



 **MISSIONS**
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AMARILLO

THE JOURNAL

Stories from the missions and ministry of First Baptist Church Amarillo

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In Our Language

Amarillo Group Receives New Bible Translation

TREVOR BROWN

On a warm Sunday in late February, First Baptist's Buchanan Street Chapel became host to a historic event. As worshippers from several local Congolese congregations sat together, one local pastor stepped to the pulpit. He opened a small paperback book with "LUKA" written large on the cover.

In preparation to serve the Lord's Supper to those gathered, he began to read from Luke's account of Jesus' last supper. For nearly every one there, it would be the first time to hear the Bible read aloud in the language they best understand.

In anticipation of this gathering, FBC's Congolese partners shared invitations with as many native-speakers as possible in the area. The morning's worship was to be a special celebration of the first book of the Bible translated into Kinyamulenge. The gospel of Luke can now be read, studied, and shared in the heart language of the Banyamulenge people.

Buchanan Street Chapel, a long-time Baptist church, has served as a mission site of FBC Amarillo since 1989. It has been host to a number of international congregations in





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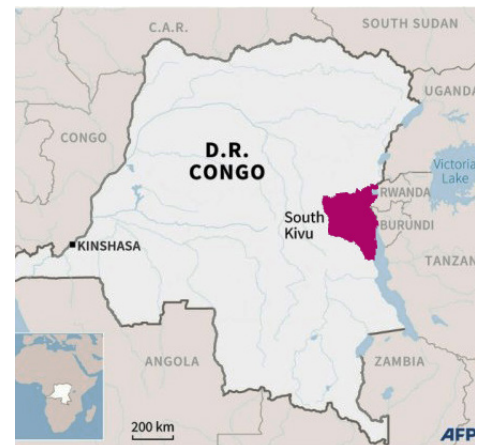
recent decades. For most of the 2000s, it was home for growing groups of Asian refugees, Christians who fled Burma. First, a Mizo group and later Karen First Baptist Church. Both moved on to more permanent facilities after years of using the chapel.

Today, it hosts weekly worship in Kinyamulenge, the native tongue of the Banyamulenge, a people group whose ancestral home is in the South Kivu province of the Congo. Some estimates are that this people group consists of as many as 500,000 people, with others noting that around 3 million understand the language. Due to ongoing war, many became refugees, scattered throughout Africa, Europe, and the United States. Amarillo is home to hundreds of Banyamulenge people.

Kinyamulenge is a language among a chain of languages called the Rwanda-Rundi system. These languages are spoken especially around the lakes Kivu and Victoria. While the Banyamulenge are a large

and influential group who have been seeking Bible translation for decades, the pressures in the region have precluded work among them. Because of their zeal for God, they are famous in the surrounding nations as evangelists and ministers of the gospel.

Until now, they have been forced to use the Swahili or Kinyarwanda translations. These are understandable, but less than ideal. A recent study showed that there are many words in the nearest translation (the Bibliya Yera) which are not intelligible in their language. In Matthew, for example, 112



Pioneering Translation

Partnering for the Global Church

words were revealed as not being understandable to Banyamulenge readers. In many other cases, words mean something different in their dialect than the text intended.

“They were always telling us to read the Kinyarwanda Bible,” shared one member of the translation team, “but we can’t get it. We just get tired of trying over and over.” These are the challenges that a team led by Pioneer Bible Translators set out to solve.

The distribution of this first book is the culmination of several years’ effort. The small team working through Pioneer Bible Translators (PBT) diligently worked for several years toward this goal. The arduous task began with a standardized alphabet and grammar book to set the foundation for proper translation. The team, consisting of several Banyamulenge pastors and Pioneer’s linguists, is based in Louisville, KY.

Upon completion of Luke, 3,000 copies were printed by PBT in January. Five hundred of those had made their way to Amarillo through generous gifts from FBC. In addition to joining together to celebrate the occasion, everyone gathered for worship was gifted a copy of their own.

As one pastor involved described, “For us as the Christian Banyamulenge, in our history, this is another beginning - a beginning where we see transformation, where we see change.”

