

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION



First Baptist Church

MARBLE FALLS

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WELCOME FROM OUR PASTOR



ROSS CHANDLER
SENIOR PASTOR

Hi, I want to welcome you to First Baptist Church Marble Falls! In my years here, I have found this to be one of the most alive and spirit filled churches that I have ever seen. The moment I walked in and began meeting the members, I felt like singing the song from Annie, "I Think I'm Gonna Like it Here." Through the years, I can say that I've more than liked it, I love it here. I hope you will too!

This "First Impressions" membership orientation has information about: what we believe, how we experience growth in Jesus Christ, how we impact our world with the good news of Christ, and what it's like to be a Core member. We want you to have all the information up front. As you go through this, please keep one thing in mind, while this First Impressions seminar is full of important information about who we are, it will certainly fall short in helping you really understand us. In the end, it's only through engaging in the life of our church that anyone can truly know us.

Welcome everyone! We love you, and we hope you will be inspired and grow in your depth of insight about who we are. If your questions are not answered I would be honored to visit with you.

- Bro. Ross Chandler

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Ross Chandler".

OUR MISSION

The Mission of First Baptist Church Marble Falls is **"Helping people find life in Jesus Christ by following him."** Why is this our mission? In John 10:10, Jesus said that He has come to bring an abundant and full life to humanity. The Apostle Paul describes it like this, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). These are not isolated statements in scripture; all throughout the Bible we see this amazing teaching about how life was lost because of sin and regained in Jesus Christ. This is the mission of God: to restore a broken world back to the life God intended. Our family of faith loves this mission, and we have committed everything to joining God in it.



If you were to look closely at this mission statement and break it down, what do you think about it?

PART 1: HISTORY & BELIEFS

I. What is Our History?

My grandfather told me that if I didn't know my history there was little hope of any future. I think he was referring to the fact that current events always have a genesis in the past, and so if anyone wants to move forward in a positive way, then he or she needs to be well acquainted with what has gone on before. It is also healthy to remember that things didn't start with me. We have not recently initiated being missional, nor did we just start reaching out to our community. Our church has been doing such things in creative, relevant, and Biblical ways for a long time.

- Bro. Ross Chandler

We have a very faithful past; We began in 1888. Our first meeting was in Johnson Park on old railroad ties, and the Spirit of God was there. As it was for many emerging churches of the time, it was difficult for many decades. Our doors might have closed had it not been for the power of the Holy Spirit and the deep sacrifice of our faithful people. God had big plans for us. In 1958, God brought a great pastor and his wife who worked tirelessly for 42 years to help our church be all that God wanted us to be, Max and Glenna Copeland.

Our church experienced a tragedy when it burned down in 1961 which was a catalyst for a wise relocation from downtown to 12th Street. The Spirit of God was there. We have always been a cutting edge, risk taking people in the kingdom of God because we completely trusted God. On August 16, 2015, our church relocated to a new location at 901 La Ventana Dr. atop a beautiful hill overlooking our community. This move was initiated by Pastor Steve Peace in 2002. First Baptist Marble Falls has made a difference locally and globally for well over one hundred years. Through the legacy of our faithful past, coupled with the amazing power of God, we are always encouraged that the brightest days are ahead of us. You can be a part of that future. Jesus Christ. This is the mission of God: to restore a broken world back to the life God intended. Our family of faith loves this mission, and we have committed everything to joining God in it.



What thoughts come to your mind as you hear about our history?

Do you have any questions about our history?

II. What Do We Believe?

Our beliefs can be presented in many ways. Some people like to see our beliefs written as powerful statements backed up with Scripture. Others like to see our beliefs placed within the great story of Scripture. We would like to offer both.

A. The By-Laws We Affirm:

Our Bible: The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis for our statement of faith (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:11).

Statement of Faith: The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God and is the basis for our statement of faith. This church subscribes to "The Baptist Faith and Message", adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963, (<http://texasbaptists.org/files/2010/08/bfmcomp1.pdf>). We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ committed to sharing the good news of salvation with all mankind. The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Our Membership: We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ committed to sharing the good news of salvation with all mankind (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 12; Matthew 28:19-20).

