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'Sovereign grace of God' undergirds Calvary Beaumont

By Erin Roach
TEXAN Correspondent

BEAUMONT Churches commonly believe in the unseen hand of God on their congregations, but not all cite it as the chief reason for the effectiveness of their ministry. At Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont, pastor Nathan Cothen said "the sovereign grace of God" sets this group of believers apart. "[God] decided to do a work here," Cothen told the TEXAN. "Secondly, there is a huge commitment to the Word here. This church does not veer to the left or to the right. It sticks with the Word."

See CALVARY, 6



The Great Commission is a priority at Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont, which is a main reason they're a committed Cooperative Program partner. PHOTO SUBMITTED



SBTC DR CREWS BRAVE HEAT AND HUMIDITY TO HELP IDA SURVIVORS: HOW TO DONATE

By Jane Rodgers | Managing Editor • See IDA, 8

'NOW IS THE TIME TO GET MORE INVOLVED'

See Q&A, 10



SBTC presidential candidate Todd Kaunitz, pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview, discusses his reasons for being willing to serve as convention president.

By Rob Collingsworth | TEXAN Correspondent

TEXAN: Why are you interested in serving as SBTC president?

Todd Kaunitz: I love the SBTC. It's been a strong gospel representation for our denomination, and our affiliation has allowed New Beginnings to be a part of what God is doing in the state of Texas and around the world. I've known Dr. Lorick for 20 years, and a lot of my interest is in coming alongside of him during this pivotal season of transition, to offer any support that he might need. I also think that we are at a critical time in our convention nationally.

FROM THE EDITOR Gary Ledbetter

Cooperation, not allegiance

In 2002, the SBTC met in Houston for its fifth annual meeting. During Jim Richards' executive director's report, the ministry staff of the convention signed a brief affirmation of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

The BF&M had become the convention's statement of faith shortly after it was adopted by SBC messengers in 2000 and the staff indicated their commitment to conduct their ministries within the parameters of the confession. We did not sign the document itself; many of us would have more specific interpretations of the atonement or eschatology or church polity, for example. But we each considered the BF&M sufficient to describe our understanding of biblical doctrine and Baptist distinctives.

One observer, the editor of another state paper, sneered in print that the SBTC had "pledged allegiance" to the Southern Baptist Convention. It wasn't a fair representation of what we'd done—it wasn't intended to be—and it expressed a common misconception of that day regarding cooperation.

A little context

Two brief matters of context for that moment: First, since 2000, SBTC churches have affirmed their own broad agreement with the confession when they affiliate with the convention. Convention ministry staff already knew that the BF&M was the outline that defined our ministries. More particular interpretations were certainly our right, so long as they were not mistaken for an official SBTC addition to our standards for affiliation. We were affirming doctrinal agreement with our churches.

The second matter of context to that moment in 2002 was that my colleague's state convention had, two years earlier, initiated a significant break with the SBC over the Conservative Resurgence and its values expressed in the Baptist Faith & Message. His convention had defunded most SBC entities in favor of its own seminaries, a publishing house, an ethics agency and a mission-sending venture. Hun-

THE NEW FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES JUDGED THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION A STRONG AND RELIABLE MINISTRY PARTNER.

dreds of churches left that state convention for the SBTC as result of this defunding of the SBC. Without fanfare, the defunding was rescinded a few years later, by the way. My editor colleague arrived at our convention already certain who was a bad guy in this disagreement.

From its beginning four years prior at the inaugural SBTC annual meeting, also in Houston, the new fellowship of churches judged the Southern Baptist Convention a strong and reliable ministry partner. In his 1998 sermon to that first meeting that elected him executive director, Jim Richards lined out core values that included the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program as the method that fueled our work to reach Texas and to impact the world beyond Texas. This latter priority was a point of contention between the new convention in Texas and the old one. The new convention, the SBTC, began in 1998 apportioning 50 percent of Cooperative Program receipts for SBC missions beyond Texas. With the adoption of the 2002 budget, messengers raised that percentage to 52 percent. The convention that most of our churches had left behind was sending about 29 percent beyond Texas in 2002.

Why the difference?

From 1995, the completion of the Conservative Resurgence goal of electing inerrantist presidents at all SBC entities, Southern Bap-

tists in Texas had a high degree of trust in our national SBC partners. This was not and is not lockstep, but it was like-mindedness on the essentials or denominational goals. We agreed that abortion was the taking of a human life, that Jesus was the only way to heaven, and that the Bible is the inspired Word of God—without error in anything on any subject that it asserts.

There were advantages to our young fellowship of churches. We could call on resources already available to SBC churches that owned the institutions that provided them. The SBTC, an autonomous fellowship of churches, could also multiply its effectiveness in national and international outreach by working with tens of thousands of SBC churches beyond our borders. We didn't have to reinvent the denominational wheel or do everything with our own hands because we could trust resources already in place.

Everyone wins

There were also advantages to the SBC. Texas Southern Baptist churches are among the strongest in the world. Some of our churches innovate ministries that bless thousands of sister churches. Cooperation and partnership with the SBC mean that we give according to how we've been blessed so that sister churches will flourish, and the lost will hear the gospel. This desire for cooperation was a significant reason for the SBTC's formation.

That November afternoon in 2002 was a recognition that we agreed on essential doctrines with Southern Baptists around the world. It was the same commitment our churches had already expressed. Today, I say with gratitude that the accord with our partners at every denominational level in the SBC is at least as strong as it was in 2002. ✝

This is the second of four 2021 editorials describing "denominational virtues" of the SBTC.

gledbetter@sbtxexas.com
@sbtxexas



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

Correspondents:

Rob Collingsworth
Michael Foust
Gayla Holt
Tobin Perry
Erin Roach

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@sbtxexas.com

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What's Next?

sbtxexas.com/events

October

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

1-2 Hombres de Impacto Riverbend Retreat Center, Glen Rose	
4-5 Pastors Masters Golf Tournament Tour18, Flower Mound	9 She Stands Women's Conference FBC, Forney
11 Disciple-Making Forum FBC, Colleyville	12 Disciple-Making Forum Harmony Hill, Lufkin
12-14 Collegiate Send Summit Redeemer Church, Lubbock	
13 Disciple-Making Forum Bay Area Church, League City	14 Disciple-Making Forum Great Hills BC, Austin
16 Disaster Relief Phase 1 SWBTS, Fort Worth	20 SBTC Chapel Grapevine

November

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



7 Spanish Session Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Pittsburg	
ANNUAL 2021 MEETING	
8-9 SBTC Annual Meeting Flint BC	8 Interim Pastor Equipping Flint BC
16 Evangelism Roundtable Online	28-12/5 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Week of Prayer
All in-person events subject to change based on COVID conditions.	

SBTC RESOLUTIONS DUE BY OCT. 26

The SBTC Resolutions Committee will complete its work before the convention's 2021 meeting, Nov. 8-9 at Flint Baptist Church, south of Tyler. In order for the committee to have adequate time to consider its report, all resolutions must be submitted to the SBTC office by Tues., Oct. 26.

Resolutions may be submitted by email to dsmith@sbtxexas.com or to Deborah Smith at PO Box 1988, Grapevine, TX 76099. All submissions must include the name, church membership, phone number and email address of the submitter. Mailed submissions must be typewritten for the sake of legibility.



PHOTO BY ANDREW PEARLE

FBC Sutherland Springs votes to remove ‘memorial’ auditorium

Members of First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs voted 69-35 on Aug. 22 to demolish the 100-year-old building that had been preserved as a memorial. On Nov. 5, 2017, Devin Kelley methodically walked through the sanctuary killing 25 people, including a pregnant woman, and injuring 20 others before killing himself. “This decision was loaded down with so much emotion on both sides that we agreed that no more conversation would be had till we voted to see what the future held for the memorial corner, so as not to ruffle anything that would not have had future bearing anyway,” Pastor Frank Pomeroy told Baptist Press Aug. 24. “So, the next conversation will be about when

and how to remove the facility. “Most, if not all, of those that wanted the enclosed facility to stay was for historical purposes of the 100-year-old building. So I have asked them to try and find someone who would disassemble and reassemble (the building) elsewhere for posterity’s sake. At the present time no one has come forward, but that would be the optimum solution in my opinion.” Since 2019, the congregation has worshiped in a new facility funded by the North American Mission Board with gifts made through the Southern Baptist Convention’s Cooperative Program and other donations. The massacre is considered the deadliest mass shooting in Texas history and the deadliest church shooting in the nation. Pomeroy’s 14-year-old daughter, Annabelle, was among those killed.

—BAPTIST PRESS

Plainview Baptist, Krum, to begin 100 nights of preaching

Calling the effort “Come Home,” Pastor Tim Robinson of Plainview Baptist Church in Krum launched 100 nights of preaching Sept. 22. Based on the story of the prodigal son, Robinson’s series will shift themes every seven days as the pastor moves from “Come to the Bible” to “Come Home to Church” and so on. Robinson says the theme for the sermon series came to him during an increased emphasis on prayer this summer, following what he called “a year of uneasiness” in our communities. “We prayed for our leaders and for the country to return to the Lord. These prayer services gave a vision of what the 100 days should be for us,” he told the TEXAN. Robinson says that an increase in attendance and first-time visitors has followed the prayer efforts of the church. They recently had to add a second service to accommodate members who were returning and new attenders joining the services. He encouraged other pastors to “keep the lost in the forefront of their prayers and be bold, be brave, be big in prayer and plans; do all that is necessary in outreach to win the lost to Christ.”

—PLAINVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH



New Hope BC in Bloomburg celebrates 100th anniversary

Roy Ford, SBTC field representative, presented David Baxley, 22-year veteran pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Bloomburg, a plaque commemorating the 100th anniversary of the church on Sept. 12. PHOTO SUBMITTED



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Mission City opens new campus in former dance hall

After five years in a temporary facility, Mission City Church in San Antonio opened its Northwest campus with over 1,000 in attendance on Aug. 15. Pastor Matt Surber began a new series from Acts on that day and many have responded to the gospel and have engaged in ministry at both the Central and Northwest campuses. “What is so exciting to me, is that 95 percent of the Northwest campus is new growth, with no connection to the Central campus in Castle Hills. Our philosophy of campuses is like a new church plant, only there is a connection to the greater church. Our prayer is for four or five ‘Mission City Churches’ in communities all around San Antonio,” said Surber. Early in his tenure as pastor of Mission City, Surber was praying about additional San Antonio locations. One day, while washing his truck, he spotted the Leon Springs dance hall, a historic spot in the fast-growing northwest corridor of San Antonio. He asked if they would be open to a church meeting there and the owners agreed. During the construction of the new Northwest campus, COVID hit, and the church went to online worship for a time. Surber felt like the pandemic was an opportunity, not just a negative. Donnie Anthony, who has served for 20 years at the church and is currently mission pastor, shared, “We more than doubled our weekly food ministry and expanded our community outreach. We saw over 80 trust Jesus as Savior in our drive-through distribution of food during COVID.” That year of ministry laid the groundwork for a successful start to the church’s new campus.

—MISSION CITY CHURCH

Talty Baptist Church associate pastor dies after contracting COVID-19

Andrew Clayton Pearle, 38, family life pastor at Talty Baptist Church, died on Aug. 19, 2021, in Rockwall, following a battle with COVID-19. Pearle served numerous Texas churches, including First Baptist Venus, First Baptist Quitman, Calvary Baptist of Wells and Talty Baptist. A gifted professional photographer, Pearle was a frequent contributor of photos to the TEXAN and other publications. He often donated his photography services to veterans’ organizations, too. Gary Ledbetter, TEXAN editor, said of Pearle and his work: “Andrew was a joy to work with. He had a great eye and a sweet spirit. He was always willing to help us at meetings. I’m so sad for his family.” Pearle leaves behind his wife, Stefanie, and four daughters. He is survived by his parents, Bob and Deborah Pearle; his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Lyle and Nicole Wallace; numerous nephews, nieces, aunts, cousins and friends. A celebration of life service was held at Birchman Baptist Church, Fort Worth, on Saturday, Aug. 28.

—TEXAN STAFF



BUT GOD ...



Nathan Lorick
Executive Director
nlorick@sbtxas.com
@NathanLorick

I remember it like it was yesterday. The pastor of the church that my family was a part of while in Colorado was called to a new ministry. I was asked to do much of the preaching during the interim time.

The day came in March 2020, when we had to quickly shift to online church only. COVID-19 was making its rounds in communities across the state. I will never forget it. As I gazed into the lens of the camera trying to give calming and hopeful words, internally I was wondering how the world had found itself in this situation. Who would have thought that as advanced as we are in technology, medicine and communication, something like COVID would have turned

“
IN EARLY NOVEMBER,
YOU WILL HAVE
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO HEAR FROM
PEOPLE ALL ACROSS
TEXAS WHO HAVE
EXPERIENCED ‘BUT
GOD’ MOMENTS IN
THEIR LIVES
”

the world upside down?
The next few weeks and months proved difficult for so many families, churches and communities. Many lost loved ones, some were laid off work; all had to get used to new rhythms and adjust to what seemed to be a new normal. In many ways, the pandemic changed the world.
But God...
In the midst of so much uncertainty and chaos, one thing that certainly never changed is the faithfulness of God. While lives were and continue to be altered, the sure thing that we can always place our hope and trust in is the Lord’s goodness to us.
Throughout the story of the

Bible, we see many instances of difficulties, heartache, disappointment and obstacles. However, in most of those stories we also see “but God” moments. When all hope seemed lost, God would step in and put his faithfulness and glory on full display. As believers, we must read those stories and be reminded of God’s character. In life, we will face tremendous challenges and pain, yet we have to believe that God is still fully capable of creating “but God” moments. His glory shines brighter coming out of the dark days.
This is the theme of this year’s SBTC Annual Meeting: “But God.” While we all know how difficult the last couple of years have been, we want to celebrate those moments in which God moved in the midst of the crisis. In early November, you will have the opportunity to hear from people all across Texas who have experienced “but God” moments in their lives. The annual meeting will be an incredible time to be together and celebrate the faithfulness of God.
The evening session on Monday will constitute a unique time of honoring the past with an exciting look toward the future. I will have the distinct honor of following my hero and mentor as we will both preach messages to kick off the 2021 annual meeting. Dr. Richards will open the night and I will follow later. The evening will symbolize the “handing off of the baton” of 23 years of faithful min-

istry as we look enthusiastically to build on this strong foundation working to reach the current and coming generations of Texans.
On Tuesday we will hear great messages throughout the day, including one from our president, Kie Bowman. Most of our business will happen in the afternoon session on Tuesday. Though the time of business may not seem as exciting as times of worship, it is important for our messengers to hear how God is using the SBTC to serve churches. In addition, it’s an opportunity to make decisions as a united body on issues that are important to Southern Baptists.
I know many people are busy and sometimes must leave during the day on Tuesday. However, I want to make a personal plea for you to stay and participate in our Tuesday evening prayer gathering. It is going to be an incredible time of corporate prayer with worship led by Matt Boswell. We need to unite in prayer for a movement of God like never before. I promise you will be blessed by being a part of it. It is crucial for us to go before our God together in prayer. Please make plans to stay and pray.
We are so grateful for you. It is the joy of the SBTC to serve you and see how God is using you. I believe God is going to meet with us at our annual meeting, and I can’t wait to see you. I love you and am honored to serve you. ✝

Meet us in Flint



Kie Bowman
SBTC President
kbowman@hpbtc.org
@KieBowman

When Sam DeVille went to Flint Baptist Church as pastor in 1996, it was a small congregation of a few families. Today, it’s a large, mission-minded, evangelistic, praying church reaching East Texas and far beyond.

The church is now lodged in beautiful new facilities perfect to host the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention in November.
We all need this time together to do the business of the convention, renew our relationships across the state, experience deep worship in the presence of God, celebrate the victories of the past and hear powerful challenges about the years to come.
The meeting this year will be historic. Following last year’s annual meeting in Austin, Dr. Jim Richards announced his intention to begin the transition to his successor as executive director of the SBTC. A nationwide search led us to one of our own: Dr. Nathan Lorick, who was then the state executive in Colorado but who had deep roots in the SBTC.
In February, the board issued a unanimous call to Dr. Lorick. In the months since, the SBTC has embraced Dr. Lorick and his vision of evangelism, church planting, prayer and much more for the future. So, this historic convention in Flint will witness a significant moment in time: the passing of the baton from the first generation of SBTC leadership to the next.
The theme of this year’s meeting, “But God,” is a reminder to all of us that personal transitions, global pandemics, the shifting sands of a changing culture and all of the challenges of leadership today could potentially hinder us—But God! Almighty God is the “uncommon denominator” who, when he steps in, immediately changes the outlook from the impossible to “we can do this!” And

together, we can do everything God calls us to do.
Join us in Flint. Highlights will include the following:
→ A dinner honoring Dr. and Mrs. Richards
→ Messages from Dr. Richards and Dr. Lorick and others
→ The Spanish language session
→ The election of new officers
Additionally, there will be panels to discuss evangelism, prayer, caring for our own souls; a young pastors panel, and an incredible prayer and worship gathering Tuesday night.
God has given us a great convention (the best in the SBC) and this year’s annual meeting will be one you will not want to miss.
Put November 8-9 on your calendar and meet us in Flint! ✝



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SBTC TO HOST SUMMER 2022 ISRAEL TRIP FOR PASTORS

By TEXAN Staff

GRAPEVINE The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is providing a rare opportunity for its pastors next July. A 10-day trip to Israel will be available to the convention's pastors with \$1,000 in financial assistance for pastors visiting the Holy Land for the first time provided by a grant from reserves approved by the SBTC Executive Board at their summer meeting. Clergy members travelling must be currently pastoring an SBTC church.

The trip will depart Dallas, July 12, 2022, and return July 21. Total cost of the trip for pastors, from Dallas, is \$2,195 (\$1,195 for pastors visiting Israel for the first time, after the \$1,000 grant from the SBTC) and \$2,495 for pastors' wives. This price includes various fees and taxes, plus gratuities.

Highlights of the tour include Caesarea Maritima, Megiddo, Mount Carmel, Galilee (including a boat ride on the sea), Caesarea Philippi, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Temple Mount, Masada, the Dead Sea, the Shrine of the Book, the Garden Tomb and the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum. This list is not exhaustive but illustrates the thoroughness of the travel among significant sites.

The tour will be led by SBTC executive director Nathan Lorick. Lorick expressed great anticipation at seeing Israel again, "Traveling in Israel—seeing the places where Jesus walked and preached—is truly a life-changing experience. I look forward to seeing it again with many of our pastors and church leaders. Come join us!" For more information, SBTC pastors can contact the SBTC office.

At this time, Israel is requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination for entry into the country. This requirement may change between now and July, so travelers are encouraged to keep track of changing requirements. Current information and registration are posted at sbtexas.com/Israel.

1



2



3



1. The Israeli flag waves from the hilltop fortress, Masada with the Dead Sea in the distance.

2. A city view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives—a Muslim shrine stands on the Temple Mount.

3. The hippodrome excavated at Caesarea Maritima. Caesarea is the place where Paul went before Felix and Agrippa.

PHOTOS BY TONY WOLFE



Nathan Cothen, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont, said a “sweet reasonableness” is evident in the congregation, making it fun to be involved. PHOTO SUBMITTED



Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont is a consistent disaster relief stronghold, positioned close to the gulf to respond to hurricanes. PHOTO SUBMITTED



THE POPULATION SHIFT AND THINGS LIKE THAT ARE MAKING IT A REALLY GOOD PLACE FOR US TO BE RIGHT NOW.

