



Texas
IN MCALLEN, PASTOR SEES IMAGE OF GOD IN EVERY PERSON
▼
Page 8



Briefs
SUPREME COURT SETS DEC. 1 FOR CHALLENGE TO ROE V. WADE
▼
Page 15

Opinion
Gary Ledbetter, Editor
Great Commission priority → **Page 2**

Around the State
North Richland Hills BC sets goal of 2,000 gospel conversations in 5 months → **Page 3**

Around the State
Texas Baptist Home opens West Texas office → **Page 3**

National
Pro-life policies under attack at federal level → **Page 12**

SBC
COVID claims, inflation impact medical rates for 2022 → **Page 13**

Book Review
Two Baptists you should know better → **Page 13**

SOUTHERN BAPTIST
Texan

NOVEMBER 2021
VOLUME 20 • NO. 11
NEWSJOURNAL OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTISTS OF TEXAS CONVENTION
texan.digital

Del Rio church combines creativity and Christ

By Karen L. Willoughby
TEXAN Correspondent

DEL RIO Jim Wilson and his wife, Marsha, in 2005 told their three daughters they all were going to be in ministry when they moved from North Carolina to start a church on the Texas/Mexico border.

See **DEL RIO**, 11



Taekwondo classes gave church planter Jim Wilson, who, with his daughter Bethany, holds a black belt in the martial art, an inroad into the Del Rio community years ago. **PHOTO SUBMITTED**

First Baptist Dallas’ Shea Lowery creates single moms ministry



Shea Lowery has added a Discipleship University class to the single moms Sunday School class she teaches at First Baptist Dallas. **PHOTO SUBMITTED**

By Jane Rodgers | Managing Editor

DALLAS
April 27, 1990, began as a normal Friday for Shea Lowery, a mom of two small children in northwest Alabama. Shea’s husband, Jeff, left early for a construction job and the young mother busied herself tending to the needs of a two- and a three-year-old.

Later that day, Shea and the kids headed out to tell neighbors about their church’s weeklong revival. Friday was Friendship Night. In the days before cell phones and COVID, one knocked on doors and issued in-person invites.

See **MOMS**, 5

BOLD PROCLAMATION OF BIBLICAL TRUTHS KEY TO STRENGTHENING RACIAL HARMONY, PANEL SAYS

By Michael Foust
TEXAN Correspondent

GRAPEVINE The path to strengthening racial harmony begins with pastors boldly standing up and applying God’s Word without fear of consequences, Baptist leaders said recently during a panel discussion on the issue.

The Sept. 30 event sponsored by the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention featured a multi-ethnic panel of Black, Asian, Hispanic and White Baptist leaders.

See **HARMONY**, 10

FROM THE EDITOR Gary Ledbetter

Great Commission priority

There are a lot of things Baptist state conventions can do. The SBTC's sister conventions are, with one exception, 50 to 200 years older. That age, growing up through the years of dynamic expansion by Southern Baptists, led to a broadening of ministry scope into a stable of fine institutions.

This growth made sense when a Baptist convention was providing a service that did not exist as the nation or state developed. The difficulty is unwinding those entanglements as the time comes when it's not so crucial that Baptists turn from other priorities to do it.

It's hard to stop doing something that has been around long enough to have a constituency.

It is also difficult to diligently oversee institutions, particularly colleges and universities, that tend to drift in the cultural wind. It can be done but it is difficult and a never-ending stewardship. For these reasons—the existence of effective institutions and the costs associated with keeping an institution—the SBTC determined early that it would not control institutions, seeking to instead lend strength to like-minded institutions already up and running.

A second challenge for parachurch ministries that follows with age and success is the increase of diverse ministries and the staff experts to run them. If you have the money, you'll spend it on good things. But this hand-to-mouth growth is one reason some Baptist parachurch ministries are downsizing in our day.

When the SBTC was founded, a couple of Baptist state conventions had more than 200 fulltime staff members. The SBTC's founders had watched their former state convention become the biggest, a top-down parachurch that had a staff member for nearly everything. For that reason, they determined that the new convention's staff would be fewer, generalist in duties and always looking up to the churches. The SBTC's high percentage of Cooperative Program allocation to the Southern Baptist Convention has also ensured that the state convention does not become an end rather than a means.

“THESE LESSONS LEARNED BY THE SBTC FOUNDING GENERATION ALLOWED THE NEW CONVENTION TO PRIORITIZE MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM, IN TEXAS AND BEYOND.”

These lessons learned by the SBTC founding generation allowed the new convention to prioritize missions and evangelism, in Texas and beyond. This ministry remains the first in budgeting and staffing within the SBTC. That means there are some things we do to a lesser degree. We have a strict limit on the percentage of our budget used to fund institutions, for example. The other Texas convention had allocated around half of its instate budget to institutional support at the time of our founding. That limited their spending on church planting and worldwide missions. We love our cooperating institutions and support them in a variety of ways. But we don't own them, and we don't have an open-ended relationship with them. And we will not maintain a relationship with any institution anywhere that will not thoroughly operate within our statement of faith.

Our work in public policy is another place where we intentionally walk a different path than some other conventions. At one point our budget for this work was about 10 percent what the other Texas convention budgeted for this work. This was thoughtfully

“AS WE DESCRIBE OUR CORE VALUES, WE SAY A COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL AUTHORITY IS WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO, MISSIONS IS WHAT WE DO AND OUR COOPERATION WITH THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION IS HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO.”

done to reflect our philosophy of helping the churches do what they set out to do, not do it all or tell them what to do. Our founders left us without the ability to become top down in this work. It's important but it's not the priority.

But beyond the priority placed on our missions and evangelism ministries is the fact that such work is high on the agenda for all SBTC ministries. Revitalization work, church health resources, even our interim and church transition assistance are designed to help churches pursue the lost in all places. Missions is baked into every plan we make. That priority came to us from the churches that founded our convention, and it has been reinforced by over 2,500 churches that have affiliated since 1998.

As we describe our core values, we say a commitment to biblical authority is why we do what we do, missions is what we do and our cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention is how we do what we do. Missions is our payload, and it is one place where we are unapologetically prophetic when we speak to our churches. Our series of church features in each issue of the TEXAN is intended to show you ways that diverse churches fund and do missions within their horizons and beyond them. Our evangelism conference is two days of missionary exhortation. You also won't likely hear a sermon at the annual meeting that is not focused on the priority of the Great Commission.

I am not saying that our sister state conventions do not share this priority; they do in intent and increasingly in their structure and methodology. This is a day in which state convention ministry is going through a bit of a renewal of focus in many places. Churches in all our states should encourage this where they see it happening and support it in all ways, especially when they have groused about the lack of Great Commission vitality in former days. These conventions are doing the hard work of rebuilding something well underway. The SBTC has been blessed to have started in this place and maintained this priority from the beginning. It's made all the difference. ✠

This column three of four describing the denominational virtues of the SBTC. Next month: Biblical Fidelity.

gledbetter@sbtcxas.com
@sbtcxan



SOUTHERN BAPTIST
Texan

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 11 NOVEMBER 2021

Nathan Lorick, Executive Director
Gary K. Ledbetter, Editor
Jane Rodgers, Managing Editor
Gayla Holt, Circulation Manager
Russell Lightner, Designer

Correspondents:
Michael Foust
Erin Roach
Karen L. Willoughby

The Southern Baptist TEXAN is the official newspaper of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, P.O. Box 1988, Grapevine, Texas 76099-1988. Toll-free 877-953-7282, Phone 817-552-2500, FAX 817-552-2520. Email: gholt@sbtcxas.com

Obituaries, memorials and classified advertisements listing items and services for sale will be published at a cost of 30 cents per word with a minimum of \$10. Copy is limited to 100 words and must be submitted within three months of death or event. Submit information to gholt@sbtcxas.com. Several forms of advance payment are available.

Letters to the editor should be limited to 250 words and should refrain from personal attacks. Submit by email to gholt@sbtcxas.com or mail to the address above.

Individual subscriptions are free of charge within Texas. A \$10 per year donation is requested for out-of-state subscriptions. Email changes to gholt@sbtcxas.com.



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

- ▶ texan.digital
- ▶ sbtcxan
- ▶ sbtcxan

What's Next?

sbtcxas.com/events

November

Full calendar, use your phone's camera to scan QR code. →



All in-person events subject to change based on COVID conditions.

7 Spanish Session
Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Pittsburgh

16 Evangelism Roundtable
Online

25-26 Thanksgiving
SBTC office closed

28-12/5 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
Week of Prayer



December

For more details on SBTC events visit sbtcxas.com/events

3-4 Student Ministers Getaway, Lone Star Court, Austin

24-31 Christmas
SBTC office closed



North Richland Hills BC sets goal of 2,000 gospel conversations in 5 months

Calling Who's Your One "one more tool" in your personal evangelism toolbox, North Richland Hills Baptist Church pastor Scott Maze is challenging his church to have 2,000 gospel conversations between August and December 2021. As of Oct. 10, members have recorded 446 conversations.

They have used "3 Circles," Evangelism Explosion, the "ABC" (Admit-Believe-Confess) method, and other tools to teach their people to talk to their neighbors about Christ. "This witnessing effort is basically asking our church to make the effort and have a gospel conversation with those in our lives or someone God brings in our life. God can take it from there. When we're willing to be obedient and step out in faith, it's amazing what "happens," said NRHBC missions pastor Danny Stafford.

The church uses a large structure in the lobby to encourage church members to name the persons they are praying for, with the intent of having a gospel conversation with them in the coming days. The emphasis includes training during Bible fellowship group times.

—NORTH RICHLAND HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

Texas Baptist Home opens West Texas office

The Texas Baptist Home for Children opened a new office in Odessa in July 2021. The office is located inside Mission Dorado Baptist Church. Dana Holt, a long-time Texas Baptist Home employee, will direct the Permian Basin branch of the foster care and child placement agency. Holt has been adoption director for the past seven years. According to Holt, the goal is to recruit foster families from the pews of churches in West Texas. She has been contacting churches in the Permian Basin to establish relationships and to bring awareness of the need of foster and adoptive homes in West Texas.

Only 14 percent of West Texas children removed from their biological families by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services stay in their own communities with a foster family. Most children are sent to Dallas or Houston for placement. In 2020, 514 children were removed in West Texas from their families but only 70 were able to stay in their community. If you have a connection that would help build relationships and help TBHC bring and keep kids home, please contact Dana at dholt@tbhc.org.