Membership Commitment: "Considering the polity of our church, which states that, the 'government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it,' (Priesthood of Believers), we are hereby bound to hold all candidates for voting membership accountable for striving toward a Biblical lifestyle. Therefore, First Baptist Church of Marble Falls believes all church membership is, and should be, transformational. This means that each member is publically committed to being transformed into Christ-likeness as a disciple of Christ. A member's entire life is subject to Biblical authority as we are transformed into the unity of our community of believers. Some specifics helping us to define "Biblical lifestyle" may be interpreted by: The Baptist Faith and Message 1963, and our own Statement of Faith." (This will clarify to all members and potential members our stance on sexuality.)

Our Government: The government of this church is vested in the body of believers [members] who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership (Acts 6:2-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

A. The By-Laws We Affirm:

(continued)

Our Partnerships: This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the Burnet-Llano Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptist Convention, and with other associations as the church may decide (2 Corinthians 8 demonstrates partnerships in the early church).

Our Marriages: First Baptist Church of Marble Falls believes in Covenant Marriage which is the uniting of one Christian man and one Christian woman in loving companionship and commitment for a lifetime. The concept is first mentioned in Genesis 2:20-25. It is God's unique gift to provide for the man and woman in marriage the framework for: intimate companionship, the channel for sexual fulfillment, and the means for procreation within a safe environment conducive to raising children. Covenant Marriage also illustrates the union between Christ and His church. We believe that Ephesians 5:21-33 is the normative expression of Covenant Marriage. Therefore, only Covenant Marriages are to be performed on the premises of First Baptist Church of Marble Falls and are signed by the couple, witnesses, and the officiating minister.

First Baptist Church of Marble Falls also believes that the Christian Bible mandates that all sexual activity is to be enjoyed exclusively between one natural man and one natural woman that have been joined together in marriage. All other sexual activity is a violation of Biblical standards.

B. The Story:

(The pastor contends that the best way to express our belief is through story)

We believe in the adventure of an amazing God and his people, and we believe in the authority of the Bible which tells it. The Bible/Scripture/God's word is written by humans and inspired by God which means that the Bible contains the truth of God's redemptive movement to save the world. So the story is true, and it goes like this:

God has always been. We call this eternal. God cannot die, and God is the source of all that is. This truth is exciting because God is good and anything that comes from Him will be good as well.

One of the complex beliefs we have about God is his nature as three in one; we call it Trinity. We believe God is one, but he reveals himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three have distinct personal attributes but without division of nature, essence, substance, or being. For instance, if God the Father was a source of light, the Son Jesus would be the eternal light emanating from that source. Easy enough, the substance is the same. Both are light, yet they are different. Now the source doesn't create what emanates from it; it's just the reality of light. One cannot be separated from the other. So, God did not create Jesus, as some religions might

B. The Story: (continued)

suppose. Jesus has always existed with the Father. The Father and Jesus are one because Jesus is a part of what is God. The Holy Spirit is a part of this as well. It is mysterious we admit, but many passages of scripture demonstrate this complexity. We are satisfied to embrace the mystery of it. We do not believe that mystery is to be discounted simply on the grounds of our lack of vocabulary or difficulty in understanding.

Here is where the story comes to us. God created our world and then created people in his own image with freedom of choice, spirit, and individual personhood! God is deeply moved by his love for his whole creation, and this love drives him to redeem his creation from sin. Sin came about by the free will of people. God's desire was for people to love Him freely and that is why he gave them free will in the first place, but all people have chosen to use their freedom to rebel against God rather than love him. This is the sad part, and it's real. We see the result of this sin all around us in forms of violence, racism, greed, isolation, lust, poverty, and so on. God's movement is to set up his kingdom forever with humans playing a significant role in that kingdom, but sin prevents this movement from moving forward. For this ultimate kingdom plan to unfold, God had to fix humanity's problem of sin. Sin's consequence was preventing people from being able to join in the kingdom movement. Our rebellion had us on a path for ultimate separation from God. Sin separates people from God, and we just keep moving in that distant direction unless God steps in. How was God to fix this problem? How are people to be saved from sin but without taking away their free will?

