

The Frontlines of Ministry

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A Note from Pastor Zach:



Dear Friend,

I am so grateful for your willingness to serve in the Altar Ministry of First Baptist Church. This is one of the most important ministries that we have as a faith family. It is during the invitation that all of the various ministries and prayers of our church converge in the new birth of a soul or a decision that can change a person forever. Thank you so much for serving in this capacity!

In Christ,
Zach Terry
Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church
Fernandina Beach, FL

EXAMPLE DECISION SHEET:

First Baptist Church Fernandina Beach

Church New Member and Baptism Decision Form

Decision Made (filled out by counselor):

Date:

- Salvation
- Assurance of salvation
- Baptism
- Baptism and Church Membership
- Church Membership by letter form:
- Rededication
- Commitment to Church Vocation
- Church Membership by Statement
- Other: _____

Church Name: _____

Address (if known): _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please Print Information Below

- Mr. Mrs. Miss
- Dr. Rev. _____

Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Home Address: _____
(Number, Street, Apartment Number)

Mailing Address (if different): _____
(P.O. Box Route and Box Number)

(City) (State) (Zip Code)

Birth date: ____ / ____ / ____

School Grade: _____ Parent's Name(s): _____

I am: Single Married Formerly Married Widowed

Phone Number: Home () _____ - _____

Work () _____ - _____

Cell () _____ - _____

Email: _____

Counselor's Name: _____

Baptism scheduled for:

If you are scheduled for baptism, please meet in the church office 15 minutes prior to baptism. A person from the baptismal committee will meet you. Bring a change of clothes and a towel.

Top copy: Church office Yellow copy: Sunday School Teacher Pink copy: Pastor

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR OUR ALTAR MINISTRY:

1 Corinthians 14:40 (ESV)

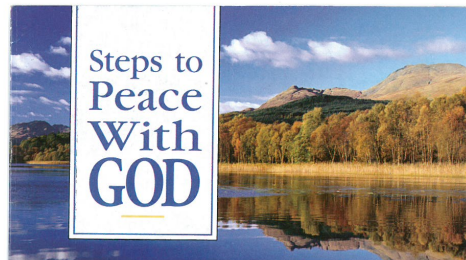
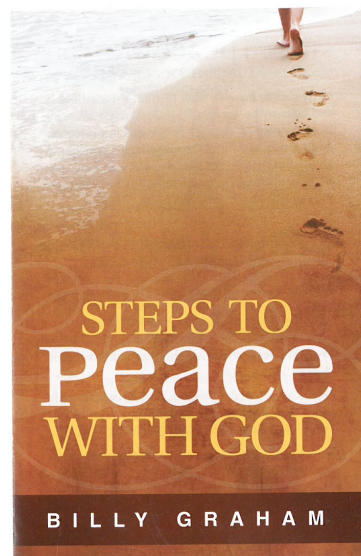
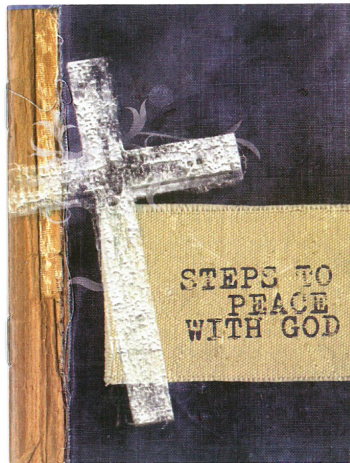
⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.

1. **Spiritually Prepare Yourself** - Free people, free people. God uses us best when we are close and clean to Him. Spend some time in prayer for the service and those who need to respond prior to the invitation. Make sure you are walking in freedom and maintaining a healthy relationship with Christ. If at any point you feel you are unprepared to serve in this capacity let the Pastor in charge of Altar ministries know as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements.
2. **Physically Prepare Yourself-**
 - Consider how you dress - some skirts or dresses make altar ministry difficult. Dress in a way that allows you to comfortably and modestly kneel down beside a person.
 - Think about your breath - If possible, use a mint as we transition into the invitation so that you are not talking about life's most important decisions with bad breath. Avoid gum, it's unprofessional to be chewing gum while dealing with a person.
3. **Purpose to Approach the Same Gender** - The exception to this rule would be in the context of a very large response when you may have to counsel several people at one time. We prefer that people who serve in Altar Ministry function as husband/wife teams.
4. **Make Physical Contact** - There is something about the physical touch that conveys more than words can say. It communicates love, acceptance, and gentleness. Before you say a word, make *appropriate* physical contact.
 - Lay a hand gently on the shoulder - do not push or grab.
 - Keep your hand still: avoid rubbing or patting people.
 - Speak in a comforting tone - use a calm, steady voice, speak loud enough that you can be heard over the music.
5. **Identify why they Responded** - If a Pastor hands them off to you, the Pastor should have already discovered why the person came forward (join church, salvation, pray, etc.). Here are a few common reasons people respond:
 - **Prayer** - If the person is kneeling at the altar then you will have to ask - Would you like me to pray for you about anything specifically? Their answer may be specific or

general, pray accordingly.