—TEXAS BAPTIST HOME FOR CHILDREN

FBC Brackettville turns 100

First Baptist Church Brackettville celebrates 100 years of ministry Nov. 13-14, 2021.

The church, originally the military chapel on Fort Clark, was moved into Brackettville in 1947. The church is requesting that former members and members call 830.563.2245 and leave a name and address.

—FBC, BRACKETTEVILLE



PHOTO BY JAMES PEVEHOUSE (GOOGLE)



Current Events. Relevant Topics. **Gospel Stories.**

Do you have a gospel story you'd like to share?
Please reach out to gholt@sbtexas.com.

texan.digital

SUBSCRIBE



Fenton to pastor First, Malakoff

Ed Fenton, formerly worship pastor at Rock Hill Baptist Church in Brownsboro, began his service as the pastor of First Baptist Malakoff on Oct. 3. This is Fenton's first senior pastorate. He formerly served as worship pastor for First Baptist Malakoff between 2011 and 2013. He is pictured above with his wife, Sara, and their daughters.

—FBC, MALAKOFF



Rosharon, Texas, pastor The Mey dies of COVID-19

Pastor The Mey, 76, of Rosharon, Texas died from COVID-19 complications on Wed., Sept. 15, 2021 at HCA Houston Healthcare Mainland hospital in Texas City.

The was born in Cambodia and was a longtime resident of Rosharon, where he pastored the church he also planted, Rosharon Bible Baptist Church, for more than 30 years.

"Pastor The Mey was small in stature, quiet in manner, but a giant in the faith, particularly among those in the Cambodian community," said Mitch Kolenovsky, SBTC field ministry representative for South Texas.

The was also active in the Gulf Coast Baptist Association.

Chuck Beem, director of missions for the Gulf Coast association, told the TEXAN that The had escaped the infamous Cambodian Killing Fields during the reign of terror of the Khmer Rouge.

Beem also noted The's commitment to his church: "He loved his people, and he worked hard to share the gospel in Rosharon and in Cambodia. When he wasn't able to go to Cambodia, he preached via cell phone."

The was preceded in death by his wife, Nen, and is survived by his wife of 41 years, Khim Lor, four sons and seven grandchildren.

A funeral service was held Sat., Sept. 25, 2021 at Rosharon Bible Baptist Church.

—ROSHARON BAPTIST CHURCH

Little Cypress Baptist Church to host crisis preparation event

Located on the storm-prone Gulf Coast, Little Cypress Baptist Church is hosting a crisis preparation event for the community, Feb. 11-12, 2022. The training event will begin Friday morning and will conclude Saturday afternoon. Vendor space is available at no charge but registration by vendors is required. Food is also available for purchase. Contact Pastor David Turner 409.330.3623 to register for a vendor booth.

—LITTLE CYPRESS BAPTIST CHURCH

TIME MARCHES ON



Nathan Lorick
Executive Director

nlorick@sbtcxas.com
@NathanLorick

They say, “time flies when you’re having fun.” While I am sure this is somewhat of a true statement, the reality is that in life, time continuously marches on.

Recently I was on a weekend trip to preach at an SBTC church. I had two of my sons with me—one age 17 and the other, 14. We went to a college football game the night before I preached. As we sat in the stadium, my heart was overcome with emotion. I wondered where time had gone. It seemed like yesterday these boys were crawling around on the floor, and now they are beginning the journey of becoming young men. The truth is time marches on.

A few weeks ago, I watched some video clips from the first annual meeting of the SBTC. I was a senior in high school at the time. It was November 1998, with a packed house at Woodforest Baptist Church in Houston. The atmosphere was electric, and people were excited about this new convention being formed to stand firmly on the inerrancy of Scripture and work closely with the Southern Baptist Convention at large to reach Texas and impact the world. That day, the SBTC began its incredible ministry that God has continued to bless. For the last 23 years, time has been marching on.

Through the cooperation of SBTC churches, Dr. Jim Richards’ superb leadership, and the team he assembled through the years, the SBTC has grown from 120 churches to nearly 2,700. As time marched on, God poured out his blessings upon the convention. We have been and remain a network of churches focused on missions and evangelism, cooperating within the parameters of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. This has served us well. We have seen great ministry accomplished across Texas together, all while time marches on.

I remember the moment the search team invited me to be presented as the next executive director of the SBTC. My mind and heart were immediately overwhelmed with excitement and gratefulness. I stood in that room humbled and honored to be considered to follow Dr. Richards. However, in the midst of all the emotions, I also felt a sense of resolve. I was, and am

today, resolved to see us move the ball forward together, resolved to see us accelerate the gospel’s impact across Texas at an expedited rate. I am resolved to see us plant more churches than we ever have before. I am resolved to see us move the needle on reaching the lost in our state. I believe that together, we will see great days ahead.

The people who gathered in 1998 with a vision for the SBTC served so faithfully. Their vision and hope became a reality that has lasted 23 years. Their convictions about the Word of God and their investment of time, participation and resources served as the catalyst to get us to this place today.

As great as the last 23 years have been, we are still faced with the reality that time continues to march on. Today, we continue to stand for those foundational reasons we started and that have enabled us to grow. We must hold fast to our core values and yet begin to develop new approaches and strategies to serve the next generation of churches, pastors and leaders. The core group in 1998 had no idea that their next executive director was in high school when they formed. Yet they knew there needed to be a convention that would not compromise the Word of God for any reason. I am so grateful they did.

As we move toward the future, let us walk together with a renewed sense of passion and unity. Let us lock arms to reach Texas and impact the world. Let us be found faithful like those who started the SBTC in 1998 because soon we will all look up and realize, time is marching on. I love you and am grateful for you! ✨

“
LET US LOCK ARMS TO REACH TEXAS AND IMPACT THE WORLD. LET US BE FOUND FAITHFUL LIKE THOSE WHO STARTED THE SBTC IN 1998 BECAUSE SOON WE WILL ALL LOOK UP AND REALIZE, TIME IS MARCHING ON.
”



Handling Scripture



Kie Bowman
SBTC President

kbowman@hpbpc.org
@KieBowman

Everyone who reads the Bible becomes, consciously or not, an interpreter of Scripture. Even if Bible readers have never heard the word “hermeneutics” (the art and science of biblical interpretation), they are practicing it with every morning devotion.

We read the words and know what they say, even while our minds are quietly assessing what those words mean. It’s our nature to wonder and explore and hunger for

understanding. Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.”

If we love the Bible, we will want to understand it so we can live by it and teach it to others. Fortunately, there are principles to guide us as we “search things out.” Allow me to share a few.

INSPIRATION

The starting point of interpretation for most of us is a bedrock conviction that God has spoken in Scripture. Paul wrote to Timothy to remind him of the following: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

When we are doing the work of interpretation, we are handling the Word of God. The Bible is more than ancient literature. We approach Scripture with the confidence that “Where the Bible speaks, God speaks.”

INERRANCY

Closely related to the doctrine of inspiration is the doctrine of inerrancy. In other words, not only has God spoken, he has spoken truthfully. The interpreter can be assured that the Bible is “truth without any mixture of error.” Why is this important? Obviously, volumes could be and have been written on this subject. But for our

“
SO, INERRANCY MATTERS FOR THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL OF REASONS: THE MESSAGE WE BELIEVE ORIGINATES FROM THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD. INERRANCY ASSURES US WE CAN TRUST THE GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY AND HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT.
”

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

So, inerrancy matters for the most fundamental of reasons: the message we believe originates from the written Word of God. Inerrancy assures us we can trust the grammatical accuracy and historical reliability of the biblical text.

WORDS MATTER

Flowing out of the doctrine of inerrancy is the importance of the words of Scripture themselves. God has revealed himself in history through what he has done and through what he has said. Words matter. Therefore, the interpreter should become extremely familiar with the words of Scripture. Invest in a Bible dictionary, do word studies, find online resources. Use everything at your disposal to become as proficient as possible in the words of the Bible.

Much more could be said about the significance of interpreting Scripture, but I will leave you with this thought. Every time you read the Bible, you are interpreting it. God has already instructed us to do it right.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15). ✨

purposes, permit me to suggest a practical reason why inerrancy matters. We put our faith in Christ based on what Scripture teaches about his death and resurrection (and everything else said about him). Paul, who saw the ascended Lord, reminds us the gospel he preached wasn’t based on his testimony alone, but rather upon the objective truth of the Bible.

When a nagging pain turned into a “sick headache,” Shea and the kids detoured by her sister’s house so she could rest.

Then the phone rang. “There’s been an accident. Keep Shea there till I can come for her,” Shea’s mom told the sister.

Lowery’s memories remain vivid more than three decades later: Her mother’s face while speaking to the doctor as Shea paused at hospital information. Family members walking through the door of a small room where the doctor had taken Shea to deliver the bad news. A moment alone in a hospital restroom after viewing her husband’s body when she looked in the mirror and asked, “God, what am I going to do?”

“I thought Jeff had just been hurt,” Shea recalled. Instead, he had been killed instantly in an electrical accident on the construction site.

Shea Lowery’s world was upended.

A new journey

“I was a 24-year-old stay-at-home mom with no college education. I had awakened that morning a married woman and I [went] to bed that night a single mom,” she recalled.

“The funeral comes and goes,” she mused. “Life got to going again for our family. A new journey was appointed.”

Part of that new journey, Lowery knew, would someday involve a calling into fulltime Christian ministry. But first she had children to raise.

“I prayed a Hannah’s prayer,” she told the TEXAN: “Lord, if you will allow me to raise my family near family, I will go to seminary.” He did, and when the kids were grown, the Lord “came calling.”

Meanwhile, Lowery finished her undergraduate education at Blue Mountain College in Mississippi.

Remarriage never appeared on the horizon, but seminary did. Lowery started postgraduate work at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary before accepting a scholarship to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where she earned a Master of Arts in biblical counseling and a Doctor of Educational Ministry in family ministries.

Entrusted Hope begins

In 2017, while at Southwestern, Lowery started Entrusted Hope Ministries, a 501c3 speaking and

“PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH TRIALS HAVE NO IDEA HOW GOD WILL USE THE TRIAL. THEY MADE IT TO THE OTHER SIDE, BUT NOT WITHOUT THE STORM IN THE MIDDLE.”

—SHEA LOWERY

writing outreach. Ensuing years found her speaking at numerous Christian events.

Lowery joined First Baptist Dallas soon after beginning studies at Southwestern. Then singles pastor Michael Perron (now at Prestonwood) asked her to teach a Sunday school class for single moms. After praying, Lowery said yes and agreed to attend a planning meeting on April 27, 2017.