Jesus is the answer! God began revealing himself to a people called the Israelites. They were to be a witness of God by everything in their lives. They were ordinary people but specially called out by God to carry his revelation to the world. It is into this people group that God sent his son Jesus to be born. Jesus came to fix the world's impossible problem of sin and put them back on the path to join God's kingdom. Jesus took the consequences of sin by living a perfect life, dying on the cross, and defeating the ultimate consequence of sin, which is death, by coming back to life. Only God could do such a thing.

Jesus is the savior of our lives. He loves us and died for us so that we can have life and join the kingdom of God. One day, maybe soon but we don't know when, Jesus is returning to bring all things, all history, all people to a final and wonderful culmination. In Him our lives are forgiven of sin, given purpose, and given the promise of immortality.

As a church, we are swept up into the creating of God's kingdom right now. We join the movement! It's hard and sometimes dangerous, but it will be worth it! We want all people to know the life that comes from Jesus because we love them. We believe that if someone has heard the story and they reject it, then they are choosing separation from the loving Trinity

B. The Story: (continued)

and all that is good forever. God will not force anyone to be with him forever. We don't want this for anyone. God's kingdom brings outsiders in, offers justice to those who are oppressed, imparts righteousness and purity for those with a broken past, provides power for those trapped in addiction, invites community for those who feel lonely and isolated, presents purpose for the confused, and gives hope for the hopeless! This is our story.

No one can prove it's not true. Our proof of its truth is our very lives. To be saved is to believe that Jesus is God's son by faith and to dedicate one's life in repentance to following Jesus into the exciting kingdom of God. This story is for all people and all races across the pages of history. It speaks in different languages and from within different cultures. It is not an American thing, or a Middle Eastern thing, or an Asian thing alone; it is a global and historical thing. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

III. Further Study on Beliefs:

This church also subscribes to the "The Baptist Faith and Message", adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963, (<http://texasbaptists.org/files/2010/08/bfmcomp1.pdf>). This document describes what Baptists associated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas generally believe. It is not a creed or a statement of accountability; it is a general doctrinal confession.



What are your thoughts about the story of Christianity?

Do you agree with our beliefs about the story of the Bible?

What do you believe about Jesus and salvation?

What do you think about our Marriage Covenant?

What do you think about our Membership Commitment?

Do you have any thoughts about theology, doctrine, or the Bible you would like to share?

PART 2: HOW WE FUNCTION

I. This is How We Make Decisions:

It would be almost impossible to overstate the role of the Core member. Any church that governs itself by the will of the people must strive to have a spiritually and emotionally mature membership. Our Core membership comes together every other month in what we call a “Church Family Conference.” Major decisions are brought before the Core for discussion and direction. After discussion and prayer, when those present are ready, they vote according to what they believe is God’s will. They do not vote for their own will, they seek God’s will. The expectation is that every Core member will vote with the whole church and the kingdom of God in mind.

II. This is the Role of the Pastor in Decisions:

“The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament Church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff in the performance of their tasks. The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. He works with the deacons and church staff to lead the church in the achievement of its mission...” (Church By-Laws).

The pastor is not a dictator, nor is he marginalized in the decision making process. Regarding the direction of the church, the pastor is expected to speak what God lays on his heart with grace and truth. This prophetic task is to be performed with gentleness and courage. This kind of strong leadership will help equip the church for the ministry rather than hurting the church.

III. This is How We Achieve Our Mission:

Our staff and members work side by side to accomplish the mission of the church. We have a hybrid system of serving where both committees and ministry teams work in tandem.

Our committees are nominated and voted on at a “Church Family Conference.” We have Administrative Committees: Stewardship Committee, Personnel Committee, Nominating Committee, and Church School Committee. These Administrative Committees exist to serve all other committees and ministry teams. We also have Ministry Committees: Property & Space Committee, Missions Committee, Children’s Committee, Youth Committee, and Recreation Committee. From time to time, we also have the need to appoint a temporary committee to perform a special task.