- **Salvation** - If they are absolutely ready to be saved, ask, “Would you like me to lead you in a prayer or are you ready to pray on your own?”.
- **SAMPLE PRAYER:** *Dear God, I know I am a sinner and there is nothing I can do to bring myself into a right relationship with you. I believe that you love me and that you sent Jesus to pay for my sins by his death on the cross. I believe you raised Him from the dead because his death was completely sufficient to pay for my sins. Jesus please forgive me of my sins and be my Lord and Savior. Thank you Jesus for hearing this prayer. Thank you Jesus for saving me today. Help me to live for you. In Christ’s name - AMEN.*

The following tracts are provided to help you guide a person in this decision. Get familiar with the tracts and decide which format you prefer prior to serving the Altar Ministry.



- **Baptism** - Fill out a decision card and mark best way to contact.
- **Membership** - Fill out a decision card and mark best way to contact.

[PASTOR'S WILL DO THE FOLLOW UP AND COUNSELING.
PLEASE DON'T OVER COUNSEL]

6. **Record their Decision** - If the person is making a decision make sure you fill out the decision card. Let them know that a Pastor will follow up with them in the next couple of days. Make sure that you turn the decision card into the Pastor in charge of the Altar Ministry.
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THE FLOW OF THE INVITATION:

When Pastor Zach is preaching the ending of the sermon will be very predictable. This is so that both our worship team and altar ministry can respond accordingly.

- Pastor Zach will say something like - “Let’s pray together”
- At this point the worship team will take the stage and altar ministry workers should get in place.
- Pastor Zach will mention various decisions that might be made as a result of the sermon. Generally, he will encourage them to make their decision to respond during the prayer. He will make it very clear that when the prayer is completed with an, “amen”, the music will begin and that is their “cue” to come forward.
- Pastor Zach and/or one of the other Pastors will be standing at the front to receive those who need to make a public decision or those who wish to pray with a Pastor.
- He will encourage others to feel free to pray at the altar (stage steps).
- After the Pastor has a brief prayer with the prospect - he will hand them off to an Altar worker.
- If you have a prospect handed off to you - take them out the door to Pastor Zach’s right.
- In that hallway there are a number of chairs arranged for you to use for counseling and prayer.
- All of the materials you need will be available on a table.



VALUES WE WANT TO CONVEY:

- **Confidentiality** - People approach the altar with tremendous needs, trusting that any personal information shared will be handled with value and discretion. Avoid any and all forms of gossip as a faithful steward of the lives being influenced at the altar. When additional ministry or assistance is needed, use discretion.
 - **Hope** - We want them to know that God is bigger than any problem and they should have great faith that He will honor their response.
 - **Organization** - Make sure you are prepared with a pen and a decision card.
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THINGS WE WANT TO AVOID:

- **Detailed Counseling** - Your total time with the individual should be 3-5 minutes. Pastor's will counsel and followup. People have different levels of comfort. They will address you at their particular comfort level. God will work through you to meet a person's need – it is not necessary to know intimate details.
 - Ask questions when you need clarity to understand the person's request.
 - Do not ask questions about a story's details. It is not necessary.
 - Do not transition into counseling or giving an opinion.
 - Hear the persons request, stand in the gap, and bring the person to the Father.
 - NEVER - take a person's personal information home with you.
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EMERGENCY & CRISIS SITUATIONS:

An emergency or crisis situation is one in which there is a threat of harm to self or another:

1. Threat of Suicide
2. Spousal Abuse
3. Child Abuse
4. Sexual Assault
5. Physical Assault
6. Criminal Activity

If you encounter any of these areas, or another area indicating a threat of harm to self or other, IMMEDIATELY CONTACT A PASTOR. While acting immediately, please use a calm demeanor and maintain discretion. Pastors are trained to handle these situations.