

SOUTHERN BAPTIST

Special Edition | NOVEMBER 2021

TEXAN

PRAYER AWAKENING

CHURCHES PUTTING A PRIORITY ON CRYING OUT TO GOD ARE EXPERIENCING A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT LIKE NEVER BEFORE



RICHARDS ON
SBTC'S FUTURE



SO YOU WANNA BE
A 'DISASTER PASTOR?'



WHY LOTTIE
STILL WORKS

Different format, same gospel mission

WELCOME TO THE NEW LOOK OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST TEXAN.

For many years the Texan has been an incredible source for news across Texas and the SBTC. For almost 20 years, the Texan has been in a newspaper format. It has served us well for those two decades. In January, the Texan will be transitioning to a magazine format. This will be a first-class magazine that offers opportunities to celebrate what God is doing across Texas and the world. It will be packed with practical articles that are helpful tools for ministry, stories of how God is moving among SBTC churches, some newsworthy items, and ways in which you can be involved in all that God is doing in our state. We are praying this will be a fresh resource for you as you serve the Lord.

While we believe you will love the new Texan, we do have one request of you. We need your stories! In fact, we cannot do what we do without you. Our convention of Southern Baptist churches is 2,682 members strong here in the Lone Star State. That's a lot of ground to cover. To give you some perspective, if we reached out to one SBTC church per day every single day trying to find out what God is doing in your area, it

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Help us tell the story of what God is doing across Texas. We believe the Texan will serve as a great tool of encouragement for SBTC churches and leaders.

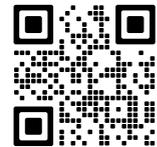
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would take us more than seven years to talk to each affiliated church just once!

So what are we looking for? Has God answered a prayer at your church that you and your congregation have been praying over for years? Is a ministry evangelism effort beginning to yield fruit? Is there a faithful servant in your church who is modeling the life of Christ in a way that sets a godly example for another generation? We want to tell those stories, and in doing so, partner together in fulfilling the command of Psalm 96:3: “Declare His glory among the nations, His wondrous works among all peoples.”

Help us tell the story of what God is doing across Texas. We believe the Texan will serve as a great tool of encouragement for SBTC churches and leaders. We pray you enjoy this first copy of the new Texan. Be on the lookout in January as we begin to make the shift. It's going to be great!

There are multiple ways you can share with us the stories of what God is doing in your church. Scan this QR code to be taken to a page where you can submit your stories; send an e-mail to Texan editor Jayson Larson at jl Larson@sbtxas.com; or follow the



“What's your story?” link on our website at texan.digital.



Dr. Nathan Lorick
SBTC Executive Director



Engage.
Encourage.
Equip.

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Ministering in a hurricane zone is an exhausting—but rewarding—calling

So What's Your Story?



Jayson Larson | Editor

Inspired by the testimony of one of the stories you'll read in this issue, I decided to let the psalms guide my prayer time one morning recently.

I landed on Psalm 19, which says in part: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4, CSB).

There's so much good stuff there—much more than I've got space to lay out here. But notice two things:

1. There is a constant, 24/7/365 testimony being proclaimed by creation. Like a rambling, loquacious child full of wonder, the creation just can't stop testifying of God's greatness—and amen to that!
2. Creation does this without the benefit of voice. Not that it can't—Jesus says if we don't testify, the rocks will cry out. But I've yet to hear a sedimentary singing soprano. Its mere presence testifies to God's greatness.

Humans are unique in countless ways, one of them being that we do have a voice with which we can sing the praises of our



IF JESUS HAS SAVED YOU, YOU'VE GOT A STORY. I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE A DOG CATCHER, A LAWYER, A TEACHER, A COLLEGE STUDENT, A STAY-AT-HOME MOM ... IF YOU'RE IN CHRIST AND HE IS IN YOU, YOU'VE GOT A STORY TO TELL.



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Tell us the stories of what God is doing in your life and your church by visiting the "What's your story?" link at texan.digital or by e-mailing jl Larson@sbtxas.com.

Mighty Creator and God. Psalm 105 encourages us to not only worship the Lord by singing praises to him, but to speak of all his wonders and make his deeds known among the peoples (v.1-2).

But I didn't come here to preach—I came here to testify, and to encourage you to start doing the same.