NATHAN COTHEN

“BEAUMONT IS A GOOD PLACE. SOME PARTS OF IT ARE PRETTY TOUGH, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THE LORD CALLED US HERE FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE, FOR RICHER, FOR POORER, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, FORSAKING ALL OTHERS TO CLEAVE ONLY TO THE CALLING HE PUT ON US ‘TIL DEATH DO US PART OR HE BURNS A BUSH. SO THAT’S WHAT WE’RE GOING TO DO.”

NATHAN COTHEN, PASTOR OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN BEAUMONT

CALVARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Calvary Beaumont began in 1904 and has started two other churches in the area with the goal of reaching Southeast Texas for Christ. In 2007, it started a new campus in Lumberton, a rapidly-growing bedroom community about 15 miles north.

“That market is exploding for us,” said Cothen, who has been Calvary’s pastor for 22 years. “The population shift and things like that are making it a really good place for us to be right now.”

Beaumont is not an Anglo-majority city, and Calvary is “one of the most diverse congregations that you’ll find,” Cothen said. They have a thriving international ministry, which includes Filipinos, Chinese, Guatemalans, Ecuadorians and people from several countries in Africa. They also have Casa Calvario, an Hispanic ministry, “which is rocking and rolling.”

About 15 years ago, some researchers studied Calvary using a list of about 100 socio-ethnic groups. “They said the average number of groups off that chart represented in the average church was four, and Calvary had 24 at the time,” Cothen said.

The church’s greatest asset, the pastor said, is something he describes as “sweet reasonableness.”

“Sweet reasonableness, in my opinion, is what makes it fun to come to church here—the absence of fussing and fuming and fighting. Two-thirds of our ministerial staff has been here over 10 years, and over half of our support staff has been here over 10 years,” Cothen said. “I think that’s kind of a big deal.”

As the community changes and people are moving from Beaumont to Lumberton, Calvary has tried to get involved in the local schools through mentoring projects and by supplying chaplains for the football team at one of the large high schools. They’ve also partnered with First Baptist Church Hamshire to host a Beast Feast to reach men who love to hunt and fish but don’t have much exposure to church.

“In the last 23 years, we started a television ministry that’s on every week and a radio ministry that’s on in Houston five days a week. We were paying for 30 minutes a day, and they showed favor to us—I believe it was divinely inspired—and gave us an

extra 30 minutes free,” Cothen said. “They play our broadcast twice a day on the biggest Jesus station in Houston.”

Disaster relief is a significant ministry at Calvary Beaumont, particularly hurricane relief. “We are more than willing to lose our expertise from lack of use,” Cothen said, acknowledging the challenges of living with dangerous weather patterns. When Hurricane Katrina struck, the church had 400 evacuees come and go, seeking shelter during the first month. “Two of our buildings were devoted just to housing Katrina refugees,” the pastor said.

When Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017, both campuses of Calvary remained dry and became ground zero for disaster relief teams.

“We housed 600 Team Rubicon people. We had a group of relief workers from Israel that came and stayed with us. We had a group of New York firefighters that came and stayed with us,” Cothen said.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief workers from at least seven states were housed at Calvary Beaumont in the Harvey aftermath, and Rick Warren rallied local pastors there. More recently, Calvary sent its chainsaw crew as the tip of the spear heading into New Orleans after Hurricane Ida.

Cothen believes the two most important functions of the Southern Baptist Convention are to provide seminaries to educate new pastors and missionaries and to reach the nations through the International Mission Board. “Those are the two biggest reasons that we’re hard core in on the Cooperative Program,” the pastor said.

Through the years, Calvary has prayed to have 100 “sell your house” missionaries come out of the church, and so far about eight families have been sent through the IMB, he said. One of the highlights of CP, the church’s missions pastor Clay Jones said, is that those families don’t have to raise money when they come home. They can recharge and go out again.

“Beaumont is a good place. Some parts of it are pretty tough, but we believe that the Lord called us here for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others to cleave only to the calling he put on us ‘til death do us part or he burns a bush,” Cothen said. “So that’s what we’re going to do.”

La ‘Gracia Soberana de Dios’ es la base de la Iglesia el Calvario en Beaumont

Por Erin Roach | Corresponsal del TEXAN

BEAUMONT

Las iglesias suelen creer en la mano invisible de Dios sobre sus congregaciones, pero no todas la citan como la principal razón de la eficacia de su ministerio. En la Iglesia Bautista el Calvario en Beaumont, el pastor Nathan Cothen dijo que “la gracia soberana de Dios” distingue a los creyentes.

“Decidió hacer una obra aquí”, dijo el pastor Cothen al TEXAN. “En segundo lugar, aquí hay un enorme compromiso con la Palabra. Esta iglesia no se desvía ni a la izquierda ni a la derecha. Se ciñe a la Palabra”.

La Iglesia el Calvario en Beaumont comenzó en el 1904 y ha fundado otras dos iglesias en la zona con el objetivo de alcanzar el sureste de Texas para Cristo. En el 2007, comenzó un nuevo campus en Lumberton, una comunidad de rápido crecimiento a unas 15 millas al norte.

“Ese mercado está explotando para nosotros”, dijo Cothen, que ha sido el pastor de esta iglesia durante 22 años. “El cambio de población y cosas así están haciendo que sea un lugar realmente bueno para nosotros en este momento”.

Beaumont no es una ciudad de mayoría anglosajona, y el Calvario es “una de las congregaciones más diversas que pueden encontrar”, dijo el pastor Cothen. Tienen un próspero ministerio internacional, que incluye filipinos, chinos, guatemaltecos, ecuatorianos y personas de varios países de África. También tienen la Casa Calvario, un ministerio hispano, que está creciendo y avanzando.

Hace unos 15 años, unos investigadores estudiaron la iglesia el Calvario utilizando una lista de unos 100 grupos socio-étnicos. “Dijeron que el número promedio de grupos de esa lista representados en la iglesia media era de cuatro, y el Calvario tenía

24 en ese momento”, dijo Cothen. El mayor activo de la iglesia, dijo el pastor, es algo que describe como “afable sensatez”. “En mi opinión, la afable sensatez es lo que hace que sea divertido venir a la iglesia aquí: la ausencia de quejas y discusiones. Dos tercios de nuestro personal ministerial han estado aquí más de 10 años, y más de la mitad de nuestro personal de apoyo ha estado aquí más de 10 años”, dijo Cothen. “Creo que eso es algo importante”.

A medida que la comunidad cambia y la gente se muda de Beaumont a Lumberton, el Calvario ha tratado de involucrarse en las escuelas locales a través de proyectos de tutoría y proporcionando capellanes para el equipo de fútbol en una de las grandes escuelas secundarias. También se han asociado con otra iglesia para organizar un evento llamado “Beast Feast” para llegar a los hombres que aman la caza y la pesca, pero no tienen mucha conexión con la iglesia.

“En los últimos 23 años, hemos creado un ministerio de televisión que se transmite todas las semanas y un ministerio de radio que se transmite en Houston cinco días a la semana. Estábamos pagando por 30 minutos al día, y mostraron favor hacia nosotros—creo que fue inspirado divinamente—y nos dieron 30 minutos extra gratis”, dijo Cothen. “Ponen nuestra programación dos veces al día en la mayor emisora cristiana en Houston”.



Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont is a historically strong congregation with an enduring commitment to the Cooperative Program. They have a second campus in Lumberton with a goal of reaching Southeast Texas for Christ. PHOTOS SUBMITTED



“
**EL CAMBIO DE POBLACIÓN Y COSAS
ASÍ ESTÁN HACIENDO QUE SEA
UN LUGAR REALMENTE BUENO PARA
NOSOTROS EN ESTE MOMENTO.**
”

NATHAN COTHEN, EL PASTOR IGLESIA BAUTISTA EL CALVARIO EN BEAUMONT

La ayuda en caso de catástrofe es un ministerio importante para la iglesia el Calvario en Beaumont, especialmente la ayuda en caso de huracán. “No queremos que surjan catástrofes, pero estamos preparados para ayudar en caso de que ocurran”, dijo el pastor Cothen. Cuando el huracán Katrina golpeó, la iglesia tuvo 400 evacuados que iban y venían, buscando refugio durante el primer mes. “Dos de nuestros edificios se dedicaron sólo a albergar a los refugiados debido a Katrina”.

Cuando el huracán Harvey golpeó en el 2017, los dos campus de el Calvario permanecieron secos y se convirtieron en la zona cero de los equipos de ayuda en caso de desastre.

“Alojamos a 600 personas del Equipo Rubicón. Tuvimos un grupo de socorristas de Israel que vinieron y se quedaron con nosotros. Tuvimos un grupo de bomberos de Nueva York que vinieron y se quedaron con nosotros”, dijo el pastor Cothen.

Los trabajadores del Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (Ayuda en caso de desastres de los bautistas del sur) de al menos siete estados se alojaron en la iglesia el Calvario en Beaumont después del huracán Harvey, y Rick Warren reunió a los pastores locales allí. Más recientemente, el Calvario envió su equipo de motosierra como

punta de lanza hacia Nueva Orleans después del huracán Ida.

El pastor Cothen cree que las dos funciones más importantes de la Convención Bautista del Sur son proporcionar seminarios para educar a nuevos pastores y misioneros y alcanzar las naciones a través de la Junta de Misiones Internacionales. “Esas son las dos razones más importantes por las que estamos metidos de lleno en el Programa Cooperativo (PC)”, dijo el pastor.