Meet the Ogburns

Projects like this happen because dedicated workers, like Aaron and Grace Ogburn, are committed to

the task. The Ogburn’s work full-time with Pioneer Bible Translators, serving on a small team based in Milan, Italy. Beginning in 2022, First Baptist Amarillo joined other Texas Baptist churches as monthly supporters of the Ogburn’s ministry. Aaron ministers among refugee and asylum-seeking people who arrive in Italy from across the African continent, particularly those who



Aaron and Grace Ogburn



“We all work through the translation together, learning from and listening to each other as we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

have had little to no exposure to the gospel. Grace is using her gifting in linguistics and Biblical languages to aid in the Bible translation process. Her primary role with PBT includes translating and quality-checking Old Testament passages for various African dialects. Technology enables her to be involved in various projects around the world, efforts that closely resemble the task of the Kinyamulenge translation team.

Aaron described their journey to serving with Pioneer saying, “When we met in college both of us had a passion for missions, but we didn’t know what that would look like or where that would lead. Over the course of the next six years, we have found greater clarity with each class and conversation. [...] For Grace, her calling began to take shape as she took linguistics classes at Baylor.

“The need for everyone to have a

translation of the Bible in their heart language was a need that settled on her shoulders. This calling only grew as she studied theology and biblical languages in seminary. We have found a fit with Pioneer Bible Translators, whose vision is wide enough to include both of our skills and callings.”

When asked about her favorite part of serving in Bible translation, Grace says that it is the opportunity to work with the global church.

“Today,” she shared, “the reality of Bible translation isn’t a singular person sitting in a room translating verse by verse, but a cooperation of people from different places and backgrounds working together to best communicate the message of Scripture. When I sit down with a team, I am working with expat translators, native speakers working towards the Bible in their language,



and sometimes people from neighboring language groups.”

Teams like this are precisely what led to the first alphabet and first published book in Kinyamulenge. Because of faithful Christian workers, that first book printed in Kinyamulenge was the Gospel According to Luke.

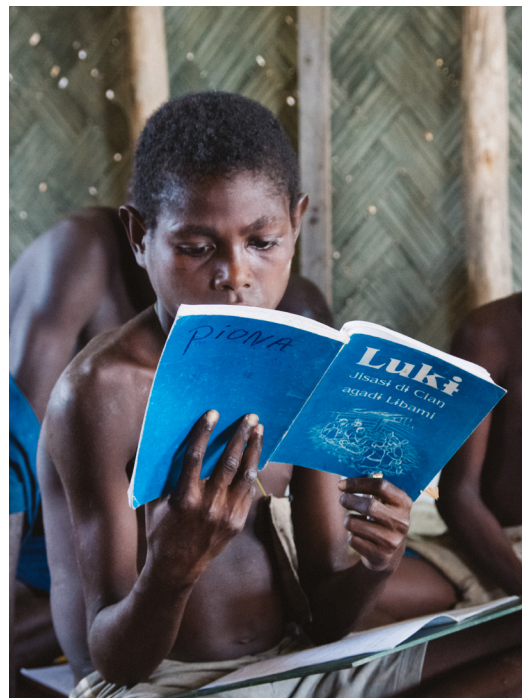
“We all work through the translation together,” Grace added, “learning from and listening to each other as we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for what God is trying to say to his people in that place. I think it is a beautiful picture and reminder of the expansiveness of the church of God, that He is not only at work among us, but among all the people of the world.”

Easter Offering for Missions

Several times a year, special offerings are collected for missions. Gifts to the **FBC Partnership Missions** fund during the Easter season go directly to North American missions. These enable our church to fund projects such as purchasing Bibles for local international groups, planting churches in other states, and supporting ministries across the region.

Additionally, we invite church members to give toward the **Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®** which provides support for thousands of NAMB missionaries planting new churches and meeting needs. Every day, lives are being impacted and transformed.

Contributions to the Easter Offering for Missions can be designated online or using envelopes provided in our sanctuary.







Medical Missions

More Than We Can Carry

JOE THOMPSON

Joe and 28 other FBC members served on a mission trip to Lusaka, Zambia in July of 2023, with plans set for a return trip this year. His words below were shared as a reflection on that week of ministry.

Almost 20 years ago, I had the opportunity to go serve in Zambia. Since then, I've been looking for an opportunity to go back to the place and the people I fell in love with on my first trip. Every time I go on a mission trip with this church, I get asked a lot of questions. There are questions like, "What will the group be doing?" and "What will you do there?" Of course, I explain that this trip is a medical trip where we take doctors and nurses to help provide care to underserved people.