Only Shea knew it was the anniversary of her husband’s death.

Sporting “big black sunglasses” to hide her tears, she remembered God’s goodness. “What a faithful God you are. You allowed me to live out the life of a single mom, and now you are allowing me to use what you entrusted to me to entrust to others,” she recalled telling the Lord.

“INSTEAD OF WALKING UP TO A SINGLE MOM AND PATTING HER ON THE BACK AND TELLING HER, ‘YOU CAN DO THIS,’ WHY NOT TEACH HER HOW TO BIBLICALLY?”

—SHEA LOWERY



Developing a single moms ministry model inspired Lowery’s doctoral work at Southwestern Seminary. Here members of her First Baptist Dallas class enjoy the fellowship and study.

“People who are going through trials have no idea how God will use the trial,” Lowery said. “They made it to the other side, but not without the storm in the middle.”

Lowery named the new class “Strong & Courageous” and started teaching. She soon saw the need to broaden the outreach.

She discussed possibilities with Perron and Pam Brewer, First Dallas women’s ministries director, who encouraged her. In addition to preparing materials for the Sunday school class, she began working on ideas for a single moms ministry model that churches could adopt. This formed the basis of her doctoral project at Southwestern.

She named the new ministry as she had the class: Strong & Courageous, an outreach of Entrusted Hope. The name evoked Joshua 1:9, where the Lord urges Joshua to be “strong and courageous.” Since Lowery’s full first name is O’Shea, the original version of Joshua, the link to the Old Testament hero seemed apt.

Word got out. Pastors started contacting Lowery, telling her that when the material was finished, they wanted access. Some inquired about translating the content into other languages.

Charla Vinyard, Entrusted Hope board member since its inception, affirmed the ministry’s importance since “the single mother is the fastest growing segment of our society.”

“Instead of walking up to a single mom and patting her on the back and telling her, ‘You can do this,’ why not teach her how to biblically?” Lowery noted.

First Dallas has embraced Strong & Courageous. Lowery now also teaches a Sunday evening course as part of the church’s Discipleship University. Through First Dallas, S&C offers fellowship and discipleship opportunities for single moms, including outings with the kids.

For DU this fall, Lowery is teaching a seven-week Bible study she wrote based on Joshua and other Scripture. Attendees will also learn such practical life skills as resume building and financial management.

Program basics

For the broader Christian community, S&C offers a four-phase model for congregations wishing to do single moms ministry:

- **Phase I: Launch:** A seven-week study on spiritual disciplines written by professors and their wives from Blue Mountain College, Southwestern and New Orleans seminaries
- **Phase II: Living it out:** *The Entrusted Lessons for the Journey* Bible study written by Lowery
- **Phase III: Going deeper:** A discipleship program encouraging the mentoring of younger women by older ones
- **Phase IV: Equip:** A series focusing on life skills for single moms including workplace and interview tips and counsel in money and time management

Lowery said she is currently exploring options for publishing the model for churches to use.

A ministry opportunity

Churches are already signing on and Lowery finds herself in meetings frequently these days.

More than 40 women from Hillcrest Baptist Church in New Albany, Mississippi are now going through the *Entrusted* study with Lowery via Zoom. Instead of waiting on a published version, the church has printed the material for attendees.

First Baptist Tuscaloosa has scheduled Lowery to teach *Entrusted Lessons* in person in January 2022 and will film the series for distribution.

Lifeway has asked her to write two blogs: one on the loss of her husband and the other with tips for churches doing single moms ministry.

For single moms such as Nikki Lopez, who serves as the Sunday school class director and administrator for S&C activities at First Dallas, the heart of the ministry is friendship.

“When I became a single mom, I didn’t have friends or support outside my family,” Lopez said. Now her S&C friends provide encouragement, support, spiritual counsel and even babysitting for one another.

“I love that Shea was a single mom herself. She is somebody we can come to. She understands what we are really going through. She has lived it as a single mom,” Lopez said.

Churches and moms designing more information should visit entrustedhopeministries.org to find daily Scriptures, lessons, mom tips, links to podcasts, blogs, prayer support and other resources. ☪

CRISWELL COLLEGE

Ambassadors | Cultivators | Peacemakers | Problem Solvers | Professionals

APPLY AT CRISWELL.EDU DALLAS TEXAS

[in](#) [t](#) [f](#) [o](#) [y](#)



ANNUAL 2021 MEETING



NOVEMBER 8-9 FLINT BAPTIST CHURCH

sbtexas.com/am21

REGISTER TODAY!

Session Schedule

Monday, Nov. 8: 6:30pm

Tuesday, Nov. 9: 9:00am, 2:10pm, 6:45pm

Questions? Email aminfo@sbtexas.com or call the SBTC office at 817-552-2500.

Meals & Events

Sunday

5:00-9:30 PM

Spanish Session & Fellowship
Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana, Pittsburg

Monday

10:00 AM-3:00 PM

Interim Pastor Equipping

12:00-2:00 PM

En Español Lunch Panel

4:45-6:00 PM

Recognition Dinner for Jim & June Richards

9:00-10:00 PM

Welcome Reception for Nathan & Jenna Lorick

Tuesday

7:30-8:45 AM

Seminary & College Breakfasts

12:00-1:55 PM

President's Panels & Young Pastors Network Panel
(Complimentary boxed lunch with 3 panel topics)

5:00-6:30 PM

Missional Ministries Dinner

BBQ Fellowship Dinner



But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:4-7

Schedule

MONDAY EVENING SESSION

6:30-9:00 PM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Choir & Orchestra, Flint Baptist Church

CALL TO ORDER

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Kie Bowman, SBTC president

CONSTITUTING OF THE CONVENTION

COMMITTEE ON ORDER OF BUSINESS

Jay Gross, pastor, West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe

INTRODUCTION OF MOTIONS

Kie Bowman, SBTC president

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Jim Richards, SBTC executive director emeritus

SBTC EXECUTIVE BOARD PRESENTATION

Mark Hogan, member, Mission City Church, San Antonio

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Nathan Lorick, SBTC executive director

COMMISSIONING SERVICE AND DISMISSAL

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION
9:00-11:45 AM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Praise Team, Flint Baptist Church

LAST INTRODUCTION OF MOTIONS

Kie Bowman, SBTC president

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Joe Lightner, Jacksonville College president

SBTC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Mark Hogan, member, Mission City Church, San Antonio

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (president)

PANEL DISCUSSION: Persecution of the Church in America

Moderator: Nathan Loudin (Milwood BC, Austin & TERLC chairman)

- Bart Barber, First Baptist Church Farmersville
- Bob Fu, ChinaAid
- Keisha Russell, First Liberty Institute
- Juan Sanchez, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Kie Bowman, senior pastor, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin

PRESIDENT’S PANELS:

12:00-12:15 PM (get your boxed lunch & find your breakout)

12:15-1:00 PM | BREAKOUT SESSION 1

1:10-1:55 PM | BREAKOUT SESSION 2

Separate Breakout – Young Pastors Network (Session 1 Only)

TOPICS:

- Keeping the Basic: Evangelism and Prayer
Kie Bowman (moderator)
Panelists: Todd Kaunitz, Nathan Lorick, Jason Paredes, Nathan Lino, Damon Halliday
- After Covid: Rebuilding the Pastor and the Church
Tony Wolfe (moderator)
Panelists: Danny Forshee, Jacob Fitzgerald, Ed Johnson III, Ramon Medina
- The Church and Worship: A Conversation with Matt Boswell
Young Pastors Network Panel

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION
2:10-4:50 PM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Praise Team, Flint Baptist Church

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Lakan Mariano, senior pastor, College Hills Baptist Church, San Angelo

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (vice president)

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

John Turner, executive pastor, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (secretary)

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

Andy Hill, executive pastor, Mobberly Baptist Church, Longview

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

Coleman Philley, pastor, Katy’s First Baptist Church

COMMITTEE ON ORDER OF BUSINESS FINAL REPORT

Jay Gross, pastor, West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe

PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Ed Johnson III, pastor, Harvest Fellowship Baptist Church, Desoto

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING & INCOMING OFFICERS

TUESDAY NIGHT SESSION
6:45-8:00 PM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Matt Boswell & Band

CHALLENGE AND INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER

Nathan Lorick, SBTC executive director

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Matt Boswell & Band

DISMISSAL

Tuesday annual meeting
to feature persecution panel

By TEXAN Staff

FLINT The Tuesday morning session of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Annual Meeting at Flint Baptist Church will include a mainstage panel on the Persecution of the Church in America. Nathan Loudin, pastor of Milwood Baptist Church in Austin and chairman of the SBTC’s Texas Ethics and Religious Liberty Committee, will moderate. Panelists scheduled include Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church Farmersville; Bob Fu, founder and president of ChinaAid; Keisha Russell, counsel for the First Liberty Institute; and Juan Sanchez, pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church of Austin.

Loudin, Barber, Fu and Russell were among several contributors to the *Persecution Journal*, a 70-page book edited by the TERLC



and published by the SBTC. The new release, which contains essays regarding modern-day persecution of Christians in the United States and globally, will be distributed to attendees on Tuesday.

Register for the annual meeting at sbtexas.com/am21 and then scroll down to or click on “meals” to sign up for the various times of food and fellowship. 🍴

Lewis, Molina join Kaunitz
as nominees at the annual meeting

By TEXAN Staff

FLINT Richard Lewis, pastor of Unity Baptist Church in Copperas Cove, and the current SBTC vice president, confirmed to the TEXAN his intention to run for a second term in that office at the 2021 SBTC Annual Meeting, Nov. 8-9 at Flint Baptist Church.

Moises Molina, pastor/church planter of Iglesia Bautista Jerico in Brownsville, has agreed to have his name placed in nomi-

nation for SBTC secretary. Steve Dorman, pastor of First Baptist Church Brownsville, will nominate Molina at the 2021 annual meeting.