A lo largo de los años, el Calvario ha orado para que 100 misioneros “vendan su casa” salgan de la iglesia, y hasta ahora unas ocho familias han sido enviadas a través de la IMB, dijo. Uno de los aspectos más destacados del PC, dijo el pastor de misiones de la iglesia, Clay Jones, es que esas familias no tienen que recaudar dinero cuando vuelven a casa. Pueden recargar y salir de nuevo.

“Beaumont es un buen lugar. Algunas partes son bastante duras, pero creemos que el Señor nos llamó aquí para lo bueno, para lo malo, para lo rico, para lo pobre, en la enfermedad y en la salud, abandonando todo lo demás para apegarnos sólo al llamado que nos puso hasta que la muerte nos separe o queme una zarza”, dijo Cothen. “Así que eso es lo que vamos a hacer”.



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SBTC DR crews help Ida survivors

By Jane Rodgers | Managing Editor

GONZALES AND HAMMOND, LA.

Battling mosquitoes, poison ivy and the lack of electrical power, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention disaster relief volunteers endured sweltering temperatures and soaring humidity to assist survivors of Hurricane Ida, which struck landfall in Louisiana on Sunday, Aug. 29, 16 years to the day after Hurricane Katrina blasted ashore.

The SBTC's response to Katrina, led by the late Gibbie McMillan, the convention's first director of disaster relief, who died of COVID this August, marked the inaugural major deployment of SBTC DR.

SBTC DR crews continued building on McMillan's legacy as they again traveled quickly to Louisiana, where they were joined by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from across the country.

Even as the hurricane still raged, a four-person SBTC DR incident management left Texas for Alexandria, La., where they established operations from Aug. 30-Sept. 12 to help coordinate SBDR activities across the Bayou State.

Debra Britt, the IMT's operations officer, told the TEXAN that hundreds of requests for help were received. Britt said mass feeding sites were quickly established and volunteers from multiple state Baptist DR teams arrived. Besides Louisiana and SBTC DR, volunteers from Texas Baptist Men, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky supplied volunteers, Britt said.

Mass feeding established quickly

SBTC DR feeding crews also rushed to Louisiana, first setting up operations in Gonzales, where they began by cranking out 20,000 hot dogs on Aug. 31. All 10,000 hot meals (each containing two hot dogs) were appreciated by the survivors of Hurricane Ida who received the food prepared by SBTC DR volunteers and delivered to area shelters and neighborhoods by the Salvation Army, shortly after Ida's landfall.

"More wieners and fajitas than I want to see again for a while," said Debby Nichols of De Kalb, Texas, who served as lead cook for the SBTC DR mass feeding team of 18 volunteers from the Unity Baptist Association near Lufkin serving in Gonzales.

Because the demand proved so great, a second mass feeding unit from First

Baptist Pflugerville arrived on site late Wed., Sept. 1 and set up a larger kitchen the next day.

Feeding teams prepared to produce 20,000 meals per day by Sept. 3.

Conditions remained challenging at the open-air Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, where the DR volunteers worked. While some electrical plugs were operational, teams relied on generators to run the field kitchen. There was no air conditioning at the center or at First Baptist Gonzales, where teams were housed.

The Dixon center also served as a staging area for utility linemen, tree crews, Salvation Army volunteers and other groups responding to the hurricane, which eventually spun into Mississippi, dumping heavy rains in Tennessee and Ohio before eventually moving over the eastern seaboard in New England.

Contact at Gonzales between SBTC DR crews and survivors was at first limited, since Salvation Army personnel delivered the hot meals packed in Cambro containers. But DR volunteers had opportunities to pray with the work crews and first responders congregating in the Dixon center, Nichols said.

"We don't come across many survivors when we're in the kitchen," team leader Mike Northen of Pflugerville said, "But we look for opportunities with the delivery and service people. There are lost people all around us."

Northen added that when he and other DR volunteers pick up supplies at Home Depot and other stores, people come up to thank them for their service.

"We just try to rub shoulders with all we can," he said. "They see our [yellow] shirts and that makes for good conversation."

A lady came up to the Pflugerville group at a Buc-ee's stop as they made their way to Louisiana and asked if she could make a donation.

Northen gave her the SBTC DR website address.

DR crews have rotated in to relieve the original SBTC DR feeding teams as the work continues.



The recovery team from FBC Pflugerville even removed the kitchen sink and attached granite countertop from this Hammond home. PHOTO SUBMITTED



Homeowner and infant son with the Pflugerville crew, l-r: Brad Stover, Paul Wood, David Dean, Scott Pruyn, Melodie McDonald. PHOTO SUBMITTED

West Monroe, Hammond and six other sites

Other SBTC DR workers have since joined hundreds of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers to help Louisiana and the affected states.

A recovery team from Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont escorting the feeding teams to Gonzales was able to complete a few jobs before returning to Texas.

Shirley and Cliff Spencer of Spring set up the SBTC DR shower and laundry unit from the Bowie Baptist Association on Sept. 2 in West Monroe, where they began doing laundry for survivors at a shelter there. Other SBTC DR shower/laundry units deployed to Gonzales and Denham Springs, La. to serve both feeding teams, power line crews and recovery units.

A quick response kitchen deployed to Denham Springs to feed DR volunteers. A second QRU set up operations in Kenner, La.

SBTC DR recovery units also arrived, rotating in and out over ensuing weeks, working under an incident management team from Arkansas in the Hammond area.

The eight sites manned by SBTC DR volunteers as of mid-September marked the most of any state Baptist DR team, Scottie Stice, SBTC DR director, said.

Chaplains see fruit

In addition to feeding, shower/laundry and recovery crews, SBTC DR chaplains and assessors came to Louisiana.

Chaplain Wayne Barber of Jasper found unexpected opportunities to share the gospel in Hammond as he and assessor Jim Casten of Collinsville traveled through mostly middle-class

and working-class neighborhoods to offer assistance.

Amazingly, Barber said, many of the gospel encounters happened seemingly at random, at addresses where the team had not intended to go.

"Every night, we just prayed for divine appointments the next day," Barber told the TEXAN. "I asked the Lord to prepare their hearts and prepare my words."

One elderly gentleman at first seemed reluctant to talk, telling Barber that he had gone to church. The men kept visiting.

"We talked. He started crying," Barber recalled. "Then he prayed to accept Christ as Savior." The new believer was 86.

"That's pushing it pretty hard," Barber, himself a young 77, said of the man's late-in-life decision.

Another time, finding their intended road blocked by the fire department, Barber and Casten headed down an alternate route where they spied people sitting outside their manufactured home to escape the heat inside.

"We stopped and asked if they were O.K.," Barber said. "Did they need anything?" After conversation, five of the men prayed to accept Christ.

"We weren't supposed to even be there, but God had a plan," Barber said.

Another God-ordained appointment came when the pair encountered a young mother with two small children whose military husband was enroute back from Afghanistan. The volunteers returned the next day with two packs of diapers.

"She was so appreciative that we came back. She said she sure could use [the diapers]," Barber said.

One man told the pair it was the first time anyone had ever told him about Jesus. Another man was alerted to the coming of the chaplain team by his Christian mother, whose home they had just visited. She didn't need help, but he did.

"I hope they tell you about Jesus," the mother said.

They did, and the young man, an EMT in his thirties, prayed to receive Christ. He also filled out a work request for his home.

Bringing hope and help in crisis is the heart of disaster relief. One survivor who had been helped at her home in Hammond texted her thanks to recovery team leader David Dean, adding this:

"Tonight when things quiet down, I'm signing up with SBC to give back to my community. God is good."

Efforts to help Ida survivors in Louisiana are ongoing, Stice said. For more information about SBTC DR, visit sbtexas.com/dr. ✂

SBTC DR response to Ida as of Sept. 15

- 945 volunteer days
- 190,285 meals provided
- 23 professions of faith among survivors



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Q&A

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Being able to step in and be a unifying voice of influence and help us stay focused on the Great Commission—these are key ways I feel like I could be a help in a pivotal season with this opportunity. I also have some experience with helping create a vision and culture within an organization, and with the revisioning Dr. Lorick is working through, I believe some of my experience could be a help to him.

Why is your church affiliated with the SBTC, and what are some of the benefits you've experienced?

We believe in the Cooperative Program, and we believe that the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole has a platform for advancing the gospel both here in North America and around the world like no other entity in the world. For us, the reason we're SBTC is because we believe in doctrinal unity. We align with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, and that doctrinal alignment is important for us. And second would be the missional focus.

I love how intentional the SBTC is on the Great Commission. You can see that in the way that we distribute our funds and in how we respond to needs both in the state and around the world. We're better together. New Beginnings benefits because we get to be a part of a bigger gospel movement than we could if we were just doing missions on our own. Personally, I've been able to build strong relationships, and some of the guys I dialogue with daily all over the state are SBTC pastors with whom I've built relationships. The moment we got in with the SBTC and aligned ourselves with that partnership, I developed friendships and a brotherhood with other pastors that has really breathed life into my ministry.

What will your platform be as president?

I feel like God has led me to build on some of the great things Kie Bowman has already started in regard to prayer. Kie has put our focus on prayer in a very strategic way,



The Kaunitz family

keeping it in front of us in the way he has led the state convention and at the annual meetings. Honestly, I feel like God has called me to be an extension of what Dr. Bowman has started, and my platform will be centered on challenging churches to pray. We want to become houses of prayer and offer experiences, gatherings and training to equip pastors to lead prayer movements in their churches.

What Dr. Bowman has started at the state level and what Dr. Ronnie Floyd is doing at the national level regarding prayer are exactly what we need at this moment in history. I am committed to spend my time in this role helping continue that emphasis by creating some additional strategy to go along with it. I think what we're discovering in our churches coming out of this pandemic is that we've been working far too long in our own power. If there's anything that 2020 and now 2021 have revealed to us, it's that when times get hard, when pandemics come and when there's social unrest, it reveals the true condition of the church. We are seeing that we have operated way too long in our own effort, and God is giving us an amazing opportunity to see a spiritual awakening that will not happen outside of God's people praying.