Inevitably, I'm asked the same follow up question: "Why are you going?" You see, I'm not a doctor. I'm not a nurse, and I don't have a medical background. I'm an IT guy. I can't pronounce most of the medications the doctors prescribe. What I am pretty good at, on the other hand, is filling



**“I was reminded that we don’t
have to carry it all...
hope is found in Christ alone.”**

gaps. Mostly, I can fill doorways. That’s useful to direct traffic or, when needed, obstruct people’s views of what is going on inside. I don’t typically serve the purpose that comes to most people’s minds when they think of a medical mission trip. On most of these medical trips, I have found comfort in being that square peg, filling my role without much trouble or change.

This recent trip to Zambia was different. On Sunday, I accompanied my daughter to the girls’ orphanage where they had me dancing. That was not a “square peg” thing. On Monday, I had a whirlwind of

emotions watching our doctors love on the people that I had fallen in love with so many years ago. Tuesday, we were able to participate in Christ Life Church’s feeding program in the slum. I can serve food pretty well, and that suits my role. But Wednesday was hard.

That day, our doctors saw some really tough cases, and they always do a good job. One patient, in particular, had me questioning just about everything we were there for. A man came to Dr. Bechtol that day, and the patient couldn’t walk on his own. As a ‘square peg,’ I’m pretty good at carrying people. The man





needed to go to through several stations, and a wheelchair wasn't readily available.

So, I carried him. First, I carried him to Dr. Bechtol and then on to our spiritual care team. I knew it was hard because Dr. Bechtol couldn't do anything for him. As fixers, that's very difficult for us.

When I took him and sat him down to be prayed with, I watched as one of our Zambian pastors prayed over his body. First, he prayed for his legs, gripping them as he petitioned the Father for healing, and then I watched him pray over the man's head and his heart. Carrying heavy things is easy when that's the square you fit in, but sometimes the weight of the object isn't the heaviest thing to carry. After he left, I carried his hopelessness with me. It's easy to carry physical weight, but it is not easy to carry the other weight.

When people visit our clinic, they come with hope. Sometimes it's just a hope to see an American. In most cases, it's hope that our well-



trained doctors can offer them some relief and healing. Personally, I had been caught up in those same hopes: that we could offer them healing and reprieve. But Wednesday, as I carried this man from Dr. Bechtol to spiritual care, there was no hope in his eyes. Reality weighed heavy as there was nothing we could do to make him walk again.

Even after the man had left, I carried that with me all day and into the night, an image of hopelessness. Then, later that night, God reminded me of Psalm 33:20 that says, “We put our hope in the Lord; he is our protector and our help.” I was reminded that we don’t have to carry it all. For our team and for the man who couldn’t walk, hope is found in Christ alone. Our doctors do great things and can fix a lot of the hurt that exists, but they can’t do it all. The physical hope we bring is temporary, and hoping in things that are temporary won’t get us very far.

What I have found, being the square peg, is that no matter the circumstances, God finds a way to mold me to fit into those round holes as He sees fit, not as I do. Thank you for your part in making this ministry possible. Your donations of medicine, glasses, and finances make it possible for us to serve, and your prayers help guide us along the way. It is a special privilege that you afford us in sending us to spread the love of Jesus all over the world.



2024 Zambia Trip

Applications to join this summer’s Zambia mission trip are still being received. The team will host medical clinics, minister with children, and serve our partner church in Lusaka. To learn more, visit firstamarillo.org/2024trips.