Lewis and Molina join Todd Kaunitz, pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview, in rounding out the slate of officers to be nominated in Flint. Kaunitz will be nominated for SBTC president by Jarrett Stephens, pastor of Champion Forest Baptist Church in Houston. 🍴

2021 Presidential Appointments

REGISTRATION

LaRue Monsivais (CHAIR)	Grace Community Church, Mabank
Darla Britt	West Lake Baptist Church, Chandler
Brandon Cochran	Hillview Baptist Church, Henderson
Beth Davis	Flint Baptist Church, Flint
Ame Thompson	First Baptist Church, Fruitvale

RESOLUTIONS

John Turner (CHAIR)	Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin
Michael Cooper	Grace Community Church Mabank
Ken Holland	University Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville
Travis Kerns	Lane Prairie Baptist Church, Joshua
Clara Molina	Hillcrest Baptist Church, Cedar Hill
Sherrell Ogletree	Image Church Houston
Mac Saydometov	Lamar Baptist Church, Arlington
Terry Turner	Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church, Mesquite

TELLERS

Daniel Stone (CHAIR)	First Baptist Church, Murchison
Andy Barlow	Coastal Oaks Baptist Church, Rockport
Amy Collier	First Baptist Church, Groesbeck
Cameron Crow	College Baptist Church, Big Spring
Judson Frazier	First Baptist Church, Fruitvale
Tara Kimball	First Baptist Church, Colmesneil
Charlie Robinson	Fellowship Baptist Church, Athens
Darrell Vang	Unity Point Church, Plano

PARLIAMENTARIANS

Al Gage	Convention Parliamentary
Terry Wright	First Baptist Church, Vidor

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

2021-2022 Chair: Andy Hill, Mobberly Baptist Church, Longview
Term Expiring 2024

Beaux Hinote	First Baptist Church, Justin
Chris Kouba	United City Church, Humble
Roland Tureaud	Harvest Fellowship Baptist Church, DeSoto

In McAllen, pastor sees image of God in every person



A new generation at First Baptist Church in McAllen is being trained to carry on the task of getting the gospel to the nations. PHOTOS SUBMITTED

By Erin Roach
TEXAN Correspondent

MCALLEN First Baptist Church in McAllen has a closeup look at the border crisis, and Steven Gaither, the church's pastor, said despite the challenges, "we are still called to see the image of God in every person."

"How do you help hold the line for what is right and legal, and how do you also love your neighbor as yourself? How do you function as the Good Samaritan?" Gaither said. "I think that's part of the unique challenge that's here on the border."

In some churches in the Rio Grande Valley, border patrol agents worship alongside first generation immigrants, Gaither said. Some immigrants in a congregation may have gone through the proper channels, he said, while others may not have.

"It's really heartbreaking because we know the rules of our country, and we are for them, and we want things to be done in an organized manner, but we also know there's a face of desperation that is the immigration crisis and that many people are fleeing from horrific situations, and they're looking for help," Gaither told the TEXAN.

On a recent flight to Dallas-Fort Worth, Gaither estimated 60 percent of his plane was filled with people seeking asylum being flown to different locations.

"What I noticed on that flight was a lot of young families with young children, and everyone looked scared—like they'd never been on a plane before, and they didn't know where they were going," Gaither said.

The pastor felt compassion for the people on the plane and couldn't imagine their stories.

"It's really easy to lump everybody into the same category and demonize people and their motives, but it's different when you look into a child's face, when you look into a scared mama's face, when you look into a young man's eyes and you realize this guy is desperate and he doesn't know what to do," Gaither said.

First Baptist McAllen, which began in 1908, has a long history of strong Cooperative Program support and has sent countless missionaries throughout the world through the years, Gaither said. They have also worked with missionaries just across the Mexican border to minister to people hoping to enter the United States.

"You'll have groups of people who have kind of migrated toward the border from southern Mexico, and they're right here at the Texas border, but for whatever reason, in a sense they get stuck there and they kind of form their own communities," Gaither said.

Missionaries and churches are able to provide food, clothing and education to people in those groups, whereas once they've crossed the border into McAllen, many are in holding facilities that aren't as easily accessible for ministry.

As believers follow the border crisis in the media, Gaither hopes they'll consider that only a partial picture is conveyed.

"These are complex situations, and real people are involved in them on both



Giving through the Cooperative Program is an investment First Baptist Church in McAllen wants to make until Jesus comes back, pastor Steven Gaither said.

"IT'S REALLY HEARTBREAKING BECAUSE WE KNOW THE RULES OF OUR COUNTRY, AND WE ARE FOR THEM, AND WE WANT THINGS TO BE DONE IN AN ORGANIZED MANNER, BUT WE ALSO KNOW THERE'S A FACE OF DESPERATION THAT IS THE IMMIGRATION CRISIS AND THAT MANY PEOPLE ARE FLEEING FROM HORRIFIC SITUATIONS, AND THEY'RE LOOKING FOR HELP."

—STEVEN GAITHER, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN MCALLEN

sides—those who are trying to enforce the laws and those who are sometimes even completely unaware of the laws," Gaither said.

"Just understand that we should be stirred up to love and good works. We should be stirred up to pray for these situations. When you're in your community—it doesn't matter where you are in the U.S. or across Texas—as you watch people, it's probably not a long shot that you're interacting with somebody who is a first generation American or may be in your community for the very first time, and there may be an opportunity to share the gospel with them," Gaither said.

Sometimes people lose the ability to see others as humans, the pastor said, but most people have the same emotions, the same concerns for their families and for their well-being, no matter what country they're from, what their heart language is or what color of skin they have.

"A bottle of water goes a long way," Gaither said, offering an idea for how to start a connection.

Despite the border crisis, despite COVID and despite a revitalization period at the church, the Great Commission, the great commandment and the great challenge of Acts 1:8 have remained pillars at First Baptist McAllen, Gaither said.

"We understand the deep history of Cooperative Program giving here at this church. To me, knowing its history, this church has said, 'No matter what has changed in the world, we absolutely believe that co-operating together to spread the gospel to the nations is a high priority, if not the highest priority.'

"... I think there's a long history of this church saying, 'We can't do this by ourselves, but as we cooperate with other churches from all over the place that we may never interact with, we believe that we're investing in the gospel, and that's an investment we want to make until Jesus comes back.'" ❧



At First Baptist Church in McAllen, the border crisis is local news, and the pastor urges people to see the image of God in everyone. Worship is joyful.

En McAllen, el pastor ve la imagen de Dios en cada persona

Por Erin Roach
Corresponsal del TEXAN

MCALLEN La Primera Iglesia Bautista en McAllen ve de cerca la crisis fronteriza, y Steven Gaither, el pastor de la iglesia, dijo que, a pesar de los desafíos, “todavía estamos llamados a ver la imagen de Dios en cada persona.”

“¿Cómo usted ayuda a definir una línea entre lo que es correcto y legal?, y a la misma vez, ¿cómo puede amar a su prójimo como a usted mismo? ¿Cómo podemos obrar como el buen samaritano?” dijo el pastor Gaither. “Creo que eso es parte del desafío único que hay aquí en la frontera.”

En algunas iglesias del Valle del Río Grande, los agentes de la patrulla fronteriza celebran un culto junto a inmigrantes de primera generación, dijo el pastor Gaither. Algunos inmigrantes en una congregación pueden haber pasado por los canales adecuados, dijo, mientras que otros pueden no haberlo hecho.

“Es realmente desgarrador porque conocemos las reglas de nuestro país, y estamos a favor de ellas, y queremos que las cosas se hagan de manera organizada; pero también sabemos que hay una cara de desesperación que es la crisis de la inmigración. Por la cual muchas personas están huyendo de situaciones horribles y están buscando ayuda”, dijo el pastor Gaither al TEXAN.

En un vuelo reciente a Dallas-Fort Worth, el pastor Gaither estimó que el 60 por ciento de su avión estaba lleno de personas que buscaban asilo y que eran trasladadas a diferentes lugares.

“Lo que noté en ese vuelo fue un montón de familias jóvenes con niños pequeños y todos parecían asustados como si nunca hubieran estado en un avión antes, y no sabían a dónde iban”, dijo Gaither.

El pastor sintió compasión por la gente del avión y no podía imaginar sus historias.

“Es muy fácil meter a todo el mundo en la misma categoría y demonizar a la gente y sus motivos, pero es diferente cuando miras la cara de un niño, cuando miras la cara de una madre asustada, cuando miras los ojos de un joven y te das cuenta de que esa persona está desesperada y no sabe qué hacer”, dijo el pastor Gaither.

La Primera Iglesia Bautista de McAllen, que comenzó en 1908, tiene una larga y fuerte trayectoria de apoyo al Programa Cooperativo y ha enviado innumerables misioneros en diferentes partes del mundo a través de los años, dijo el pastor Gaither. También han trabajado con misioneros al otro lado de la frontera mexicana para ministrar a las personas que esperan entrar en los Estados Unidos.

“Hay grupos de personas que han emigrado hacia la frontera desde el sur de México, y están aquí en la frontera de Texas, pero por alguna razón, en cierto sentido se quedan atrapados allí y forman sus propias comunidades”, dijo el pastor Gaither.

Los misioneros y las iglesias pueden proporcionar alimentos, ropa y educación a las personas de esos grupos, mientras que una vez que han cruzado la frontera hacia McAllen, muchos se encuentran en instalaciones



First Baptist Church in McAllen is in a revitalization phase, but the church has a long history of strong Cooperative Program support, remaining committed to missions no matter what.



The church provides many opportunities for families and kids to grow spiritually.

“ES REALMENTE DESGARRADOR PORQUE CONOCEMOS LAS REGLAS DE NUESTRO PAÍS, Y ESTAMOS A FAVOR DE ELLAS, Y QUEREMOS QUE LAS COSAS SE HAGAN DE MANERA ORGANIZADA; PERO TAMBIÉN SABEMOS QUE HAY UNA CARA DE DESESPERACIÓN QUE ES LA CRISIS DE LA INMIGRACIÓN.

—STEVEN GAITHER, LA PRIMERA IGLESIA BAUTISTA EN MCALLEN

de detención que no son tan fácilmente accesibles para el ministerio.

Mientras los creyentes siguen la crisis fronteriza por medio de los medios de comunicación, el pastor Gaither espera que ellos consideren que en los medios sólo se transmite una imagen parcial de lo que realmente allí ocurre.

“Estas son situaciones complejas y hay personas reales involucradas en ellas en ambos lados: por un lado, están los que están tratando de hacer cumplir las leyes y en el otro está los que a veces incluso desconocen por completo las leyes”, dijo el pastor Gaither.

“Sólo hay que entender que debemos ser incitados al amor y a las buenas obras. Deberíamos animarnos a orar por estas situaciones. Cuando estás en tu comunidad, no importa en qué parte de los Estados Unidos o en Texas te encuentres,

mientras observas a la gente, probablemente no es casualidad que estés interactuando con alguien que es de primera generación estadounidense o que puede estar en tu comunidad por primera vez, y que ésta sea una oportunidad para compartir el evangelio con ellos”, dijo el pastor Gaither.

