretty much the extent of my relationship with him. On this late fall night when he called, I heard my father speak words to me that I had never heard before. He said, "I need help, can you come get me?" Without thinking, I replied, "Yes, where are you?"

Early the next morning, I drove over four hours to Charleston, WV. My father's condition was not well. His hotel room was scattered with beer cans and bottles. The once powerful and outgoing man I knew was frail and sick. My father had hit rock bottom. He was too sick to work. He had no money and no friends. He was alone. I helped him gather what belongings he had, paid his hotel bill, and we headed home to Hickory. It was not long into the drive before my dad started to feel the effects of not having a drink. It was tough to watch him go through withdrawals so I took him to the store so he could "self-medicate."

As we drove down the road it was mostly small talk at first. Then he started to reflect on his past, and the decisions he had made...and had not made. He started to say how he should have done things differently and how selfish he was. He was never quick to admit his faults and shortcomings. I listened and a big part of me wanted to point out even more things he had done wrong. I wanted to point out how he missed every one of my children being born. I wanted to remind him how he missed my college graduation. I wanted to ask him why he never even attempted to come see my youngest son, who was now almost two years old. But God's love wouldn't let me say those things. I let my father finish and then I said, "Dad, we can't change those decisions and those



decisions you made taught me what not to do. I forgive you and I love you. That's all behind us and our most important goal is getting you well."

We arrived back home to Hickory and I introduced my father to my children, which almost seemed like the first time they had met ever. For Chase and my dad, it was.

My Father, my wife Charity and I had decided it would be best that we find a program somewhere close so he could recover. After searching four days, we found a program in Galax, VA that suited him best. That Saturday afternoon we drove him there to enroll. Along the way he started to get cold feet and looked for a way out. I was stern with him and explained this was not an option. We decided that he would complete a recovery program which would keep him until just before Christmas. We filled out the needed paperwork and we said our goodbyes to Dad. I hugged him and said, "I will call you in a couple of days."

I drove home excited about the possibility of change in his life. I thought of him coming over for Sunday dinners. I pictured him going to ball games with me and the boys. I longed for his recovery to be over so we could start over together. The following night we received a late phone call. It was the hospital in Galax where we dropped him off. My first thought was he changed his mind or he was being combative. Unfortunately this was not the case. The hospital was calling to inform me my father had passed away. The rush of disbelief consumed my body. This immense pain I had never felt before began to tear me apart. My father laid down that Sunday evening and had a heart attack in his sleep. We buried him in Quantico, VA a few days later.

As the weeks went by after his death and Christmas approached I realized how God's love brought my father and I back together during that last week of his life. He could have easily died alone in that hotel room a few days before. But God's love made me put all my disappointment with him behind me. Without question I drove to get him because he needed my help. During Dad's last few days at my house we celebrated Chase's second birthday and had cake and ice cream. I watched him help my oldest son, Thomson with his homework. I watched him bond with my daughter, Taylor over a bag of Skittles. Dad and I watched a couple ball games together and enjoyed being around each other for the first time in years.

God's love made all of this possible. He brought closure and healing to a damaged relationship. As we celebrate this Advent season, let's remember that God's love is unconditional. During this time, the love I had for my father was unconditional because of the grace of God. I owe those precious last moments I had with him to God. Had I ignored God and let my pride get in the way that night my dad called asking for help, I might not have received the gift of those last few days with him. God led me to act through love rather than pride and I am ever thankful for that.

*"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."*  
1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV)



- Thomas Hand



### Child-friendly Lenten Devotional for Families

Parents should be watching for their children grades 1 thru 6 to bring home a family Lenten devotional to be used as a family during Lent, the weeks preceding Easter. Use this as a time to lead your child/ren into a meaningful time of communication and reflection. You and they will be blessed by it!

### Ash Wednesday Service Include Kids

On Wednesday, February 13, children in 1st-6th grades are encouraged to attend our Ash Wednesday service with their families. (We will offer regular activities for preschool children on the Heartland hallway). We will not have music or missions activities that evening for 2nd-6th grades. Parents can help first graders choose which to attend.

### Important Calendar Dates:

**February 22 & 23** - RA Hickory Dickory Dock and Camp-in

**March 30** - Kid's Easter Celebration

**May 15** - Music/Missions Finale

**March 16** - RA Campout

**May 26** - Children's Sunday

**June 24-28** - VBS

**July 22-26** - Children's Music Camp

## FACE OF A CHILD 2013

Sponsor a child from the Strasen Orphanage! We provide basic needs for these children showing God's love in practical and personal ways. Items needed: backpacks with school supplies and athletic shoes. PICTURES AVAILABLE NOW. Items need to be turned into the office by February 15. Contact Beth Ballhausen at 326-9233 to sponsor a child. Thank you for sharing your love with a child!





## DARKNESS TO LIGHT

First Baptist Church will be hosting "Darkness to Light", a seminar on stewardship of children, Sunday, March 3 from 3:00 to 6:00pm, location TBD. Childcare and light refreshments provided. Learn the 7 steps to prevent child sexual abuse. For all adults who care about the welfare of children. Call the church office to sign up by Wednesday, February 27.

## ChristLIFE

### Creation? Evolution?

Faith, Science, and the Origin of Life  
Beginning Wednesday, February 20th  
6:00 - 7:00 pm, Room 203  
Facilitated by Rendell Hipps

### NEHEMIAH

A Heart That Can Break  
Tuesday Mornings - 10am - 11am  
Room 189 - Cost \$10  
Beginning February 12

## WOMEN HELPING WOMEN – BAG TIME

Thank you Women of FBC for the many items you donated to put in the Welcome Bags for the Day Shelter of Safe Harbor Missions. It's time to put the bags together, so we will meet on February 8 at 10:00am in Room 163. Thanks again for your participation.

### Ash Wednesday Service

Family Lenten Service  
Wednesday, February 13  
Includes Imposition of Ashes  
6:00pm - Sanctuary



## BAPTIST MEN MEETING

The Baptist Men's February meeting will be on February 18 at the Region 8 Rally at FBC Stanley. This is a free event with meal. We will carpool and leave the church at 5:00pm sharp.

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

339 Second Avenue, Northwest  
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Our cover photo this month shows Baptist Men from North Carolina, including some from FBC-Hickory, sharing God's love with the victims of Hurricane Sandy by providing hot meals.

## First Friday <sup>1ST</sup>

at First Baptist First Ave NW

A Monthly Gathering of Single Adults in their 20's and 30's  
6:30-9:00 pm - February 1, 2013

### FROM OUR TREASURER

*Do you make New Year's resolutions? Many of us have decided this will be the year! The year to exercise more, to lose that weight, to de-clutter the house, to love more people, to keep the budget, to read the Bible through, and many, many more really good things to do.*

*We have just completed the first quarter of our new church budget year and are off to a really good start not only with the budget, but also with our giving to Greater Things to eliminate our church debt.*

*Consider making an addition or two to your list of resolutions for the year. To resolve that we will do all we possibly can to keep our church's financial house in order. If you are a tither of your income, continue that and if not, please consider a challenge to enjoy the blessings of becoming a tither. Not my challenge, but the Bible's-*

**Malachi 3:10. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." -Tom Guthrie**