A Land Set Aside For God's Purposes

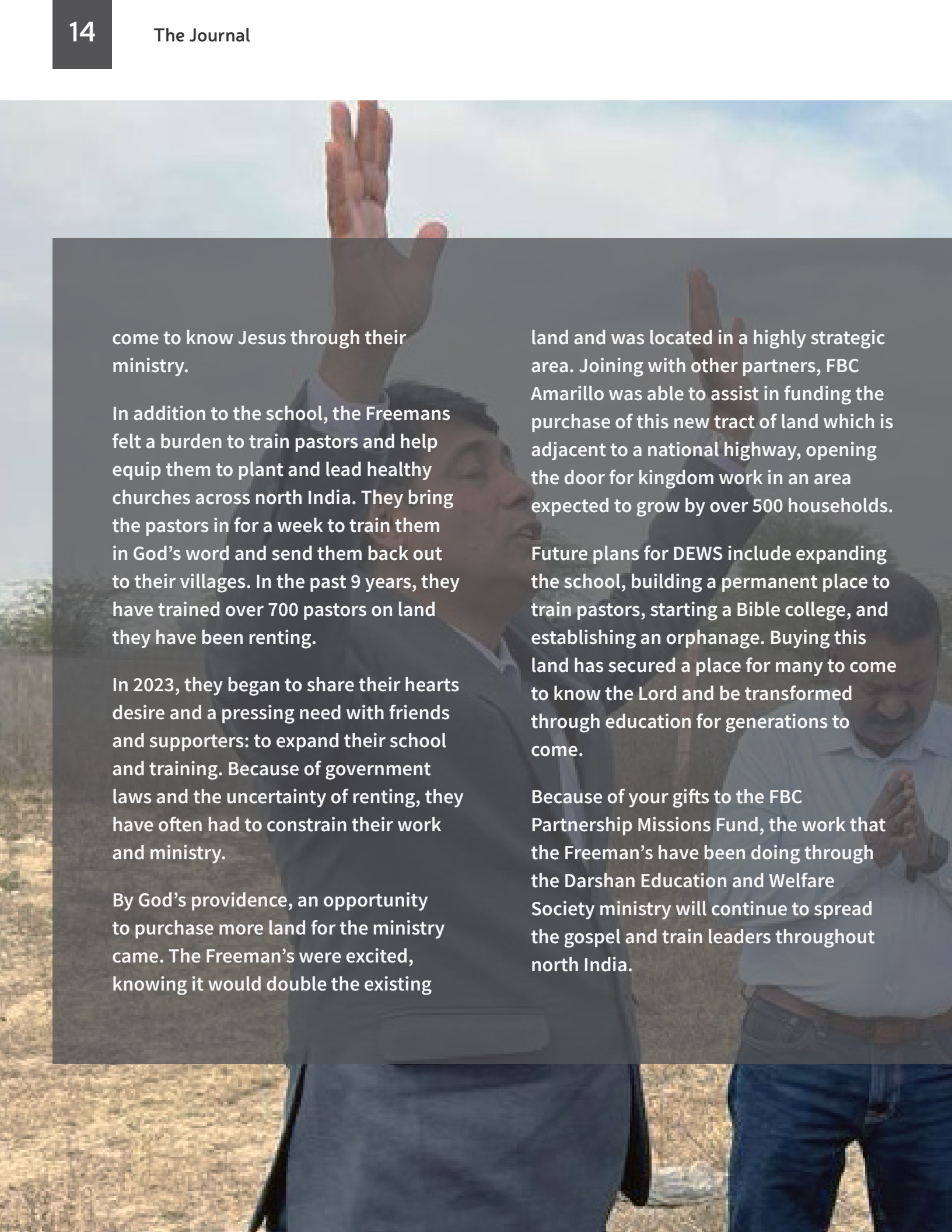
Back in 2014, Trevor and Annie Freeman began the ministries of Darshan Education and Welfare Society (DEWS) in faith. It was a faith built on a firm sense of God's calling for them to spread the truth of Christ in north India through education, pastoral training, and care for children. They bought 4 bigah (1 bigah is equivalent to .6 of an acre) at a cost of \$60,000 to begin a school, with funding entirely provided by the Lord's provision.

Today, the school is fostering 250 students and bursting at the seams. It is the only English and Christian school in the whole area of Sambharlake, which is surrounded by 45 villages. David's Public School is a light in a dark place, and many students and teachers have



Trevor and Annie Freeman





come to know Jesus through their ministry.

In addition to the school, the Freemans felt a burden to train pastors and help equip them to plant and lead healthy churches across north India. They bring the pastors in for a week to train them in God's word and send them back out to their villages. In the past 9 years, they have trained over 700 pastors on land they have been renting.

In 2023, they began to share their hearts desire and a pressing need with friends and supporters: to expand their school and training. Because of government laws and the uncertainty of renting, they have often had to constrain their work and ministry.

By God's providence, an opportunity to purchase more land for the ministry came. The Freeman's were excited, knowing it would double the existing

land and was located in a highly strategic area. Joining with other partners, FBC Amarillo was able to assist in funding the purchase of this new tract of land which is adjacent to a national highway, opening the door for kingdom work in an area expected to grow by over 500 households.

Future plans for DEWS include expanding the school, building a permanent place to train pastors, starting a Bible college, and establishing an orphanage. Buying this land has secured a place for many to come to know the Lord and be transformed through education for generations to come.

Because of your gifts to the FBC Partnership Missions Fund, the work that the Freeman's have been doing through the Darshan Education and Welfare Society ministry will continue to spread the gospel and train leaders throughout north India.