A veces la gente pierde la capacidad de ver a los demás como seres humanos, dijo el pastor, pero la mayoría de las personas tienen las mismas emociones, las mismas preocupaciones por sus familias y por su bienestar, sin importar de qué país son, cuál es su idioma natal o qué color de piel tienen.

“Un simple gesto de ofrecer una botella de agua puede llegar muy lejos”, dijo el pastor Gaither, compartiendo una idea de cómo iniciar una conexión.

A pesar de la crisis fronteriza, a pesar de COVID y a pesar de un periodo de re-

vitalización en la iglesia, la Gran Comisión, el gran mandamiento y el gran desafío de Hechos 1:8 han permanecido como pilares en la Primera Iglesia Bautista de McAllen, dijo el pastor Gaither.

“Entendemos la profunda historia de las donaciones del Programa Cooperativo aquí en esta iglesia. Para mí, conociendo su historia, esta iglesia ha dicho: ‘No importa lo que haya cambiado en el mundo, creemos absolutamente que cooperar juntos para difundir el evangelio a las naciones es una alta prioridad, si no la más alta.’

“... Creo que hay una larga historia de esta iglesia que dice: ‘No podemos hacer esto por nosotros mismos, pero al cooperar con otras iglesias en todo el mundo con las que tal vez nunca interactuemos, creemos que estamos invirtiendo en el evangelio, y esa es una inversión que queremos hacer hasta que Cristo regrese’.”



Children are important at First Baptist McAllen.

HARMONY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Too many pastors “believe in the authority of sufficiency of Scripture” but “are too cowardly to apply it” on the subject of race, said Kevin Smith, pastor of Family Church Village in South Florida and former executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

“The pulpit must teach and apply,” Smith said. “And some folks are just weak on application—not because they don’t know where the text is going but because they are scared.”

Intentionality in discipleship

Charles Grant, executive director of African American relations and mobilization for the SBC Executive Committee, said biblical discipleship is essential to confronting racism. Quoting a fellow pastor, Grant said, “We need to be intentional about discipling out racism.”

“We disciple small groups on all kinds of topics,” Grant said. “But for some reason, our discipleship small groups don’t include discipleship dealing with the issue of racism. ... Why aren’t we equipping our people to deal with it?”

Christians, he said, are “called to deny ourselves daily, take up our cross and follow him.”

“Whenever we put ourselves, our own agenda, our own desires, above Christ, then we begin to be splintered,” Grant said.

David Tan Mai, pastor of Kirkwood Church in Houston, agreed and added, “When we deny ourselves, we see our brother and sister the same.”

David Gifford, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky., noted that pastors often deliver holiday-themed sermons. Including Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a time to discuss racism from a biblical perspective could be helpful in promoting understanding of racial issues, he said.

“What greater time than when our nation sets aside that day for Martin Luther King’s birthday for White churches to talk about the sin of racism and to talk about steps to racial reconciliation?” said Gifford, who is Anglo. “We need bold Anglo pastors to stand up and say in those particular moments, ‘Hey let’s address this.’”

Dialogue needed

The panelists took questions from the audience and discussed a multitude of other issues, including the need for one-on-one dialogue on the topic of race.

“Dialogue is difficult because sometimes we come into dialogue just like the world,” Smith said.

Many times, he said, individuals enter a conversation with a worldly desire to “win” the debate instead of the goal being to learn, grow and reconcile.

“Dialogue is difficult if we don’t come in with New Testament principles of love, graciousness, patience, long-suffering,” Smith said.

Group discussions about race, Grant said, are best if they include only a small number of people.

“When you keep it small, people tend to let their guards down a little bit better, especially when they have a relationship they’ve built with you,” he said.

Gifford encouraged his Anglo friends to be open to learning.



Tony Mathews moderated the panel on racial harmony which included L-R Kevin Smith, David Tan Mai, Nelson Fonseca, Charles Grant and David Gifford. PHOTO BY CALEB LASATER

DIALOGUE IS DIFFICULT IF WE DON’T COME IN WITH NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES OF LOVE, GRACIOUSNESS, PATIENCE, LONG-SUFFERING.

—KEVIN SMITH, PASTOR OF FAMILY CHURCH VILLAGE IN SOUTH FLORIDA

BUT FOR SOME REASON, OUR DISCIPLESHIP SMALL GROUPS DON’T INCLUDE DISCIPLESHIP DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF RACISM. ... WHY AREN’T WE EQUIPPING OUR PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH IT?

—DAVID GIFFORD, PASTOR OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN BOWLING GREEN, KY.

MY HOPE IS THAT WHEN WE HAVE DISCUSSIONS ADDRESSING RACE THAT WE WILL LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER AND BE ABLE TO DISCUSS OUR DIFFERENCES WITH CIVILITY AND CELEBRATE OUR DISTINCTIONS IN CHRIST.

—TONY MATHEWS, SBTC MISSIONAL MINISTRIES

“[Anglos] have a content oblivion to what’s going on with other cultures, and we are happy to be content in our prosperity and not deal with difficult questions,” he said.

Gifford referenced a regular discussion he had with a Black friend about race when he was in his 20s. The conversation was “uncomfortable” at the beginning but “was always under the guise of, ‘We were dear friends.’”

“And because of my dear friend, I was willing to listen. And I was willing to alter. And I think that has to be the first thing,” Gifford said.

Some Christians, Smith said, are guided more by the culture than by Scripture.

“Are we not being shaped by the character of Jesus Christ?” he asked. “Sometimes, especially in some of these culture-warring things, we have people who mock the character of Jesus Christ, who mock humility. ... How in the world can we mock the character of Christ and not expect to be grieving and quenching the Spirit—which totally leaves us powerless?”

Some church members, Gifford said, “rely way too much on sources of information that are not biblical or not scriptural and that are not led by the Holy Spirit.”

“That drives us in our conversations with others” about race, Gifford said.

On politics and CRT

The panelists also discussed politics. Smith urged Christians to practice grace and humility when talking about party-line topics.

“Give individuals the dignity of being able to think and articulate that thought,” he said.

Bemoaning dialogue about the 2016 election, Smith said, the dialogue too often was wrongly simplified as: “If you liked Clinton, then you love abortion. If you like Trump, then you’re racist.”

“[But] if you sit down and talk to people ... most of them are a little more complex, or a little more different than that,” he said. “You could have dyed-in-the-wool Democrats or Republicans who don’t think anything about race or abortion.”

Such simplifications, he said, are “tremendously hurtful for dialogue.”

The panelists also briefly discussed Critical Race Theory (CRT).

“I came from Nicaragua, which was a socialist country. I lived through it. I know what socialism is like,” said Nelson Fonseca, from New Life Church in Dallas. “I’m going to be honest—what CRT brings is that type of division. It is not helping us to unite. It is making it worse.”

Smith encouraged Baptists to read American history to learn more

about the history of minorities in the United States. He added that he read a book recently to learn more about Asian life in the U.S.

“There’s nothing that CRT is purporting that Frederick Douglass and other people weren’t saying in the 19th century,” Smith said. “You need to learn about the plight of black people in the U.S. if you are ignorant of it. And we’re all ignorant of what we don’t know.”

Tony Mathews, who moderated the panel and who serves as senior strategist over missional ministries for the SBTC, said the panelists demonstrated how dialogue should look among Christians.

“My hope is that when we have discussions addressing race that we will learn more about each other and be able to discuss our differences with civility and celebrate our distinctions in Christ,” Mathews said. “The multi-ethnic panelists did a great job addressing questions and issues that many people are discussing at their dinner tables. I also hope that these panel discussions will remind us that though our skin color may be different, we have more in common than not. I’m hoping that everyone who viewed it will be reminded that together we can accomplish much more for our Lord.”



The church emphasizes ministry through various sports and activities such as archery, dance, fitness, even boxing. PHOTOS SUBMITTED

DEL RIO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

He was musical. She was artistic. Their 10-year-old daughter Bethany had already earned a black belt in Taekwondo, a Korean martial art whose name means “the right way of using all parts of the body to stop fights and help to build a better and more peaceful world,” according to the Olympic website teamusa.com. Jim Wilson also was a black belt.

“We started inviting people to attend Taekwondo classes,” Wilson told the TEXAN. “The church came out of those classes, each of which had a Bible component attached. It was an outreach that brought people in, led them to the Lord and brought them to the church.

“That’s how it started,” Wilson continued. “We just kept developing the idea of using the gifts God gave us to reach others, always incorporating the Bible into whatever we did.”

Taekwondo soon led to Esperanza Community Church. Plan A was to have two services, in English and Spanish, but those attending said they wanted English-only, to help adults learn what their offspring were learning in school. Ministries started, expanded and the church

“
**WE JUST KEPT
DEVELOPING THE IDEA
OF USING THE GIFTS
GOD GAVE US TO REACH
OTHERS, ALWAYS
INCORPORATING
THE BIBLE INTO
WHATEVER WE DID.**
”

—JIM WILSON

grew. That led to a combining of forces in 2018 with First Baptist Church of Del Rio and its pastor, Jesse Rodriguez.

“Our desire is to lead people to Christ,” Wilson said. “Many of our programs have lost people in them, and those who know Christ we want to continue discipling. We want the people we reach to know everything we do, we do to the glory of God.

“Creativity is something God gave us,” the pastor continued. “Because a lot of folks misused it, many churches set it aside. We use it to bring glory to God.”

The border town two-church merger invigorated all its members, Wilson said, which led to a multiplication of ministries and effectiveness. Most recently, that led to the

opening of church dorms originally designed for mission teams on their way to Mexico, to be used by out-of-town law enforcement onsite to manage the unprecedented influx of thousands of illegal immigrants, many from Haiti.

The church now known as Esperanza First Del Rio more typically focuses on its community, the 35,000 residents of Del Rio plus illegal migrants passing through, as well as the growing number watching its services online, which adds to the 250 actively engaged members physically attending Sunday morning worship.

Reclaiming the arts: a family affair

For the Wilson family, creative church engagement is a must.

Marsha Wilson oversees the Reclaiming the Arts umbrella ministry that involves music, dance and Taekwondo. She also helps write scripts and sews costumes for the church’s annual “Christmas with a Capital C” program.

The couple’s daughters left home to further their education. They’re all now back.

Bethany helps her dad lead Taekwondo for children as young as three. Bethany, with a degree in music composition, also serves as the worship assistant and leads the team musically.

Ashley, with a certificate in early childhood development, oversees the many volunteers involved with Heritage Ministries, which covers every aspect of children’s ministries from birth through the fifth grade.