Our ministry teams are unique in that they rise and fall according to need and passion. Any Core member can begin a ministry or serve on an already existing ministry team. A new ministry and its leader are discussed by the Nominating Committee to determine: overlap, recourses, and missional fit (does it help accomplish our mission?). A person’s ministry is where their great passion and the world’s great need intersect. We have many places to serve, and wherever there is a gap, our members can pray about filling it. Through our committees and ministry teams, our church tries to accomplish

the mission of our church. Each committee and ministry team is expected to be prayerful, loving, creative, and Biblical. Each committee and ministry team is assigned a staff member. The staff member brings the needs of the group to staff meetings and speaks on their behalf. He or she also makes sure the events of the group are scheduled properly and that they receive their needed resources.

IV. This is How We Communicate:

Our ministry and support staff utilizes several methods of communication. The main source of information is our church website (www.fbcmf.org). This website is a supercenter of great church information, sign-ups, and connection. It has our published church calendar, our weekly publication (*The Journey*), online giving, online registration to serve, staff e-mails, ministry updates, training videos and much more.

Another great source of communication is our weekly publication called *The Journey*. This publication is placed on our Website every Saturday, and is given out as a hard copy on Sunday mornings during worship. It contains great articles, upcoming promotional events, pictures of new members, budget updates, and a worship guide for that morning. If you read through *The Journey*, you will be able to be on top of the vast majority of what is happening.

Another great source of communication is our weekly worship video announcements. Every week our staff considers the most important needs to be promoted, and we create videos to highlight those things.

We also communicate through Sunday School classes, church-wide email, texting to groups, social media, letters, verbal announcements, and signage.

Twice a year we publish an informational magazine called *The State of the Church*. These magazines lay out the major events happening in the church, outline the pastor's sermon series, give reports on missions and ministries, and let everyone know where we are and where we are headed.



Is this how you are used to doing church?

What has been your experience in former churches?

You may have the opportunity to serve on ministry committees or ministry teams, would this appeal to you? If interested in serving please log on to our website at fbcmf.org/volunteer

What do you think about how we make decisions?

You will have the opportunity at our church family conferences to vote on issues and the will of God for our church. Have you had the privilege of this in previous churches?

PART 1: HOW DO PEOPLE JOIN OUR CHURCH?

While the Gospels give us a deep understanding of Jesus's life, teaching and ministry, the book of Acts offers a view of the early church and those who followed Jesus through the Apostles' teaching. The early church met in synagogues, central meeting places, and homes. They engaged in prayer, meals, fellowship, and learning what it meant to be a Jesus follower. The wave of God's power and Spirit was moving in miraculous ways. The Apostles were teaching, healing, and proclaiming the availability of God's Kingdom and eternal life for anyone who would put their faith in Jesus and be baptized. The Jesus Movement was unlike anything the world had ever seen or experienced.

We believe this can still be the case today, and we pray it is the case in our church. We welcome you to take whatever steps toward our church God desires for your life.

The Journey to Core Membership

We believe that the Christian life (being a disciple of Jesus and following Him) is a journey. We all start out at different places on the journey, but we all endeavor to walk in the same direction together as we follow Christ. Some of us are close enough to be covered in the dust from His feet while others have turned towards Him and can see Him from a distance but are running towards Him with every breath they have! At our church, we recognize these similarities and the differences amongst those who engage in our ministries.

I. Crowd

The first way that people generally interact with our church is by being part of the Crowd. These are individuals or families that visit on a Sunday morning and attend worship. They might be in town visiting family and decided to worship at our church, or they might be individuals or a family from the Highland Lakes area that are visiting several churches in town to see where they might want to start attending regularly. The Crowd only comes to worship, and they are simply testing the waters to see where God is leading them.

Some people have been hurt by some church, and they desire to come to worship but not to take any further steps - at least for a while. To relate to our church, the position of Crowd offers people some amount of anonymity.

II. Connected

The next way that people engage our church is by being Connected. Being connected means that you consider First Baptist Church Marble Falls “where you go to church.” They may not have ever given the church their personal information, and they may only come to worship on Mother’s Day, but in their mind, they consider us their church. We may not even know them, but they come ever so often, and they have decided that we are their church. This individual or family may even be trying out or searching for a small group to attend, but they have not yet stepped over the line to join a Small Group.