As one of the younger pastors to be nominated as SBTC president, how would you represent the SBTC both to younger pastors and to more experienced pastors?

I believe the SBTC is the greatest state convention in the SBC, from the work that's done and the leadership that we have at the SBTC, not to

mention that fact that we have some of the strongest pastors and churches in the nation. The work Dr. Richards has done these past 20 plus years to build this convention is remarkable. He has done this with the partnership of a lot of seasoned pastors, men who have paved the way for younger guys like me and Dr. Lorick. We are in a season as a convention where there is a baton passing between generations. As a guy in his 40s, my desire is to honor and represent the strong foundation laid by those seasoned pastors who have gone before, and also to extend a hand toward those younger pastors who may not be as denominationally focused, or maybe they're on the fence about what it means to be a part of this cooperative effort. It's exciting to be able to stand on this strong foundation that's been laid, but also to build upon it with this next generation of pastors who are going to bring innovative thoughts, new ideas and fresh ways to reach the culture.

One of the things we say quite often is that our mission never changes—it's to reach people for Christ. That's the heartbeat of the SBTC, to fulfill the Great Commission. But our methodology does shift. I see myself as bridging the gap between generations. We've got a lot of great godly leaders who have done great things in our past, and some great leaders rising up right now. I'm excited about that.

What would you say to pastors who are on the fence about denominational affiliation?

As a pastor who is in the trenches with SBTC life, I have never

I SEE MYSELF AS BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN GENERATIONS. WE'VE GOT A LOT OF GREAT GODLY LEADERS WHO HAVE DONE GREAT THINGS IN OUR PAST, AND SOME GREAT LEADERS RISING UP RIGHT NOW. I'M EXCITED ABOUT THAT.

—TODD KAUNITZ, PASTOR OF NEW BEGINNINGS CHURCH IN LONGVIEW

been more excited about our future, and I would encourage any pastor who is on the fence to recognize what God is doing in the SBTC. While there is a lot of noise right now at the national level, I don't think those issues are as loud as social media makes them out to be. We have a lot of great leaders at the national level doing great work, and a lot of the things that people see on social media that get so much attention are a result of a very few people speaking to some of these issues with a volume that overplays what's really going on.

At a state level, with Dr. Lorick and the vision that he's bringing in, there has never been better a time to come together with a more unified strategic focus around the Great Commission. There is no organization, no network of churches, that is more primed and ready to meet the challenges of this coming generation than the SBTC. I would encourage those pastors by saying that we cannot let the enemy distract us. We need to come together and unify—and prayer is a large part of that—so we can keep our focus on what's most important, which is the Great Commission. Now is the time to get more involved, and if you hear the focus of Dr. Lorick and what he wants this convention to become, I think it will bring a lot of excitement and unify us like never before. ✝

2021 SBTC Annual Meeting to feature fellowship, food, panel discussions

By TEXAN Staff

FLINT When Baptists gather, food and fellowship follow. The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention at Flint Baptist Church, just south of Tyler, should prove to be no exception as attendees will have ample time to enjoy Texas cuisine and friendly conversation.

Even before the main events, the Spanish session of the annual meeting will feature a luncheon Mon., Nov. 8, from 12-2 p.m. at Flint Baptist. The event will include a panel discussion on the persecution of the church in the U.S. featuring Joshua Del Risco, George Levant and Rafael Rondón (see Spanish, 12).

Monday evening's events will commence at 4:45 p.m. with an outdoor steak dinner honoring June and Jim Richards. Space is limited so attendees are encouraged to reserve

their spots soon. Nathan and Jenna Lorick will be feted at a reception following Monday night's program.

Messengers and guests will enjoy breakfast tacos at the church prepared by SBTC DR volunteers under the direction of Scottie Stice on Tues., Nov. 9. Others may choose to attend the alumni breakfasts hosted by Criswell College, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

At noon Tuesday, attendees will pick up their lunches and enjoy two breakout sessions of presidential panel discussions, with the audiences shifting spots and the panelists remaining in place.

Breakout session 1 will be from 12:15-1 p.m., followed by session 2 from 1:10-1:55 p.m.

The president's panel discussions will focus on the following topics:

→**Keeping the Basic: Evangelism**

and **Prayer** will be moderated by Kie Bowman, current SBTC president and pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin. Panelists will include Todd Kaunitz, pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview; Jason Paredes, pastor of Fielder Church, Arlington; Nathan Lino, pastor of Northeast Houston Baptist Church, Humble; Damon Halliday, pastor of The Key Church, Fort Worth; and Nathan Lorick, SBTC executive director.

→**After Covid: Rebuilding the Pastor and the Church** will be moderated by Tony Wolfe, SBTC associate executive director. Panelists will include Danny Forshee, pastor of Great Hills Baptist Church in Austin; Ed Johnson III, pastor of Harvest Fellowship Baptist Church in Denton; Ramon Medina, global pastor of Spanish ministries at Champion Forest Baptist Church, Houston; Jacob Fitzgerald, pastor of Denman

Avenue Baptist Church of Lufkin.

→**Young Pastors Network: Worship**, moderated by Spencer Plumlee, pastor of First Baptist Mansfield, will feature Matt Boswell, composer and pastor of The Trails Church, North Texas. The Young Pastors Network panel will be held only during the first lunch session.

→**Tuesday evening** will feature a 5 p.m. barbecue dinner and time of fellowship. Attendees should reserve their places. Tickets are \$10 each.

→**Missional Ministries** will also hold a Tuesday evening dinner featuring Jarrett Stephens, pastor of Champion Forest Baptist Church. Tickets are \$10.

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. ✝



ANNUAL **2021** MEETING



But God

EPHESIANS 2:4-7

NOVEMBER 8-9 FLINT BAPTIST CHURCH

sbtexas.com/am21



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

5:00-9:30pm Spanish Session & Fellowship
Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana, Pittsburg

Monday

10:00am-3:00pm Interim Pastor Equipping
12:00-2:00pm En Español Lunch Panel
4:45-6:00pm Recognition Dinner for Jim & June Richards
9:00-10:00pm Welcome Reception for Nathan & Jenna Lorick

Tuesday

7:30-8:45am Seminary & College Breakfasts
12:00-1:55pm President's Panels & Young Pastors Network Panel
(Complimentary boxed lunch with 3 panel topics)
5:00-6:30pm Missions Dinner
Fellowship Dinner



EPHESIANS 2:4-7

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

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New NAMB, SBTC partnership to provide momentum for statewide church planting efforts

By Tobin Perry
TEXAN Correspondent

GRAPEVINE A new partnership between the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and the North American Mission Board will provide additional resources to start churches in high need areas throughout Texas.

Approved at August's meeting of the SBTC executive board, the new Send Texas collaboration will begin in 2022.

"We are excited to see God move in a powerful way through Send Texas," said Nathan Lorick, SBTC executive director. "God is bringing the world to Texas, and we want to be ready to maximize all our efforts and as many dollars as possible to see more churches planted than ever before. In the future, we want to accelerate the gospel advance across Texas at an unparalleled rate. We believe one of the most strategic ways to do this is through church planting."

This new partnership means that beginning in 2022, NAMB will take on a bigger role in assessing, training, caring for and supporting SBTC church planters. The SBTC will continue to care for church planters and provide retreat opportunities for planters and their spouses.

Tony Mathews, SBTC senior strategist for Missional Ministries,

GOD IS BRINGING THE WORLD TO TEXAS, AND WE WANT TO BE READY TO MAXIMIZE ALL OUR EFFORTS AND AS MANY DOLLARS AS POSSIBLE TO SEE MORE CHURCHES PLANTED THAN EVER BEFORE.

—NATHAN LORICK,
SBTC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

says the new resources will allow the convention to grow church planting efforts throughout the state—including in some of the most unreached parts.

"With millions of lost people in the state of Texas along with thousands of people moving [weekly] to major cities across Texas, we are expecting to plant churches in as many places as we can," Mathews said. "Of course, from a strategic standpoint, we will be looking at unreached areas and unreached people groups as the world has come to Texas. NAMB's expertise



in identifying, training and mobilizing church planters along with our current expertise in this area, should increase the number of sending churches and pastors in the pipeline."

Before this partnership, SBC churches worked through NAMB to plant churches in areas of high need mostly outside of the South. To plant churches within Texas, SBTC churches worked through the state convention. Now, NAMB President Kevin Ezell said, SBTC churches get the best of both organizations.

"So instead of just having the SBTC looking at Texas and how to plant churches, now you have two of us. You've got NAMB and the SBTC, so it's like you added a whole other cylinder to the engine," Ezell said. "Instead of either/or, it's both/and. That's what I'd want every pastor to understand. The only thing that's changed is now NAMB is going to add its momentum and its church planting expertise to what the SBTC already has."

SBTC churches can now access NAMB support for church planting efforts in the state as well as beyond it.

Noting that Southern Baptists are better together, Lorick looks forward to God moving throughout Texas in a powerful way through this partnership.

"When you can cooperate with an organization that does planting as well as NAMB does, you are able to gain a synergistic momentum," Lorick said.

NAMB launched Send North America in 2011 with a focus on urban areas that were underrepresented by Southern Baptists. In recent years, NAMB has expanded the Send Network to include entire state conventions, like the SBTC.

Ezell says these new networks have worked "incredibly well." He added that these state Send Network agreements have streamlined how NAMB partners with states to do church planting. It has created even greater synergy and cooperation. For church planter candidates, it has been an encouragement because the process is simpler, and they have the benefit of knowing that both the state convention and

NAMB are unified in their partnership and support for them.