You're going to start frequently hearing us ask you, dear reader: "What's your story?" It's a simple-but-powerful question. If Jesus has saved you, you've got a story. I don't care if you're a dog catcher, a lawyer, a teacher, a college student, a stay-at-home mom ... if you're in Christ and he is in you, you've got a story to tell. Like every starry night, you've got a testimony to proclaim.

More often than not, I run into followers of Jesus who feel like there's really nothing special to tell about their lives. Consequently, our churches are often devoid of testimony. We're pretty good at proclaiming the testimony of Christ, but the other side of that coin is testifying about what he is doing in our lives. In doing so, we proclaim our God to be living and active, not passive and disinterested.

Here's mine, in a nutshell: I didn't grow up in church but chased a girl into First Baptist Church of Tool in junior high. While there, I went through the motions of getting saved and baptized, but my relationship with Jesus was about as deep as it was with that girl (who dumped me almost as soon as I started attending). Years later, in my early 20s, the challenges of life were crushing me and I came to realize that only Jesus could lift the burden. He so changed my life that I eventually walked away from a successful career in the newspaper business to serve him first as a missions and evangelism pastor at FBC Vidor in Southeast Texas, and then as lead pastor of a small church in Central Oregon.

And now the Lord has me back home to Texas, giving me the opportunity to seek and share the testimonies of what he is doing in the lives and congregations of our people across the state.

So friend, let me ask you—what's your story?



Michael Criner @michaelc... · 9/23/21 ...
When I read Paul in Philippians 1:3-6, and 1:21-22, I see a man who is more passionate and desperate for the LORD than a brisket sandwich.

LORD, give me THAT kind of desperation.



Brian Haynes @MBrianHaynes · 5d ...
Sat in a room with 9 pastors/ministry leaders from the city of Houston today. 4 black Americans. 4 white Americans. 1 Chinese American. All brothers in Christ. We spent 4 hours listening to each other's life story. There was laughing. There was weeping. There was healing.



Russ Ponder @RussPonder · 9/1/21 ...
35 years ago this month I asked my wife out for our 1st date!!

She said NO!

[#neverquit](#)



Kevin Alvarez @pkalvarez1 · 9/24/21 ...
The best thing about being on the road without my kids is... I get all the Chick-fil-a sauce!! 🌮👍👍

SAY WHAT?

A sampling of wisdom (and a few chuckles) from the Twittersverse



Jen Wilkin @jenniferwilkin · 9/1/21 ...
Songs of faith are teaching tools, and effective ones. In an age of widespread biblical/theological illiteracy, leaders must choose those songs with care. Many who will sing them under our leadership are spiritual infants.

Imagine if the lyrics of the ABC song were 85% accurate.



Kevin Smith @smithbaptist · 2d ...
Mercy! We do whacked out ungodly stuff, and then lament how things are. Help your people, Lord! 🙏

SBTC No. 2 in CP allocation budget for first time ever

The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention made history recently, and kingdom causes will be the beneficiaries of it.

For the first time in its 23-year history, SBTC rose to No. 2 in total Cooperative Program allocation budget with receipts totaling \$15,620,847.92 (October 2020-September 2021). That represents a nearly 8 percent increase from the previous year's giving of roughly \$14.5 million.

As they did in 2019-2020, Alabama Baptists again led the way in CP giving this past year with \$19,115,014.76 in receipts. Georgia

(\$15,430,284.18), Florida (\$15,184,241.21) and Tennessee (\$14,190,756.48) round out the top five giving states, respectively.

SBTC Associate Executive Director Tony Wolfe pointed to the biblical examples highlighted by the Apostle Paul of joyful, sacrificial investments on the part of churches in Macedonia and Philippi as templates for the faithful giving of Southern Baptists in Texas today.

"Like the apostle, we stand with great pride in the churches of the SBTC to pass along their kingdom investments into national and international mission work, seminary education, advocacy for religious liberty in the public square, and so much more," Wolfe said.

SBTC's giving is significant because

of what the dollars represent—increased support for cooperative gospel efforts. Of the \$15,620,847 given through CP, nearly \$11.5 million will go to the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board to extend the gospel reach and to plant churches across the continent and around the world.