Rebekah, who trained in New York City, leads the church’s dance ministry component, which includes ballet, tap, jazz, swing and other forms of dance.

“The Lord just brought everything together,” Jim Wilson said. “As the Lord developed our daughters, he brought them back here. He gave us the property and space and music and dance, but without having solid, grounded Christian artists to help, we would not be able to do it properly.

“Our mission with Reclaiming the Arts is to provide a godly environment for learning and practicing the arts while promoting biblical virtues,” the pastor continued. “Our vision is to be a center for impacting the border region and beyond with the hope of Christ.”

Multiple ministries

The list of Esperanza First’s regular activities—each inspired by talented members like the Wilsons—could eclipse that of a church four times its size. Each ministry

involves an outreach to the community, including archery, Awanas and homeschool enrichment. The Contenders Boxing Club for middle school and high school students is led by Pastor Jesse Rodriguez. The church offers summer camps for dance and for Taekwondo.

Other ministries include providing food, showers and laundry service on Fridays—or upon request—for the homeless. In partnership with the city’s 40 or so churches, Esperanza First also assists in ministry to illegal immigrants in cooperation with the city.

In addition, Del Rio authorities call Esperanza First when a family has been quarantined because of COVID. Members then take groceries to those isolated.

Small groups are a mainstay

“
**WE HAVE A LOT OF
NEW PEOPLE NEITHER
CONGREGATION HAD
BEFORE. THEY’RE
GROWING IN THEIR
FAITH, AND THEY’RE
SERVING. TO GOD
BE THE GLORY.**
”

—JIM WILSON

of adult ministries at Esperanza First Del Rio, where “doing life together” helps build friendships, discipleship and accountability. Adults also have fitness, kickboxing and painting groups, as leaders with those skills have joined the congregation.

In addition to its support of missions through the Cooperative Program, Esperanza First Del Rio has ministered in Uganda, Philippines, East Asia and Mexico. The church helps support a family serving through CRU at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. They also provide support for NAMB church plants in El Paso, Fort Worth and British Columbia.

“We have multiplied beyond what we each had,” said Wilson, referring to the merger. “We have a lot of new people neither congregation had before. They’re growing in their faith, and they’re serving. To God be the glory.” ✠



The church’s Contenders Boxing Club provides another means of sport and outreach.



The pastors pray for their community and church, which emphasizes engagement through both creative and athletic ministries.

Pro-life policies under attack at federal level

By Tom Strode
Baptist Press

WASHINGTON Abortion-rights advocates are pressing for the rollback of pro-life policies through all three branches of the federal government.

Supporters of abortion rights succeeded in the executive branch on Oct. 4 when the Biden administration announced the repeal of a Trump-era rule that prohibited family planning funds for Planned Parenthood and other organizations that perform or promote abortions.

The effort to rescind federal or state pro-life measures also includes:

A Democratic-led campaign, especially in the House of Representatives, to exclude from a massive budget reconciliation bill the long-standing Hyde Amendment, which bars federal funds in Medicaid and other programs from paying for abortions.

Committee hearings in both the Senate and House that attacked the Supreme Court's willingness to allow a Texas ban on abortion when a fetal heartbeat can be detected to go onto effect Sept. 1.

A return by an abortion provider to the high court in an effort to persuade the justices to intervene before a federal appeals court rules on the Texas heartbeat law.

"Some proponents of abortion once characterized it as 'safe, legal, and rare,' but now the U.S. House of Representatives, along with the Biden administration, are advocating for abortion on demand and, disturbingly, the use of federal funds to pay for it," said Chelsea Sobolik, director of public policy for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "It should grieve our consciences to see such radical steps being made to expand abortion access across our nation."

President Biden had instructed the Department of Health and Human Services in January to consider immediately whether to restore Title X eligibility for abortion providers. HHS issued a proposed rule in April to do just that and finalized it Oct. 4 after more than 180,000 public comments were received.

The new rule rescinded the Trump administration's 2019 Protect Life Rule, which banned the use of Title X money "to perform, promote, refer for, or support abortion as a method of family planning." The Protect Life Rule required "clear financial and physical separation" between Title X programs and non-Title X programs in which abortion is promoted as a method of family planning.

"Taxpayer funds should not be used to subsidize an industry that preys on women and their unborn children," said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, in a written statement. "Supplementing the abortion industry through taxpayer funds is offensive to tens of millions of Americans."

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) applauded the HHS action, which will benefit its affiliates.

"Given the attacks on abortion in Texas and across the country, it's more important than ever that patients can access their choice of birth control and other health care through Title X—and that it is easily available," PPFA President Alexis McGill Johnson said in a written release.

Nearly all Democrats in Congress are promoting a \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation bill without the Hyde Amendment, which reached its 45th anniversary since enactment Sept. 30. The ERLC and other pro-life organizations have urged members of Congress to re-



store to the legislation Hyde and other measures that prohibit abortion funding.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, told CNN Oct. 3 she will not support the reconciliation bill if it includes Hyde.

In the evenly divided Senate, however, Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., has given pro-lifers hope by saying he will not support the measure if Hyde is absent. The reconciliation bill will require only a majority, rather than the typical 60 votes, for passage.

"Hyde's going to be on," Manchin told National Review Sept. 29. "It has to be. It has to be. That's dead on arrival if that's gone."

Sobolik expressed her gratitude for Manchin and "others who are willing to protect the longstanding and life-saving Hyde Amendment. We must continue to oppose pro-abortion regulations or legislation and work towards a day when abortion is unnecessary and unthinkable, and every pre-born baby is protected."

The ERLC was among 60 national and state groups whose leaders signed onto a Sept. 7 letter that asked the Senate and House to make sure the reconciliation bill does not support taxpayer funds for abortion.

In June, messengers to

the SBC's annual meeting passed a resolution that denounced any attempt to rescind the Hyde Amendment and urged the retention of all pro-life "riders," which must be approved each year in spending bills.

It is estimated Hyde has saved the lives of about 2.5 million unborn children. The amendment has exceptions for a threat to the mother's life, as well as rape and incest.

Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Oversight and Reform Committee criticized the Supreme Court's action on the Texas heartbeat ban in hearings Sept. 29 and 30, respectively.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., House Oversight and Reform Committee chair, said in her panel's hearing, according to a written statement, that states—with the Supreme Court's assistance—"are bulldozing right through [constitutional rights]. We must take bold action to protect and expand abortion care rights and access."

The Supreme Court denied an emergency request to block the Texas law in a Sept. 1 order. The justices in the majority said their action "is not based on any conclusion about the constitutionality of Texas's law."

The law is unusual in that

it bars any government official from enforcing the ban but authorizes a private citizen to bring a civil lawsuit against someone who performs an abortion prohibited by the measure or assists in the performance of such a procedure. Under the law, a court is to award at least \$10,000 to a successful plaintiff.

Whole Woman's Health requested Sept. 23 that the high court hear oral arguments in December on its challenge to Texas' atypical approach to enforcing the heartbeat ban. The abortion provider urged the justices to rule before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans issues a decision, partly because the law is unconstitutional.

In another case, the Supreme Court has agreed to rule in this term on a Mississippi law that prohibits the abortion of an unborn child whose gestational age is more than 15 weeks. The justices will hear oral arguments in the case Dec. 1.

The ERLC and other pro-life organizations, as well as the state of Mississippi, have urged the high court to reverse the 1973 Roe v. Wade opinion and the 1992 Planned Parenthood v. Casey ruling, which prohibit states from banning abortions before an unborn child is viable. ❧



Earn **2.25% APY**
for a **21-month term**
& maximize your ministry's impact

Learn more at
sbtexasfoundation.com/promo

Open an account with as little as \$2,500. Promotional rate available through 11/30/21. Church Expansion Certificate investments are available to Texas churches and ministries.



Two Baptists you should know better

By Gary Ledbetter
Editor

O.S. Hawkins has found a good story to tell, and he tells it eagerly. *In the Name of God* is the tale of two pastors, two churches and the mythology that rose up around them. George W. Truett and J. Frank Norris pastored the largest churches in the world in the early 20th century—First Baptist Dallas and First Baptist Fort Worth.

Though there were some similarities in their stories, the men were a study in contrasts. Both men were pragmatic in significant ways; Truett was more subtle in his efforts to impact Southern Baptists beyond his church. Truett also worked from within the convention; Norris was very much the outsider and gadfly for the latter half of his ministry.

Hawkins is particularly engaged in telling this story. He is a native of Fort Worth whose father was saved under Norris’ ministry. He was called to ministry

in a church heavily influenced by the membership that scattered from First Fort Worth after the death of their legendary pastor. Hawkins also pastored First Baptist Dallas and preached a memorable sermon at W.A. Criswell’s funeral. The author also seems to enjoy twisting the tails of those who know a little and assume a lot about the two giants among earlier Texas Southern Baptists.

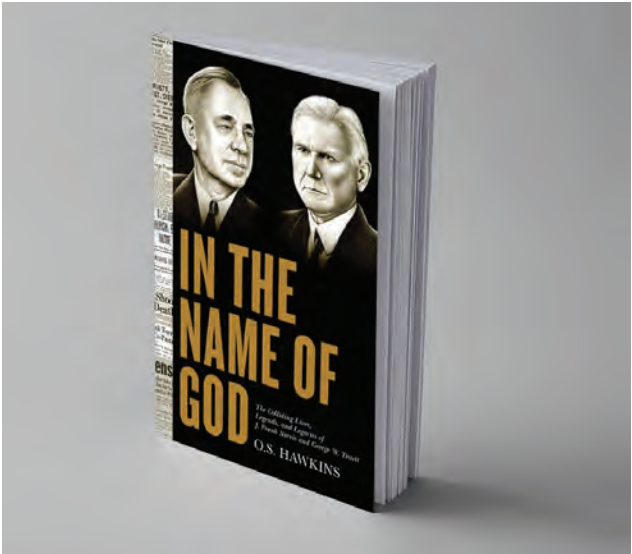
Without stealing any more of Hawkins’ thunder, two things struck me as I read this engaging book. First, men are more complex than the myths that grow up around them. The most popular Baptist histories draw Truett as larger, and more perfect, than life. Though brilliant, sincere and godly in his ministry, the pastor in Dallas was capable of being petty and manipulative when provoked. Though combative and sensational, Norris was more effective, compassionate and honest than those same histories acknowledge. This book straightens some of that mythology without scorning either legendary pastor.