Texas represents a critical state for NAMB's effort to mobilize Southern Baptists to push back lostness. Ezell compares it to high school football, where the athletic talent in the state draws the attention of recruiters around the country. The same is true for church planting.

"There's a tremendous amount of talent in that state," Ezell said. "Our biggest need right now is high-capacity planters, and for Texas to partner with us so that we can engage their churches in intentionally mobilizing their people to be potential church planters, then that's huge for us."

The new resources and systems NAMB is providing through this partnership have the potential to draw new leaders into the SBTC, says Doug Hixson, who served as the SBTC's church planting director until moving to Colorado to plant a new church this summer.

"Although I don't know the exact statistics, I would say close to half of the people that would come to SBTC to plant with us were looking for a network," Hixson said. "Maybe they weren't from the SBC or were only marginally involved. Having a national network that we're a part of has been helpful from an SBTC standpoint, but now for the convention to be formally connected directly with NAMB brings a lot more to the table. The Send Network and the North American Mission Board have high-level thinkers and leaders, along with their training, their assessments, and their planter support and care. In my opinion, it is the best—or one of the best—church planting networks in our nation."

Lorick urges SBTC congregations and pastors to pray for church planting efforts within the state.

"We know there is power in prayer. I would ask that you pray that God would raise up new planters who see the desperate need in Texas for new churches," Lorick said. "We need to plant as many new churches as we can, as God continues to bring so many people here. The need is great, and the time is now." ❧

'Pero Dios' será el tema de la reunión anual y la sesión en español de la SBTC

Por Gayla Holt
Corresponsal del TEXAN

La Sesión en Español de la Reunión Anual se celebrará el 7 de noviembre en la Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana en Pittsburg, Texas. El evento comenzará con un café y compañerismo a las 5 p.m., servicio de adoración a las 6 p.m. y una cena ligera a las 8:30 p.m. Los oradores enfatizarán Efesios 2:4-7 que el amor de Dios supera el pecado del hombre, nos ha sentado en lugares celestiales y la gloria de Dios es nuestro objetivo.

Por primera vez, el departamento

de SBTC en Español ofrecerá un panel de discusión durante el almuerzo, antes de la Reunión Anual el lunes 8 de noviembre a las 12 p.m. en la Primera Iglesia Bautista de Flint. La discusión será "La persecución de la iglesia en los Estados Unidos". Los oradores de ambos eventos serán Joshua Del Risco, fundador, Of The Rock Ministries; George Levant, pastor, IB Nueva Vida en Jesús, Laredo; y Rafael Rondón, pastor asociado de Fielder Church, Arlington.

Para más información y registro, visite sbtexas.com/event/spanish-session-of-annual-meeting. ❧

'But God' annual meeting to include Spanish sessions

By Gayla Holt
TEXAN Correspondent

The Spanish session of the annual meeting will be held on Nov. 7 at Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Pittsburg, Texas. The event will begin with a coffee and fellowship at 5 p.m., service at 6 p.m. and a light dinner at 8:30 p.m. Speakers will emphasize that God's love surpasses man's sin, God has seated us in heavenly places and God's glory is our objective.

For the first time, SBTC en Espa-

ñol will offer a lunch panel discussion prior to the Annual Meeting on Mon., Nov. 8, at 12 p.m. at Flint Baptist Church. The discussion will be on "The persecution of the church in the United States." Speakers for both events will be Joshua Del Risco, founder, Of The Rock Ministries; George Levant, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida en Jesús, Laredo; and Rafael Rondón, associate pastor of Fielder Church, Arlington.

Register at sbtexas.com/event/spanish-session-of-annual-meeting. ❧

SBTC Executive Board affirms NAMB collaboration and \$26.5 million budget



Garland pastor Tony Mathews was elected senior strategist for the largest of the SBTC's ministry divisions, Missional Ministries, which includes evangelism, missions and church planting. PHOTO BY JOSE SANTIAGO

BY TEXAN Staff

GRAPEVINE A new church planting collaboration with the SBC North American Mission Board, the election of two ministry staff leaders, the creation of an Israel travel opportunity for pastors and the posthumous conferral of the Leaders Legacy Award upon Jimmy D. Pritchard highlighted the Aug. 24 meeting of the Executive Board of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. The board met at the convention's Grapevine offices, and also approved a \$26.5 million proposed budget for 2022. Annual meeting messengers will consider the budget during their November meeting.

Texas to become a Send state

Beginning in 2022, Texas will become a Send state through the North American Mission Board's Send Network. Until recently, the Send initiative targeted significant cities in North America. Send states, like Send cities, will be the focus of church planting resources to address rising populations and lostness. Under the plan, NAMB will take on a significant role in planter assessment, training and coaching, orientation, care and funding. SBTC staff and consultants will be trained in Send Network processes. While NAMB will fund planter support and other areas, the SBTC will continue to make grants, host church planter retreats and provide additional care for planters. All Texas churches planted under this program will be SBTC-affiliated and affirm the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

Statewide church planting relationships currently exist between NAMB and state conventions in Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma and Virginia. (See "New NAMB, SBTC partnership," p. 12).

Budget increases 1.51 percent

The board voted to recommend for approval at the 2021 annual meeting a \$26.5 million budget for 2022, reflecting an increase from 2021 of 1.51 percent. The 2022 budget continues the convention's practice of forwarding 55 percent, or \$14.3 million, to the national SBC Cooperative Program while retaining 45 percent, or \$11.7 million, within Texas for state ministries.

Significant budgetary changes for 2022 include a \$300,000 reduction

in church planting expenditures because of NAMB's increased funding in that area, an amount expected to exceed \$1 million. Salary and benefits for as-yet unfilled ministry associate positions are also included in the budget.

A \$104,500 budget reallocation to the state missions offering for evangelism events, personal evangelism and church planting consultants is also included, as are smaller increases for technology maintenance and an all-ministry staff retreat. The budget also includes a first-time allocation of \$10,000 for Woman's Missionary Union efforts in SBTC churches. The WMU and the SBTC are currently exploring a formal relationship.

New leaders

Garland pastor Tony Mathews was elected senior strategist for the largest of the SBTC's ministry divisions, Missional Ministries, which includes evangelism, missions and church planting. Mathews has been pastor of North Garland Fellowship Baptist Church for 29 years and is currently also the interim director of the SBTC department he will permanently lead. He will continue in an interim role with the SBTC until March, when he transitions from his pastorate at North Garland Fellowship.

Mathews' church has been very involved in missions. Under his leadership, North Garland Fellowship staff and members have assisted with 10 church starts and have traveled in 17 countries on mission. The church has grown from 70 to about 700 during his tenure as pastor.

His service to the denomination includes being vice president of the SBTC, president of the SBTC African-American Fellowship and vice chairman of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary board of trustees.

Mathews holds a Doctor of Ministry and a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as a Master of Arts in Christian Leadership from Criswell College and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Angelo State University. He is married to Angela, and they have three children.

The board additionally approved the hiring of Jayson Larson as Digital Ministries and Communications associate. Larson will become the editor of the TEXAN, the print and

digital news journal of the SBTC, in 2022 as Gary Ledbetter moves to an advisory position with the publication.

Larson, formerly senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Prineville, Ore., served as associate pastor of First Baptist Church Vidor from 2015-2019. He earned a degree in journalism/communications from Trinity Valley Community College and a Bachelor of Arts in communication and biblical study from Liberty University. He is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

DMC Senior Strategist Lance Crowell described Larson as "understanding the news side of the TEXAN and also having a pastor's heart."

Larson has extensive experience in journalism, having been a sports and news writer and editor for the Athens Daily Review and other newspapers. He has won numerous awards from the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, Texas Press Association and Northeast Texas Press Association. He also served as a public relations officer for Trinity Valley Community College.

He is married to Brandi and they have two children.

Israel initiative

A reserves funding grant of \$100,000 was approved to subsidize the first-time travel of pastors to Israel on a tour hosted by the SBTC. The grant would provide \$1,000 toward the travel costs of 100 pastors who have never been to Israel.

Pritchard honored

The board voted unanimously to honor the late Jimmy D. Pritchard with the first Leaders Legacy Award from the Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation. The foundation recently voted to create the award to honor individuals who have distinguished themselves by their service to Christ through the SBTC.

Pritchard, who died of COVID-19 on Feb. 24, was SBTC president from 2014-2015. For 39 years, he served churches in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas. During his long tenure at First Baptist Forney, Pritchard led the church in its move to a \$36 million suburban facility and saw 38 men and women surrender to vocational ministry. In that time, the church welcomed 6,500 new members, more than 2,900 through baptism.

In addition to his time as SBTC president, Pritchard also served the denomination as trustee and chairman of the International Mission Board from 2006-2014, and trustee and board chairman of Criswell College from 2002-2007 and 2010-2015.

The Leaders Legacy Award will be awarded by the SBTC Executive Board's Executive Committee and the SBT Foundation and is funded by the foundation's Leaders Legacy Endowment.

Other business

In other business, the board voted to continue a cooperative ministry relationship with the Texas Baptist Home for Children and fraternal ministry relationships with the Con-

ference of Texas Baptist Evangelists, the Korean Baptist Fellowship of Texas, and the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas. Continuing cooperative relationships with Jacksonville College and Criswell College were not reviewed in 2021.

The board approved the awarding of a reserves funding grant of \$100,000 to the SBC Executive Committee as a designated gift to support the committee's new initiative of assisting churches in prayer ministry. The SBC Executive Committee was assigned prayer leadership during the SBC meeting in June. SBTC is the first state convention to lend financial support to the work.

A reserves funding allocation was approved for the purpose of engaging the organization Future Church Company as a consultant for the convention. For the next three years, Future Church Company's services will include general consulting, training, tool development, process design and implementation.

The board also approved a reserves funding grant of \$100,000 to be used for one-time grants to pastors in affiliated churches for the purpose of assisting with mission trip expenses.