III. Committed

Then we have people that are part of the Committed. Not only are these people attending worship regularly, but these people are also an active part of one of our small groups, serve, and may even be engaging in stewardship. These individuals have committed themselves to our understanding of how the Christian life should be lived out in faith and in practice. They commit to being a disciple of Jesus and growing more fully into His image as they seek His will for their life.

IV. Core (Members)

The Core membership of our church are those people who have stepped over the line to join us in our mission. They desire to take the responsibility of the church on their shoulders. After they have been through this First Impressions study and they understand and agree to its content; after they commit to the three membership expectations (explained below); and based on their wholehearted agreement with the Membership Commitment listed in section describing our beliefs, their name is brought to our Church Family Conference where they are recommended for Core membership and voted on.

A deacon or staff member will meet with the person seeking Core membership to discuss this First Impressions study and see what questions he or she might still have. At the end of the discussion, if the candidate and the one conducting the study both still feel God’s leading to move forward, his or her name is turned in to be presented at the nearest Church Family Conference.

The primary characteristic of a Core member is that he or she is a disciple of Jesus Christ. Everything hinges on this point. A disciple seeks God’s will in his or her personal life; a disciple is baptized and able to speak about the significance of that baptism; a disciple is able to speak about who Christ Jesus is and what he means to his or her life as a witness; a disciple continually turns away from sin, striving towards a Biblical lifestyle; and a disciple who wants to join our church must strive toward the unity and the mission of our church.

There are three transformative ways a Core member is expected to strive toward the unity and mission of our church.

A. Small Groups

The natural outflow of a disciple's life is a life that longs to fellowship with other believers: do life with them and grow in the knowledge of God's Word with them. We are blessed to have an abundant network of small groups that meet both inside the church walls and out in the community. We have Sunday School classes and Life Groups. All Core members are placed into a small group of their choosing (unless prevented to do so). It's in community that we are built up, encouraged, loved, and cared for (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:46-47; Matt 18:20; John 15:12).

B. Stewardship

When we begin the journey of discipleship to Christ, we are instinctively drawn to a community of faith to grow alongside one another. If these communities of faith prayerfully decided to do something together for the kingdom of God, it is reasonable for the people who comprise that community to give financially to make that dream a reality. Our Core members are expected to tithe for several Biblical reasons.

First, it transforms the giver into a generous person. The sin of greed, so prevalent in our culture, is overcome by a generous and giving heart. Second, the needs of others matter to our Core, and the mission of our church matters to our Core. Our Core has a vote in the budget, and our Core serves on the Stewardship Committee creating our ministry budget. Our Core gives to this ministry budget because he or she believes deeply in its ability to make a difference in people's lives. If the ministries and missions do not matter enough for you to give to them, then the person may want to reconsider being a part of the Core. Third, our Core tithes because God instructs Christians to give (Proverbs 3:9-10; Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10; Matt 6:19-21; Matt 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8).

B. Serving

One of the keynote characteristics in the life of Jesus was His servant heart. When we become indwelt by the love of Christ, intuitive promptings to serve are birthed. Our church and our community are saturated with opportunities to work alongside Christ to build His Kingdom.

Our Core is expected to serve in some gospel-centered life-giving way. This can be within one of the ministries or committees of our church or outside of it. Every member is a minister. In addition to these opportunities, all our Core members serve at least once per year with our youth or once per year with our children. (Our Children's and Youth's Minister will help you set this up.) We show our love by our hands. We do missions, we evangelize, we care (John 13:5-11; John 6:1-14; Acts 4:32-35).

Individuals interested in getting plugged into a volunteer position can log on to our website and fill out the volunteer interest survey. Survey can be found at: fbcmf.org/volunteer



Are you sure God is leading you to be a Core member of our church?

What do you think about the expectations of Core member?
Are they reasonable? Are they Biblical?

If we have Core members as described above, how could it help our church?

What are the greatest challenges facing the Christian church today?

Our Core is not expected to be perfect, but they are expected to try not to sin. This concept is written in the Membership Commitment in the following way, "Therefore, First Baptist Church of Marble Falls believes all church membership is, and should be, transformational. This means that each member is publically committed to being transformed into Christ-likeness as a disciple of Christ. A member's entire life is subject to Biblical authority..." How do you strive for a Christ-like moral and ethic in your life?

How can we pray for You?