Second, a great man’s legacy is often different than he dreams. Truett was a builder, Hawkins says, and as such supported the

“
THE AUTHOR ALSO SEEMS TO ENJOY TWISTING THE TAILS OF THOSE WHO KNOW A LITTLE AND ASSUME A LOT ABOUT THE TWO GIANTS AMONG EARLIER TEXAS SOUTHERN BAPTISTS.
”

status quo for its own sake when controversy arose. This bore sweet and bitter fruit even decades after his death. Norris lost most of the denominational battles he fought but was vindicated in some ways by the success of the Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence he did not live to see.

Most readers will be surprised to know of the innovations that began in the Fort Worth megachurch. The originality and evangelistic power of Norris’ ministry was a revelation to me. The pathos of Truett’s darkest personal moment, though known to me,



is explained to have a deep impact on his later ministry. You likely know that both men were involved in deadly shootings. Hawkins’ book explains both of those more clearly than I have previously heard.

The story of Baptists in Texas is full of colorful characters and has filled books in efforts to tell the story and its modern outgrowth. This story is of the transition between the second generation of significant leaders, dominated by B.H. Carroll, and the third generation, the framers of what Baptists would be for the next century—men like L.R. Scarborough, and yes, George W. Truett and J. Frank Norris. Scarbor-

ough and Truett are rightly known for some of the important infrastructure they provided for the generation to come. Norris, true to his view of the denomination he saw from the outside, left his most significant marks on the churches that make up our Baptist fellowship.

If you know a little about Truett and Norris, you’ll learn something you haven’t heard and maybe understand something you’ve misunderstood. I found *In the Name of God* an enjoyable way to learn more about two men who made a difference for good in our Southern Baptist Convention. (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 213 pages, \$29.99) ☞

COVID claims, inflation impact medical rates for 2022

By Roy Hayhurst
GuideStone

DALLAS The year 2021 has witnessed hospitals and ICUs filled to capacity, increased claims related to COVID-19 testing and care, significant increases in pharmacy claims, as well as additional care that was delayed due to COVID-19 isolation in 2020. All have contributed to driving insurance rates to rise for 2022 throughout the United States.

That has set the stage for increases in costs for GuideStone health plans, as well. While some will experience little to no increase, health plan participants will see an average increase of 5.7 percent in group health plans and 8.0 percent in personal plans.

“We’ve been working diligently for a number of years to provide health coverage at the most affordable rates possible,” GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said. “GuideStone’s health plans

receive no Cooperative Program funding—the plan pays all claims out of the premiums charged by the plan. This means the higher the claims experience, the higher future premiums. With significant headwinds from our participants’ claims experience going up this year coupled with the general inflation in the medical marketplace, our team continues to work diligently to offer medical plans that meet the needs of pastors and church and ministry workers.”

To help healthy pastors and their families who want protection from larger claims, GuideStone previously introduced its Secure Health 3000 plan to offer true medical coverage at pricing similar to health sharing organizations. This year, GuideStone added another plan, Secure Health 8000, which offers additional cost savings while requiring additional cost-sharing from participants in those plans.

For information on reducing health care costs with Secure Health 8000 protection plans, visit [Guidestone.org](https://www.guidestone.org) and select either Individual or Organization and choose “Insurance.”

Chu Soh, who joined GuideStone as chief insurance officer last year, has tasked his team with reviewing and aggressively researching expanded opportunities for additional products and services that will offer cost savings in 2022 and beyond.

“We believe that a healthy body of Christ is free to transform the world,” Soh said. “We are committed to doing our part to make sure we offer options that fit the budget needs of churches within the framework of running the plan effectively for the participants in the program. This has been a tough couple of years for pastors and churches with COVID restrictions limiting meetings and pastors contending with the deaths of



members. The increased stress and isolation pastors have experienced have led to additional mental health diagnoses and treatment. With those diagnoses, it has doubled their uses of other kinds of health care.

“Stress is affecting both the physical and emotional well-being of pastors. There is a high correlation between mental and emotional health and medical utilization. At GuideStone, we want our pastors to be well so they can do well. Addressing these mental and physical ailments is a good first step. Eating right, getting proper rest and exercise will help as pastors work to keep both their mental and physical health in check.”

GuideStone continues to look at innovative solutions for delivering best-in-class, quality health care coverage for its participants.

“We continue to be committed to providing health plans that reflect the values of those we serve—for example, not covering abortions or abortion-causing drugs—at the lowest price possible,” Soh said. “We will continue to keep our focus on innovative health plan options and finding more options at price points so that every church and ministry can take care of their pastors and staff.”

Rate notification letters are going out and should have been received by most participants by mid-October. ☞

Church Positions

PASTOR

♦ FBC Gun Barrel City is seeking a conservative FT pastor. Email resume to ministriesassistant@fbcgbc.org.
♦ West End BC in Beaumont is seeking a FT or bi-vocational pastor. Financially secure, loving congregation of 50 average attendance, traditional worship service. We are affiliated with the SBTC. Send resume to webcbeaumont@gmail.com.

MUSIC

♦ FBC Vidor is looking for a FT minister of music to promote and lead the music ministry of both the contemporary and traditional worship services. Email resumes to klem@fbcvidor.org.
♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT worship minister with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is a domestic and international church planting network. Other cities are available. Please email a video of you leading worship to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

♦ Westside BC in Corsicana is accepting resumes for a PT music minister for Sunday morning and evening. Email resume to westside.church@sbcglobal.net or mail to Westside Baptist Church, 1522 N 24th St, Corsicana, TX 75110.
♦ Northwest Hills BC in San Antonio is searching for a PT music leader to lead a blended service on Sunday mornings, Wednesday evenings and special occasions. Send a cover letter and resume to personnel@nwhbc.org or NWHBC, 6585 Heath Rd, San Antonio, TX 78250.
♦ College Avenue BC in Levelland seeks a PT worship minister to lead blended worship services for a small congregation. Weekly salary and housing will be provided. Send resume to brian@cabclelland.org.
♦ Audubon Park BC in Garland is searching for a PT worship leader to lead a blended worship service for a small congregation. Please email resume to apbcstaff@att.net or mail to Audubon Park Baptist Church, PO Box 495277, Garland, TX 75049-5277.

STUDENTS

♦ FBC Gun Barrel City is seeking a conservative PT or FT youth minister. Send resume to ministriesassistant@fbcgbc.org.
♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT student pastor with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

COMBINATION

♦ Tanglewood BC in Jasper is searching for a FT youth and children's pastor. We have a huge mission field of unreached children and youth who need Jesus. Must have an evangelistic heart and be able to lead youth and children to be disciples who make disciples. Please email resume to tanglewoodbc@gmail.com.
♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT kids and family minister with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic

church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

OTHER

♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT lead planter with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is a domestic and international church planting network. Other cities are available. Please email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.
♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT pastor of community engage-

ment with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.
♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT pastor of spiritual development with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

Paid Classifieds

♦ Sandia Baptist Church in beautiful Albuquerque (SandiaBaptist.org) is searching for a FT minister of worship arts. Terrific staff and church. Competitive salary and benefits based on experience. Blended worship style with a vocal team and praise band. Wonderful facilities. Send resumes to rcooksey@sandiabaptist.org.
♦ First Baptist Church in Ruston, LA is seeking a FT college minister. The applicant needs to be passionate about college students and seeing life changes in those students. We are located within 5 miles of two colleges. Send resume to Ed Colvin at ed@fbcruston.org.



WEEK OF PRAYER
NOVEMBER 28-DECEMBER 5

imb.org/lottie

WMU imb IMB is supported by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program. Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® is a registered trademark of WMU®. W181001 • ENGLISH

SPEAKING THE
+TRUTH
IN LOVE
CONFERENCE 2022
JANUARY 21-23
PREPARED FOR SUFFERING

RICHARD CALDWELL JOHN MACARTHUR (STREAM)
PAUL WASHER H.B. CHARLES JR.

STEVEN LAWSON PAUL LAMEY VIRGIL WALKER OWEN STRACHAN DARRELL HARRISON LANCE QUINN PHIL JOHNSON

REGISTER AT: TRUTHINLOVE.ORG

FOUNDERS
BAPTIST CHURCH

WALKING IN
GRACE

Supreme Court sets Dec. 1 for challenge to Roe v. Wade



The U.S. Supreme Court has set Dec. 1 for the date it will hear oral arguments in a major abortion case that could lead to the undermining or overturning of Roe v. Wade.

The case involves a Mississippi law that prohibits abortion after 15 weeks, although it contains exceptions for medical emergencies and fetal abnormality. In passing the law, the Mississippi legislature said most abortions after 15 weeks use a “barbaric” practice that involves instruments “to crush and tear the unborn child apart before removing the pieces of the dead child from the womb.” Within the medical realm, such a procedure is called a dilation and

evacuation abortion.

The Supreme Court said it will limit oral arguments to one question: Are all laws restricting pre-viability abortions unconstitutional?

Mississippi, though, has asked the high court to overturn Roe v. Wade, the infamous 1973 decision that legalized abortion in all 50 states.

Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch said she is “looking forward to the opportunity” to “present our case.”

“The Court has acknowledged that states have the authority to promote legitimate interests, including protecting women’s health and defending life; but its abortion precedents have denied the people

and their elected leaders the ability to fully do so,” Fitch said. “In fact, the Roe decision shackles states to a view of facts that is decades old, such that while science, medicine, technology, and culture have all rapidly progressed since 1973, duly enacted laws on abortion are unable to keep up.”

The high court has the opportunity, she said, to “return decision-making about abortion policy to the elected leaders and allow the people to empower women and promote life.”

Mississippi Solicitor General Scott Stewart is expected to argue the case before the court.

—TEXAN

Scientists: ‘Catastrophic’ meteor 4,000 years ago may have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah



Scientists in the Middle East say a meteor that destroyed an area in modern Tall el-Hamman, Jordan, nearly 4,000 years ago may have been what the Old Testament was referencing in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction.

The scientists, writing in the journal *Nature* in September, say they uncovered evidence of a “highly unusual catastrophic event” that took place 3,600 years ago and left a “charcoal-rich destruction layer.” The event, they wrote, would have “demolished and pulverized mudbrick walls across the city, leveling the city, and causing extensive human mortality.”

Stones and fire, they wrote, would have fallen from the sky. It is possible, they wrote, that the event “became the source of the written story of biblical Sodom in Genesis.”

But Ken Ham, the founder and CEO of the Christian ministry Answers in Genesis, says the data doesn’t match what the Bible describes.