A reserves funding grant of \$118,000 was approved to support a new NAMB-approved church plant led by Doug Hixson, former SBTC director of church planting, in Longmont, Co.

A reserves funding grant of up to \$40,000 was approved to augment the Nov. 8-9 annual meeting at Flint Baptist Church.

A grant of \$150,000 was approved to establish the SBTC Student Scholarship Endowment at the Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation for the purpose of making scholarship awards to students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with priority given to non-Anglo students.

The board also approved a motion concerning the disposition of the property of the former Dellwood Baptist Church in Mount Pleasant. In 2004, Dellwood gifted its property to the SBTC and the convention in turn gifted it to South Jefferson Baptist Church for use as a Hispanic mission, which has now closed its doors. The property is for sale and the board voted to approve the recommendation that upon that sale, one half of the proceeds will be delivered to the SBTC as a designated gift for Hispanic ministries and one half retained by South Jefferson Baptist, which has absorbed the expenses of the Hispanic mission.

The board approved 16 churches for affiliation and 16 more were removed from affiliation, including those that have disbanded, merged or no longer desired to be affiliated. One of the removals was approved upon request from the Credentials Committee. With those actions, there are now 2,682 affiliated churches.

The board will meet again Nov. 10 in Tyler, following the SBTC annual meeting at Flint Baptist Church. ❖

—With reporting by Jane Rodgers and Gary Ledbetter

Church Positions

PASTOR

- ♦ FBC Gun Barrel City is seeking a conservative FT pastor. Email resume to ministriesassistant@fbcgbc.org.
- ♦ Memorial BC in Spring seeks a FT senior pastor. Submit resume to memorialbcsearch@gmail.com.
- ♦ East Mountain BC near Longview is searching for a FT lead pastor. Send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, 315 E Mountain Rd, Gilmer, TX 75645 or embcpastorsearch@gmail.com.
- ♦ Fairview Baptist in New Fairview is seeking a pastor. Please submit a cover letter and resume to kendall.lyons@gmail.com.
- ♦ New Life Church in Borger is a growing church currently searching for a FT associate pastor to become pastor. Email resume to newlifepastor@cableone.net.
- ♦ West End BC in Beaumont is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. Financially secure, loving congregation of 50 average attendance, traditional worship service. We are affiliated with the SBTC. Send resume to webcbeaumont@gmail.com.
- ♦ Elm Creek BC in La Vernia, a small rural church in a country setting, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please pray and send resume to Elm Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 425, La Vernia, TX 78121, if the Lord is leading you to our church.

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.
- ♦ Calvary BC in Bastrop is seeking a FT pastor of worship arts. Email resume to stephen@cbcfamily.net.
- ♦ 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 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.
- ♦ Northside BC of Highlands is seeking a PT worship leader to guide us

in inter-generational worship experiences that help us connect with God and bring glory to him. Our church is currently experiencing revitalization and growth; we are pursuing a pastoral leader with a heart for shepherding people towards authentic expressions of worship. Send resume to jared@northsidehighlands.com.

- ♦ 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@cabcclevelland.org.
- ♦ FBC Crowley seeks a PT worship minister. Send resume to aaron@fbccrowley.org.
- ♦ Audubon Park BC in Garland is searching for a PT worship leader to lead blended worship services 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.
- ♦ Northside BC of Highlands is seeking a PT worship leader to guide us in inter-generational worship experiences. Our church is currently experiencing revitalization and growth; we are pursuing a pastoral leader with a heart for shepherding people towards authentic expressions of worship. Email resume to jared@northsidehighlands.com.
- ♦ FBC of Crockett is seeking a PT worship leader who is a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The compensation is \$18,000, includes housing and a scholarship to SWBTS, which covers tuition, books, and fees. The church is elder-led and is involved in church revitalization. Send resumes to Pastor Keeney Dickenson at prayeridigm@gmail.com.

STUDENTS

- ♦ FBC Gun Barrel City is seeking a conservative PT or FT youth minister. Send resume to ministriesassistant@fbcgbc.org.
- ♦ FBC De Leon is accepting resumes for a FT minister of students. Send to Minister of Students Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 228, De Leon, TX 76444 or fbdeleon@cctc.net.
- ♦ FBC Borger seeks a FT pastor to families with students to be responsible for partnering with families in seeing students, 6th-12th grades, come to Christ, grow in conformity to the image of Christ, and form a biblical worldview. Must minister to both students and their families. Resumes to shana@firstborger.com.

- ♦ FBC Edom is searching for a FT associate pastor of student ministries. Email resume to AlliLloyd@gmail.com.

- ♦ 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 saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

CHILDREN

- ♦ FBC Crowley seeks a PT childhood minister. Send resume to aaron@fbccrowley.org.
- ♦ The Grove: FBC is searching for our next PT children's minister. Salary dependent upon experience. See reachthegrove.com/staff for application and job description. Send resume and cover letter to thegrovefbc@gmail.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.
- ♦ FBC Argyle is seeking a FT student & young adult pastor. Parsonage 3 bedroom/2 bath on 1 acre in Argyle ISD included. Send resumes to pastor@fbcargyle.org.
- ♦ Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth is searching for a FT adult discipleship and outreach pastor. Bachelor's degree is required, Master's preferred, minimum 3 years' experience. Email resumes to jeff@wedgwoodbc.org or mail to Jeff Laster, Wedgwood Baptist Church, 5522 Whitman Ave, Fort Worth, TX 76133.
- ♦ 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 saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

OTHER

- ♦ FBC Wichita Falls is searching for a FT pastor of business administration. Email resume to kameel@vanderbloemen.com.
- ♦ Teled Village in Houston is now hiring FT/bivocational pastors. Instead of working for a secular

company, earn a great income with our team serving the Lord. We are the only telemedicine company that helps churches fulfill the Great Commission. Send resume to will@teledvillage.com.

- ♦ Prestige Learning Institute in Houston is hiring two FT ESL instructional coaches to play a vital part in equipping ESL teachers and empowering immigrant and refugee families. Both are support-raising positions. Email resume to michael@prestigeinstitute.org.

- ♦ South Euless BC is searching for a PT secretary 3 days a week (8 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday). Experience in Excel, Publisher and Word needed; \$15.00 per hour. No benefits. Send resume to tom.goodson@att.net.

- ♦ 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 saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT pastor of community engagement with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

- ♦ Iglesia Bautista La Vid is seeking a PT bilingual pastoral administrative assistant for a growing church in Hurst. Basic office tasks, Computer savvy (MS Office). Pay is \$13-15/hr, 12-15 hours a week. Send resume to plevant@yahoo.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 saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

Paid Classifieds

- ♦ Baker Book House pays cash for pastoral and academic religious libraries, large or small. Email quotes@bakerbookhouse.com or call 866-241-6733.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Seeking a director of worship arts at First Southern Baptist Church, Lawrence, Kansas. Job description posted at www.fsbcbfamily.com. Resumes should be submitted to search@fsbcbfamily.com.
- ♦ First Baptist Church in Ruston, LA is seeking a full-time 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.
- ♦ Looking for a seasonal job with an eternal purpose? Samaritan's Purse- Texas is hiring 175 customer service and warehouse associates who have a relationship with Christ and align with our mission. Must be flexible and able to function well in a fast-paced environment. Includes team coaches, greeters, inventory coordinators, forklift operators and switch drivers plus those who can load and unload trucks.
 - Seasonal Employment (November 20 thru mid-December)
 - 40+ hours per week, Monday - Saturday (Thanksgiving Day off)
 - Starting at \$14 per hour
 - Location: Coppell, TX
 - Jobs: careers.samaritanspurse.org/jobs/7349902-operation-christmas-child-seasonal-associate-dallas-fort-worth
 - Video Link: <https://video.samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child-overview-2021-short>



SOUTHWESTERN SEMINARY

Alumni & Friends Meeting

AT THE SBTC ANNUAL MEETING

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Biden reverses, says he doesn't believe life begins at conception



President Biden said in September he does not believe life begins at conception—a position that marks a reversal from his past beliefs on the issue.

Biden made the comments when discussing a new Texas law that prohibits abortion when an unborn baby's heartbeat is detected. Typically, that is around six weeks of pregnancy.

The president said he is a "strong supporter" of Roe v. Wade.

"I respect those who believe life begins at the moment of conception. I respect that. [I] don't agree, but I respect that. I'm not going to impose that on people," he said.

The remarks mark the latest reversal on abortion for Biden, who during the 2012 vice presidential debate said he held to the Catholic Church's historical position on the issue.

"Life begins at conception—that's the church's judgment. I accept it in my personal life," Biden said in 2012.

Biden also has reversed his position on taxpayer funding of abortion. In 1994, he told constituents in a letter, "Those of us who are opposed to abortion should not be compelled to pay for them." But he said in 2019 during his run for president that he supported federal funding of abortion.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., lamented Biden's current stance on abortion.

"There are very few profiles in courage in American politics," Mohler wrote in a column on his website. "This seems especially true when it comes to the defense of unborn life. The political predicament of a pro-life politician is this—the political class and the New York-Hollywood-Silicon Valley axis reward those who abandon pro-life positions and condemn those who refuse to surrender.

"A particularly important profile in moral collapse now resides in the White House," Mohler added. "The story of President Joe Biden's slippery shape-shifting on the abortion issue is both revealing and horrifying."

—ALBERTMOHLER.COM, WHITEHOUSE.GOV

'Jesus Music,' a film about the history of CCM, to release in theaters Oct. 1



The filmmakers who directed the faith-based hits *I Can Only Imagine* and *I Still Believe* will release their first major theatrical documentary Oct. 1 with a groundbreaking film about the history of contemporary Christian music.