When adding the \$8.7 million given through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the \$3 million given through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering over the same time period over the past year, SBTC churches contributed more than \$23 million to missions outside Texas.

"It is no small thing that SBTC churches gave so extravagantly in 2021," Wolfe said.



REAL PROBLEMS, KNEEL SOLUTIONS

Churches emphasizing prayer are seeing unprecedented movements of God

BY JAYSON LARSON | EDITOR



**SOMETHING
IS HAPPENING
IN CHURCHES
ACROSS TEXAS.**

In many ways, what’s happening looks different depending on which church you’re looking at, but in other ways, it looks the same.

Regardless, there’s a common source that seems to be powering a gospel movement: a laser-focused, dead-serious, get-this-right-before-anything-else recommitment to prayer.

Reports—no, testimonies—are being raised up from all corners of the state about God doing a work that hasn’t been seen by some in a long time, if ever. Marriages are being restored. Bonds are being broken. Lost causes are being found and falling into the arms of Jesus.

Which is to say, lives are being transformed and, in turn, churches.



New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview and First Baptist Church of Farwell—located nearly 600 miles apart in two very different geographical areas of the state—are only two of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches that are experiencing a fresh movement of God after a recommitment to corporate prayer.

In each, you’ll find a similar backstory: a discouraged shepherd, a church struggling to see the hand of the Lord moving among them and then a realization that the solution is not a better strategy or outreach ideas, but an all-in approach to leading their congregations into the beautiful simplicity of corporate prayer.

Todd Kaunitz, lead pastor at New Beginnings and SBTC’s incoming president, instituted a prayer meeting at his church in January in the midst of a season of discouragement. Russ Ponder—who pastored FBC Farwell for a decade before recently answering a call to lead FBC Hamlin—remodeled his church’s existing prayer meeting in March.

II
**I REALLY,
TRULY
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ABOUT AN
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SEEN IN
A VERY
LONG TIME
IN OUR
NATION.**

II

—TODD KAUNITZ

In implementing the meetings, both men took what some might call bold steps. Kaunitz prohibited any other adult ministry activities to coincide with their Wednesday night prayer meeting to keep his congregation focused on the main thing. Ponder changed the focus of their meeting from praying mainly for those who were sick to praying over the Scriptures, singing praise and worship songs and confessing their sins to one another and to the Lord.

“That’s not necessarily a comfortable thing to do,” Ponder said.

Uncomfortable, but obedient.

As a result, both pastors are reporting a movement of God that each said they have not seen prior. Kaunitz said New Beginnings has had nearly 230 people make professions of faith in 2021—with salvations and baptisms happening on an almost weekly basis. One woman, he said, even got saved *at* the prayer meeting who

“literally almost ran to the front of the room to give her life to Jesus.

“I feel like we’re just now scratching the surface, but we’re seeing the heart of God’s people transformed and changed,” Kaunitz said. “I really, truly believe that God is bringing about an awakening that we have not seen in a very long time in our nation. I’m hearing story after story after story of pastors who feel empty and depleted. The programs in their churches are great but the power of God is missing and (because of that) their hearts are being returned to prayer.”

FBC Farwell, located in a panhandle town of 1,300 right across the border from Clovis, N.M., has seen 18 people make professions of faith in Christ (with 17 following up with baptism). Thirty-one new members have joined the church since March—with about half that number being people who were unchurched and many others who returned to church after being absent for many years. The church typically has around 110 in attendance during Sunday morning worship.

II

**MAN,
I DON'T
KNOW.**

**GOD IS JUST
BLESSING.**

II

—RUSS PONDER

The numbers of those who have joined the church is noteworthy, Ponder said, because they represent nearly triple the number of people who join on average annually.

“I can’t explain it any other way than to say God is moving in a new way we haven’t seen in a long time,” Ponder said. “Man, I don’t know. God is just blessing.”

Ponder said he has been encouraged by the prayer leadership of other SBTC pastors such as Nathan Lino (Northeast Houston Baptist Church), Danny Forshee (Great Hills Baptist Church in Austin) and Kie Bowman (Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin). In fact, it was testimony on prayer given by Lino at the 2020 SBTC Annual Meeting that opened the door for the Lord to speak into Kaunitz’s heart about leading his own East Texas congregation to pray corporately.