“The destruction of Tall el-Hamman, according to secular dating, took place around 1750–1650 BC, much later than the time of Abraham,” Ham wrote on his blog referencing the patriarch who fled the destruction. “Furthermore, that location doesn’t match the biblical description of where the historical Sodom and Gomorrah were.”

—NATURE, ANSWERS IN GENESIS

Greenway, other SBC leaders, support vaccine but oppose Biden mandate



Multiple Southern Baptist Convention leaders in September criticized President Biden’s vaccine/testing mandate, even while they endorsed the COVID-19 vaccine itself.

Adam Greenway, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Texas Baptist College in Fort Worth, was one of several SBC leaders to criticize the new Biden policy, which requires private employers with 100 or more employees to require either the vaccine or weekly COVID-19 testing. The Biden policy requires federal workers to get vaccinated.

“Our goal throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been to do everything within our power to keep our students, faculty, and staff as safe as possible,” Greenway said. “I believe that vaccination is a proven means to help achieve that goal, which is why I have been vaccinated and I have publicly and repeatedly encouraged members of the Southwestern Seminary community to be vaccinated.”

Greenway added that he respects those who decline the vaccine and believes a “government-mandated vaccination program” or private businesses and institutions “is deeply troubling.”

“Regrettably, the president’s actions will bring further division and polarization to a nation that is already profoundly divided,” Greenway said.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, said he encourages vaccinations but opposes mandates. Other SBC leaders, including Midwestern Seminary’s Jason Keith Allen and Southeastern Seminary’s Daniel Akin, also said they back the vaccine but oppose the Biden policy. Akin said the plan is a form of “government overreach & infringement on our civil liberties.”

More than 215 million Americans—including 78 percent of adults—have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Worldwide, more than 3 billion people have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

—SWBTS, TWITTER

Christian teacher forced to resign over pronoun usage asks court to intervene

A Christian public school teacher in Indiana who was forced to resign due to a disagreement over pronoun usage is asking a federal appeals court to rule that the district violated his religious freedom.

John Kluge taught orchestra at Brownsburg High School in Indiana but was forced to resign after he declined to follow a new policy requiring staff to use the preferred names and pronouns of transgender-identifying students.

School administrators had initially accepted his compromise proposal—which involved using only a student’s

last name—but reversed course when a handful of people complained, according to Alliance Defending Freedom, which is representing Kluge.

The compromise, ADF said in its brief, “would allow him to stay neutral on transgender issues and focus on teaching music.”

ADF alleges that the district violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which requires employers to “reasonably accommodate” an employee’s “religious observance or practice” unless it creates an “undue hardship.”

ADF is asking the U.S. Seventh Circuit of Appeals to reverse a lower court that ruled against Kluge.

ADF’s brief to the Seventh Circuit calls Kluge a “deeply religious man who believes that following the district’s policy would require him to tell a dangerous lie to his students and would be perilous to his own soul.”

—ADF

Israel PM warns: Iran nuclear program ‘has hit a watershed moment’



Israel’s prime minister thanked the United States for its friendship and warned the world of Iran’s nuclear capability during a September United Nations address that offered a stark contrast between what he called “darkness and light.”

“Every member state in this building has a choice. It’s not a political choice, but a moral one. It’s a choice between darkness and light,” Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said. “Darkness that persecutes political prisoners, murders the innocent, abuses women and minorities, and seeks to end the modern world as we know it. Or light that pursues freedom, prosperity and opportunity.”

Israel, he said, is surrounded by Hezbollah, Shia militias, Islamic Jihad and Hamas—all terrorist groups that seek to eliminate Israel and “spread radical Islam across the world.”

“They all want to destroy my country. And they’re all backed by Iran,” said Bennett, who took office this summer.

Iran, he warned, has made a “major leap forward” in its nuclear program in recent years.

“They enrich uranium to the level of 60 percent, which is one step short of weapons-grade material—and they’re getting away with it,” Bennett said. “Iran’s nuclear program has hit a watershed moment. And so has our tolerance.”

Some world leaders, he said, “seem to view Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons as an inevitable reality—or they’ve just become tired of hearing about it.”

Israel, though, “doesn’t have that privilege,” he said.

“We will not tire,” he said. “We will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.”

—TIMES OF ISRAEL

Floyd’s resignation follows EC decision on attorney-client privilege



Members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in October voted for the waiving of attorney-client privilege within the scope of an independent third-party investigation of the EC concerning the handling of sexual abuse claims.

The Sexual Abuse Task Force, assembled by SBC President Ed Litton, was mandated by messengers to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting in June and will oversee the investigation.

Trustees met for more than three and a half hours Oct. 5 via Zoom before the group voted in favor of a motion to waive privilege by a margin of 44-31.

Two days later, the independent third-party review launched, according to Bruce Frank, chair of the Sexual Abuse Task Force. Frank said the contract among the task force, Guidepost Solutions and Rolland Slade, on behalf of the Executive Committee, had been signed.

“There are some small details to work out, like the Cooperation Committee, but Guidepost is at work,” Frank said.

The TEXAN has learned at press time that SBC Executive Committee president Ronnie Floyd has resigned, effective Oct. 31. In a letter sent to a broad mailing list, Floyd indicated that he had intended to submit his resignation earlier but was hindered by a family funeral.

In explaining his reasons for resigning, he said, “Due to my personal integrity and the leadership responsibility entrusted to me, I will not and cannot any longer fulfill the duties placed upon me as the leader of the executive, fiscal, and fiduciary entity of the SBC.” Though not a voting member of the Executive Committee, Floyd was in agreement with those who saw “potential risks” in waiving attorney-client privilege.

Floyd, who was president of the Executive Committee for only 28 months, emphasized that the decision, though disappointing, was made “at [his] own choice.”

—TEXAN, BP

SBTC DR Ida response continues

By Jane Rodgers
Managing Editor

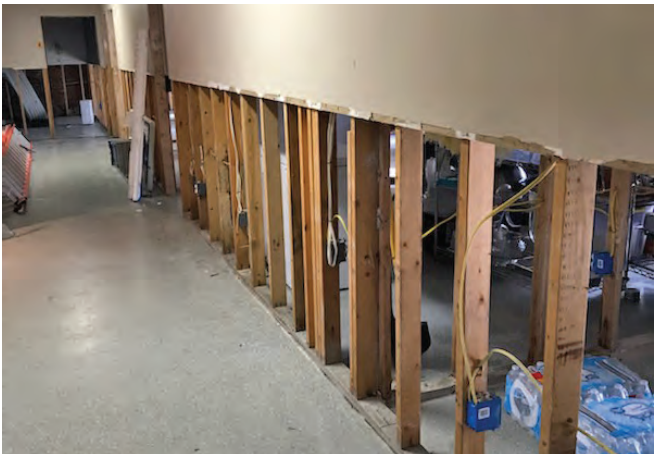
JEAN LAFITTE, La. Southern Baptists of Texas Disaster Relief volunteers have joined Southern Baptist DR teams from across the nation to serve the survivors of Hurricane Ida, which made landfall in Louisiana on Aug. 29. The first SBTC DR team deployed on the day of the storm itself, heading to the Alexandria area to assist in coordinating Baptist relief for the entire state.

Currently, SBTC DR incident management, recovery, feeding support, chaplaincy, assessment and shower/laundry crews continue to serve in Golden Meadow, La., where they are being housed at First Baptist Golden Meadow.

Recovery teams are also involved in a rebuild project at Barataria Baptist Church in Jean Lafitte, La. The Jean Lafitte rebuild was begun by volunteers from First Baptist Church Vidor, which in addition to regularly opening its facilities to SBTC DR and other SBDR work, also actively engages in rebuilding projects. SBTC DR recovery and rebuild teams rotated into the area after the First Vidor crews departed.

The fellowship hall at Barataria Baptist was literally swamped by Ida, although its main building, built some 10 feet higher, escaped damage.

Zack Greer, associate minister of missions at First Baptist Pampa, and his father James Greer, director of missions for the Top O' Texas Baptist Association, flew to New Orleans and rented an all-wheel drive SUV in order to make their way 22 miles south to Jean Lafitte where they examined the extent of the damage yet to be resolved and called for assistance.



Scenes from Ida DR relief: Barataria Baptist Church; damage in Jean Lafitte, La.; feeding teams from New Mexico and the SBTC working together. PHOTOS FROM FACEBOOK AND ZACK GREER.

First Baptist Vidor's teams had removed four feet of sheetrock and insulation to start the process of drying out the church, James Greer told the TEXAN. The crew of 13 from Top O' Texas, most from FBC Pampa, arrived to continue the work of replacing the sheetrock and insulation with work beginning for that group on Oct. 14.

"We have a plumber, a sheetrock guy, teachers and church leadership with us," James Greer said, adding that the association had collected \$3,000 from Top O' Texas churches to purchase tools and equipment for Barataria Baptist so that the work of rebuilding might continue.

The Barataria deployment is the first for the new recovery unit based at FBC Pampa, where Zack Greer serves as

unit director, SBTC DR Director Scottie Stice said.

James Greer complimented Barataria pastor Jeff Smith, staff and their wives, who ministered to their community despite the damaged facilities.

"They met the stressed-out folks with a smile and a hand of help," Greer said of the Louisiana church personnel.

Teams in the field are following COVID protocols, Stice confirmed to the TEXAN.

In addition to the ongoing work in the Golden Meadow and Jean Lafitte areas, SBTC DR teams have completed numerous other deployments in response to Ida, Stice added.

Shower and laundry teams and units have served at West Monroe and Minden in support of shelters for evacuees, at Gonzales in sup-

port of power line crews and at Denham Springs in support of recovery workers. Feeding units deployed include quick response kitchens sent to Jean Lafitte, Kenner and Denham Springs and mass care feeding teams serving at Gonzales with the Salvation Army. SBTC DR recovery teams have also worked under the direction of Arkansas Baptist DR in Hammond and Oklahoma DR in Morgan City. SBTC DR has provided other support to Baptist DR teams from Louisiana, North Carolina and Alabama.

"The Ida deployment shows the cooperative nature of disaster relief," Stice said, adding, "DR is a perfect illustration of cooperative missions where we come together with a common goal of serving disaster survivors." 🙏

IDA RESPONSE BY SBTC DR AS OF MID-OCTOBER

1524
Volunteer Days

206,717
Meals Provided

42
Professions of Faith

1,431
Spiritual Contacts

83
Recovery Jobs Completed



Texas Baptist College

Glorifying God by providing trustworthy Christian higher education for more faithful Kingdom service.

TEXASBAPTIST.COM