It's Thursday and Sunday's Coming

TREVOR BROWN

“It’s Friday, but Sunday’s coming!” So goes the famous Easter refrain, originally proclaimed at a San Diego pulpit by long-time Baptist pastor and Texas native, S.M. Lockridge. Preached, published, and repeated many times over, this announcement is a reminder for all who read and recount the Jesus story. Though the crucified Lord is buried on Friday, death does not have the final word. There is hope on Good Friday because resurrection is around the corner. Sunday’s coming!

The final days of Jesus’ life are marked each year in churches and gatherings around the world, often called Holy Week. Easter remains, of course, the most prominent day in worship and celebration. Good Friday, too, finds crowds gathered worldwide, typically with a more somber reflection on the cross. In many traditions, Thursday has its own significance as well.

The gospel writers tell us that it was on Thursday that Jesus shared his



Last Supper with the disciples. During that meal Jesus powerfully performed a humble act of service, washing his disciples' feet. He also gave them a new mandate: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34)

The meal, the teaching, and the touch of Jesus surely stirred their hearts in the moment. One can only imagine how much deeper those words cut when the crucified Messiah was found to be the resurrected Lord.

It was Thursday, and Sunday was coming. It is Sunday's resurrection celebration that fills Thursday's humble service with meaning. What was true of Jesus' final week is also true on the campus of First Baptist Amarillo.

Churches are known for what happens on Sunday, the Lord's Day. Everyone knows that Sunday is special, set aside by Christians to gather for worship and rest. Many also know that Wednesdays can be busy on a church campus, with midweek programs and teaching for all ages. Have you heard about Thursdays?

It starts with meals. Around fifteen to twenty volunteers arrive early to unload food, stock shelves, and sort clothes at the Perkins Community Center, FBC's food and clothing ministry. It's open every Tuesday and Thursday. Dozens of clients in need will enter the doors, representing some of the 300-500 served every month. After a conversational interview, they will leave with a box of groceries and selections from shopping the free clothing room.

Around the same time, Christian Job Corps classes are settling in



Left: Christian Job Corps students prepare for class.

Above: The sorting room at the Perkins Center prepares donations for distribution.

on our main campus. CJC provides tools and support to equip adult participants for next steps in life and employment. Each session, offered every fall and spring, concludes with a graduation where stories of life transformation are always the theme. Sometimes as many as eighteen certificates are awarded, other times around ten. All of the students need mentors and teachers.

As participants and volunteers find their way to the third floor, the second floor is filling up as well. Parents are filing in with one or more toddlers in tow. First Steps Preschool and Mother's Day Out programs promote the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social development of preschoolers. With quality, loving care and intentional Bible-based instruction, kids are learning and growing in faith and friendship.

Not long after preschool drop-off concludes, FBC vans arrive with adults and families headed for the International Friends ESL program on the first floor. Volunteer drivers run multiple routes around the city, providing transportation for a good portion of the nearly two hundred participants enrolled in International Friends English classes on Thursday mornings. The same program is offered Sunday afternoons. Immigrants and refugees from dozens of countries find loving teachers eager to equip them and their children with language skills, Bible truths, and connection to a family of faith.

“There are many similarities to the Lord’s Holy Thursday when you stop and think about it: meals shared, truths taught, love embodied, humble service given.”

At the same time, still others are working to grow spiritually and physically through Thursday Bible studies, senior adult gatherings, fitness at the Family Life Center, music rehearsals, ministry training, and more.

There are many similarities to the Lord’s Holy Thursday when you stop and think about it: meals shared, truths taught, love embodied, humble service given. It is the beautiful embodiment of Jesus’ command: “Love one another, even as I have loved you.”

The reality is, of course, that you could write this story about any day of the week at First Baptist Church. Here, you’ll find a faithful family of God working diligently to make the same Sunday announcement: He is risen, and now everything has changed!

Good Friday is “good” because Sunday is coming. It turns out that so is every Thursday. In fact, the Easter truth is that our work, every week, can be holy. Thank God for holy work that is happening here every week. It’s Thursday, and Sunday’s coming!



Above: Job Corps graduates receive certificates upon program completion. Right: International Friends ESL classes cover language, Bible truths, and skills for life.



Ready to Serve
Ministries like Christian Job Corps, the Perkins Community Center, and International Friends ESL happen through volunteer efforts. Most have opportunities to serve for an hour or more on multiple days per week. If you'd like more information or are interested in serving, contact the church office.

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THE JOURNAL

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
Make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

Psalm 105:1-2



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Amarillo

www.firstamarillo.org