Jesus Music (PG-13), co-directed by Jon and Andrew Erwin, follows the birth of contemporary Christian music in the 1960s and 1970s and its growth in the 1980s and 1990s up to the modern day. It includes interviews with dozens of artists, including TobyMac, Kirk Franklin, Lauren Daigle, Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Skillet's John Cooper, Chris Tomlin, Eddie DeGarmo, Michael Tait, LeCrae, Mandisa and Bill Gaither.

It will be released in theaters Friday, Oct. 1.

A companion book, *The Jesus Music: A Visual Story of Redemption as Told by Those Who Lived It* (by Marshall Terrill), also is being released.

The Erwins made the film during the COVID-19 pandemic when musicians were at home and unable to tour.

Although it is their first major theatrical documentary, the Erwins have made multiple live-action dramas, including *I Can Only Imagine* and *I Still Believe*, each of which opened in the Top 3 at the box office.

Jesus Music is rated PG-13 for some drug material and thematic elements.

—LIONSGATE

Int'l ministry requests prayer for Afghanistan's Christians, who 'must flee' or 'risk being killed'

International human rights ministries are urging Christians around the world to pray for Afghan believers who now face potential persecution following U.S. withdrawal from the country.



Afghanistan is home to an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 Christians—most of whom are converts from Islam and could become targets of the Taliban, according to International Christian Concern. The Taliban's strict Muslim ideology requires punishment—often, death—for converts.

"In many cases, known Christians must flee Afghanistan or risk being killed," ICC reported.

The Voice of the Martyrs issued a prayer guide with six specific requests for Afghanistan's Christians:

→ **Pray for God's protection.** "The situation on the ground is fluid right now. Pray for God's protection over his people," Voice of the Martyrs said.

→ **Pray for wisdom.** "Ask God to bless our brothers and sisters with discernment as they decide whether to stay or go and even with whom they should talk."

→ **Pray for fellowship.** "Pray that God will help each Afghan believer to connect and fellowship with at least one other believer in person, by phone or through some other technology." For safety reasons, many Christians in Afghanistan often keep their faith a secret.

→ **Pray for safe passage.** "Pray that God will provide safe passage to those who feel led by God to leave Afghanistan and provide for their immediate needs in their new location."

→ **Pray that Muslims will be saved.** "As Muslims in Afghanistan see this cruel face of Islam, pray that they will be drawn to Jesus Christ, the shepherd Savior who doesn't oppress but instead chose to lay down his life for his sheep."

→ **Pray for Christians trying to help.** "Pray for the wisdom of front-line workers and pray that God will open new pathways for them to continue their work under Taliban control."

—VOICE OF THE MARTYRS, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

Despite polarization, most Americans know and trust their neighbors, poll finds

Despite a pandemic and a year of political division, most Americans still say they trust their neighbors.

Almost 7 in 10 U.S. adults (68 percent) say they trust the people who live in their local community, according to a study from Nashville-based Lifeway Research.

"Trust is the basis of a peaceful society," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research.

"It's a hopeful sign that amid months of distancing and political unrest more than two-thirds of Americans trust those in their community."

Religious identification and practice play a role in the likelihood people trust those in their neighborhoods. Protestants (71 percent) and Catholics (69 percent) are more likely to trust their neighbors than are the religiously unaffiliated (60 percent). Evangelicals (76 percent) are also more likely to trust their community than are those without evangelical beliefs (66 percent). The survey defined "evangelicals" as those who said they strongly agreed with four statements about the Bible and Christ.

Six in 10 Americans (59 percent) say they know the names of many people who live near them.

Evangelicals (67 percent) are also more likely than those without such beliefs (57 percent) to say they know the names of people who live near them

"Remembering the names of people you meet is the first sign that you care about them," McConnell said.

"For Christians, caring can also include praying for those individuals by name and for their relationship with God."

—LIFEWAY RESEARCH

IMB to require COVID vaccine for missionaries to 'maintain access to unreached peoples'



The International Mission Board in September began requiring its missionaries to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as part of an effort to "maintain access to unreached peoples and places" and to keep its field personnel healthy.

Under the new policy, missionaries and their children ages 16 and older must be vaccinated prior to attending field personnel orientation before going on the field for service. Additionally, missionaries and their children ages 16 and older must be vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to attending "stateside conference" during their periodic return to the United States. Attendance at the orientation and the conference is mandatory for missionaries.

The new policy also requires staff members who must interact with field personnel at the orientation and the conference to be vaccinated.

The policy went into effect immediately.

More than 200 million Americans—including 75 percent of adults—have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

A growing number of the countries in which IMB field personnel serve are requiring proof of a COVID-19 vaccine to enter, remain in or exit the country. Additionally, some field personnel have reported incidents where proof of vaccination must be shown before boarding a subway or an airplane and entering a mall or restaurant.

The IMB has required vaccinations against other illnesses and diseases since the 1980s. During that time, "the number of vaccine-preventable illnesses have significantly decreased among IMB field personnel and their families," the IMB said.

The IMB said it requires vaccines for multiple reasons, including:

→ "vaccines prevent unnecessary sickness, suffering, and even death for field personnel and their families."

→ "vaccines protect national partners and those whom missionaries minister to from contracting illnesses from IMB personnel and their families."

→ "vaccines help ensure better health for field personnel so they can focus on the missionary task."

→ "vaccines lower medical expenses, which fosters good stewardship of the funds that have been entrusted to IMB."

The CDC in August approved the Pfizer vaccine for those ages 16 and older.

"The International Mission Board exists to serve Southern Baptists in carrying out the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations—even to those people in the overpopulated urban cities, even to those in the hardest-to-reach jungles and plains," said IMB President Paul Chitwood. "And the IMB is pressing forward to share the gospel even in the midst of an ongoing global pandemic that is no respecter of geographical boundaries or human demographics.

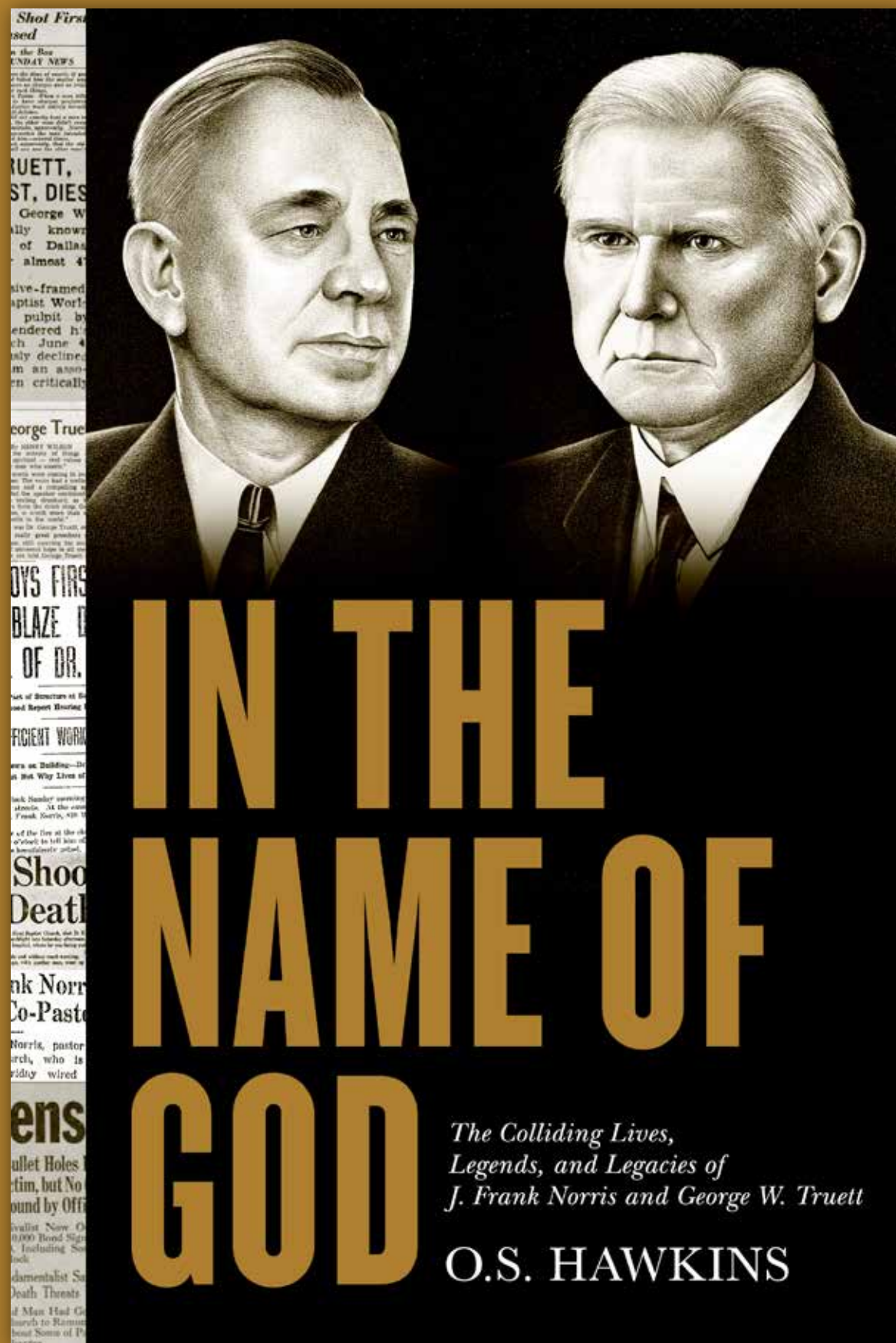
"We must make every wise decision, even when a decision is exceptionally difficult, that maintains our team members' access to the growing number of unreached peoples and places around the world where vaccines are required for entry," Chitwood said. "We also want to do all we can to undergird our team members' spiritual and physical health to maximize our effectiveness as we serve Southern Baptists in our global gospel endeavors."

—IMB

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