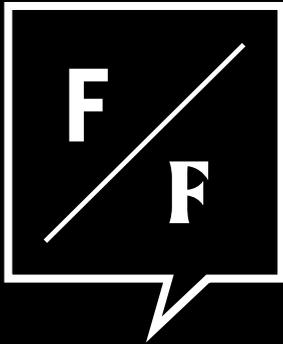
The impact of those leaders, and the prayer efforts they are leading, is having a kingdom-shaking impact, Ponder said.

“I believe some of what we’re seeing at our church is an answer to their prayers,” Ponder said. “I believe we are directly benefiting from these pastors who are just calling out to God, crying out to God for a revival.”

LISTEN UP

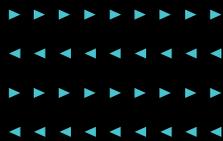
Scan QR code below to listen to Episode 16 of the Church Health & Leadership Podcast: Praying Churches are Powerful Churches





“Whatever affects the intensity of our praying,” pastor and author E.M. Bounds once wrote, “affects the value of our work.”

FACES OF THE FAITHFUL



BY JAYSON LARSON
EDITOR

Day in and day out—and countless nights, too—our faithful pastors are pushing ahead on the spiritual front lines ministering to the sick and suffering, proclaiming the gospel in every available corner, meeting felt needs, and so much more.

Knowing this, we wanted to use the next few pages to show you the faces of some of those men and let you know how you can be praying for them and their families. Some of these faces you have seen before, some you have not. Many of these faces are young.

Regardless of their diversity—be it ethnic, geographic or experiential—they all have a common need: your prayers. We’ve tried to give you a guide for that.

This is, by no means, a comprehensive list of our pastors by a longshot, but we plan to bring more faces like this to your attention in future issues. Until then, will you join us in praying for these faithful men and their precious families who are pushing back darkness in all the areas to which they have been called?

May the intensity of our prayers affect not just the value of these pastors’ work, but the kingdom for which they are laboring.


MATT BOWLES

 ▶ Age: **39** ▶ Wife/Children: **Lindy/Charlie, Max, John Rucks & Blaise**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **20** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Ovilla Road Baptist Church, Ovilla (1)**
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

We have baptized 11 people in the past year—eight over the age of 21, three over the age of 50. Our church has become more unified during the past year. Our church has become focused on evangelism.

AS A YOUNG PASTOR, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

I moved from being the youth minister to the pastor of our church during the quarantine. I have only known being a pastor during COVID. It was challenging to start casting vision and direction for a church in such a divisive political culture.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Honestly, I want to be content in doing the ministry of the Lord. I want to be content in feast and famine. We have so much good happening. It makes me afraid for my heart.


WARREN CAMP

 ▶ Age: **36** ▶ Wife/Children: **Rachel/Hudson, Adeline, Owen & Expecting No. 4**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **16** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **FBC Fort Stockton (3)**
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

As a church in revitalization, we are thankful for the new and young families that have been joining our church. The sound of babies in the congregation on Sunday mornings is a welcomed sound.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

The strengthening of God's people to do his will in between Sunday gatherings, namely openly share the gospel with those around them in conversations.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

We are a church transitioning away from some things and toward some other new things. In a Baptist church that is 115 years old, that takes time. So prayers for patience on my behalf and the people's behalf with me.


RICKY FUCHS

 ▶ Age: **40** ▶ Wife/Children: **Candace/Jacob & Cooper**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **20** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Lane Prairie Baptist Church, Joshua (9)**
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

We celebrated the 150th anniversary of the church in May. A year-and-a-half ago, under our previous pastor (who I served under for a number of years) we began a Ministry Intern Program that started with five people. This semester we were able to expand and currently have 11 men and women in our program, many from around the world.

WHAT'S ONE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED TO THIS POINT OF YOUR MINISTRY THAT YOU KNOW YOU'LL NEVER FORGET?

Ministry is a team effort, not only at the local church level, but all the way up to the SBC.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

I am praying that God will use more of the body at LPBC to be intentionally involved in evangelism, not just through the evangelism ministry of the church, but in their daily lives.


MARCUS HAYES

 ▶ Age: **44** ▶ Wife/Children: **Mandy**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **20** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Crossroads Baptist Church, The Woodlands (1.5)**
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

17 baptisms in one day!

