CHAIRPERSON SPEECH

FOR

BESSIE GILES

Hello everyone and welcome to this well-deserved dinner!! We have all dedicated our time and personal resources in support of the Bridge To Success Scholarship program and tonight signifies the turning of a page in our history. When we think of the concept of building a bridge, our thoughts can drift from the obvious… a span constructed to afford passage over a body of water, or the symbolic, like extending an arm and offering a hand to someone in need of more secure passage to overcome an obstacle. The scholar Ralph Ellison said, “Education is all a matter of **building bridges**.” Tonight we are here to acknowledge the “mechanics,” “engineers,” and “architects” of the Bridges to Success that we have been constructing here at West Chestnut Baptist Church.

Each year our church builds on the hard work and accomplishments of the chairman and committee members who have served us as well as on the achievements of the scholars that have earned our support. (**It is not clear if you are the continuing chairman or the incoming chairman- if you are succeeding an outgoing chairman you can say**) I want to acknowledge \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, our outgoing Chairman for her (**his?**) tireless work, thoughtful actions, and innovative guidance in support of our scholars. I am proud to be the [new] Chairman and partner of such a dedicated group of committee members who have served our cause so well. (**Do you want to give any statistics or examples of growth? If so you can do that here**). The previous year saw growth in several ways, especially in the response and interests by our younger congregants. In 2015 I am proud to say that we served several eager young people and presented a total of (**number of scholarships, not $$ amount**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ scholarships. Since its founding in 20\_\_, The Bridge to Success Fund has awarded \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ scholarships and as we formulate our strategy and goals for 2016 onward, we have a strong and committed foundation upon which to grow.

(**Name the outgoing committee members**) To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I want to thank you for your interest and devotion to this vital cause. Your ideas and enthusiasm have inspired us and the youth of our church have new found optimism for a more viable and fulfilled future thanks to all the time and care you have invested in this program. (**If any committee members are staying on you can say)** I would like to acknowledge current members for their ongoing commitment. It is because of friends like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, that we are able to maintain a fluid agenda as we plan to outpace our current projections. To our new committee members, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we want to welcome you a**board** **(If you want to make a joke you can say… “Get It?” and wait for the laugh. If not, you can skip “Get it?”**) . We thank you in advance for your fresh and new ideas and perspectives that will invigorate our purpose in guiding and supporting the eager and deserving youth of our church community.

To our students and scholarship recipients, **YOU** are our muses, our inspirations, and our reason for doing what we do here through this program. As adults, we know that to have an education is more than vital. It is an **urgent** necessity in overcoming the obstacles of adult life. We also know that there are many other places you’d rather be, in several other scenarios that may hold more temptation, and still you have chosen to partner with us and invest in the future… **YOUR** future. Now, more than ever, an education is necessary to survive and in order to prevail in this increasingly competitive, divisive, and mixed up world we live in, we all need to have as much information and opportunity as possible. Remember that it was Abraham Lincoln who said, “The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.” Can you just **IMAGINE** if President Lincoln had even a **PEEK** into what’s going on in this country today??? I am telling you kids…. we’ll work as hard as we can to make as many scholarships as possible available, but it is up to **YOU** to put the opportunity to good use… this world **NEEDS YOU**! Our future well-being depends on it!

I have always been proud to be a member of this church community and I am honored to support and partner our neighbors and friends as we share a vision of an educated, viable, involved, and engaged collective. Each one of us is here by the grace of someone else that cared and each one of us can cite the bridges and helping hands that reached out to us to mentor and guide us to achieve our goals. Steven Spielberg said, “The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.” That is what we do here with our Bridge To Success Scholarship fund. To my colleagues and committee members, I look forward to working with all of you to create more opportunities for the youth in our congregation. To our scholars past, present and future, we are proud and enthusiastic to work on your behalf to present a bridge to your future and we look forward to the positive impact you will have in the world of tomorrow.

Thank you all!