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

Help us to be a praying, soulwinning, and discipling church and to teach our members to reach and disciple others and to live on mission.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray for our new staff to settle in and grow in Jesus while serving in our local body.


ANDREW HÉBERT

 ▶ Age: **34** ▶ Wife/Children: **Amy/Jenna, Austin, Mackenzie & Brooklyn**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **16** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Paramount Baptist Church, Amarillo (5)**
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

Our student ministry has been a highlight at our church this summer. We've seen nearly 30 students come to faith in Christ and have baptized many of them. Our student pastor urged the students to read through the entire Bible over the summer and it was exciting to see many of them accept the challenge and begin the spiritual discipline of daily Scripture reading.

AS A YOUNG PASTOR, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

The spiritual, emotional and physical toll of leading people, bearing burdens, hearing criticism, making no-win decisions during the pandemic, etc., is heavy.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray for endurance in ministry during the challenging dynamics of a post-COVID world.


JERRY HORINE

 ▶ Age: **27** ▶ Wife/Children: **Jaclyn/Kaleb, Azalea & Annabelle**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **9** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Friendship Baptist Church, Montalba (4)**
AS A YOUNG PASTOR, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

It has been a true miracle that a church established in 1860 called and followed a then-23-year-old pastor to wherever God was leading! The challenge comes with making sure I am a good steward of this.

WHAT'S ONE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED TO THIS POINT OF YOUR MINISTRY THAT YOU KNOW YOU'LL NEVER FORGET?

I have learned quickly that pastoral fellowship is of extreme value and importance. I have a group of pastors that I love dearly that get together regularly. It is a time of rest to be able to gather with other brothers in Christ and not have to carry the pressure and weight of entering in a room as "the pastor."

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Our prayer request is that God would give us a desperation for him!


ED JOHNSON III

 ▶ Age: **44**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **27** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Harvest Fellowship Baptist Church, DeSoto (4)**
HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Please pray that God would continue to help us stay on mission to lead people to trust and obey Jesus even in the midst of this COVID crisis. We would also ask that God would continue to grow our church in every way and that we would be able to secure a larger space to accommodate that growth.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

I would like to see God cause those on the fringes of our church to make movement toward the center and would love for God to allow us to break the 100-member barrier.

AS A YOUNG PASTOR, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

Pastoring members during this COVID crisis and seeking to help them fight off spiritual apathy.


DAVID MAI

 ▶ Age: **52** ▶ Wife/Children: **Phoebe/Charrisa, Irene & Theomak**

 ▶ Total Years in Ministry: **19** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Kirkwood Church, Houston (16)**
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

We have had many new members join our church this past year.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

We want to see God revive his people this coming year.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Please pray that we would be strong and fruitful for the Lord.



RICKEY PRIMROSE

▶ Age: **36** ▶ Wife/Children: **Megan/Isaiah, Judah, Joshua & Eliana**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **13** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **MacArthur Boulevard BC, Irving (10, 2.5 as lead pastor)**

AS A YOUNG PASTOR, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

Navigating the divisive issues/topics of our culture within the church (i.e. politics, race, COVID) in a manner that keeps us focused on our gospel unity and mission. Learning how to receive criticism that's offered in nonconstructive ways and managing the variety of responsibilities of the pastorate.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

We want to see God generate a movement of prayer within the body.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray for wisdom and discernment to rightly determine direction and timing and that the voice of the gospel will be louder in my mind/heart than the voice of my inner critic.



SHAWN SMITH

▶ Age: **34** ▶ Wife/Children: **Laura Ashley/Stone & Shep**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **16** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Immanuel Baptist Church, Marshall (3)**

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO CELEBRATE AT YOUR CHURCH RECENTLY?

We have had a great year despite COVID – a continual increase in attendance, baptisms and giving.

WHAT'S ONE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED TO THIS POINT OF YOUR MINISTRY THAT YOU KNOW YOU'LL NEVER FORGET?

Everyone is looking to the pastor for leadership at all times. Stay prayed up and ready for any situation.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

We want to see major evangelism and soul-winning happen by our congregation in our community.



CALEB TURNER

▶ Age: **37** ▶ Wife/Children: **Tamera/Caden, Cason & Camden**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **14** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church, Mesquite (6)**

AS A YOUNG PASTOR, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

Honoring the past while embracing the future. Determining what “problems” within our local church are worth the time, energy and equity investment to see real change.

WHAT'S ONE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED TO THIS POINT OF YOUR MINISTRY THAT YOU KNOW YOU'LL NEVER FORGET?

Being with a member as they take their last breath surrounded by their family in a hospital room. The reading of Scripture or the singing of a hymn is often better than anything else I could come up with to say in those moments.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray that God would remove the sense of spiritual apathy that has taken root in many of our churches.



WES WILKINSON

▶ Age: **32** ▶ Wife/Children: **Bethany/Jessie**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **10** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **FBC Pflugerville (Less Than 1)**

WHAT'S ONE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED TO THIS POINT OF YOUR MINISTRY THAT YOU KNOW YOU'LL NEVER FORGET?

God is faithful to sustain and empower those he calls. Doubt never means yes.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO SPECIFICALLY IN YOUR CHURCH THIS COMING YEAR?

To see a passion for Jesus that leads to a desire to reach the community and the up-and-coming generations.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray that I start well and am filled with the Lord's wisdom.

‘STAY FAITHFUL! JESUS IS COMING!’

A Q+

Jim Richards reflects on the convention he led for over 22 years

BY GARY LEDBETTER

Jim Richards became executive director of a new fellowship of 120 churches 23 years ago this month. The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention has since grown phenomenally—a leading state convention in size, giving and ministry innovation.

Earlier this year, Dr. Richards welcomed his successor, Dr. Nathan Lorick, who became SBTC’s second executive director in July. Dr. Richards serves Dr. Lorick in an advisory capacity currently and will become executive director emeritus Jan. 1, 2022. The Richards family recently moved to East Texas, nearer their kids and grandkids, and Jim is keeping a busy preaching schedule.

The Texan asked Dr. Richards a few questions about his time leading SBTC and his thoughts about the current state and future of Southern Baptist cooperation.

“ We never can hang a banner that says ‘mission accomplished’ until we see Jesus. ”

—JIM RICHARDS

Southern Baptist TEXAN: What makes you happiest about the time you led the SBTC?

Richards: The most rewarding part of my service for the SBTC was seeing churches being convictional about the Word of God and affiliating with the convention. Each autonomous local church had to make a decision: “Are we going to identify with a confessional fellowship of churches or remain in something less?” Normative-size churches and large churches came in huge numbers to be together for missions and ministry in Texas, America and the world. From 120 founding churches to now 2,700 churches, the SBTC is comprised of congregations that love the Lord Jesus and his Word.



Are Southern Baptists headed for another battle for the Bible? Another Cooperative Baptist Fellowship-type fracture?

Every day is a battle for the Bible because Satan never rests. There are always people in the church leading people astray. We never can hang a banner that says “mission accomplished” until we see Jesus.

All the identified groups (within the SBC) I know of affirm biblical inerrancy. I don't see a departure. I do think there are subtle indicators that culture is influencing the direction of interpretation. In order to maintain some interpretations, biblical inerrancy will be undermined. We have to stay on guard.

(A fracture) is more likely to happen if (dissenters) coalesce around more than one or two social issues. Commonality over a broader base of issues is necessary to form a group that survives. In 1998, when the SBTC began, there was a problem with whether or not the (existing) convention was going to affirm biblical inerrancy. That was a no-brainer that provided a stack pole for churches to rally around. At that time, the current social issues were not as prominent. Because of that one clearly defined issue, it was easier for hundreds and even thousands of churches to come together.

Can you think of one or two things that surprised you as the convention grew and matured?

After 51 years in the ministry, little surprises me. I did find one of the most difficult tasks was to serve the SBTC while the SBC and other factors out of our control impacted our ministry. Being



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Through more than two decades, I was able to see a new generation of leaders grow up. There are some extremely gifted young leaders who are committed to cooperative work.

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supportive of the SBC while doing what was best for the SBTC at times was a balancing act.

On a positive note, through more than two decades, I was able to see a new generation of leaders grow up. There are some extremely gifted young leaders who are committed to cooperative work. Pundits had predicted the demise of convention ministry. The young leaders will prove them wrong.

What is the greatest challenge on the horizon for Southern Baptists?

In one word—unity—we find the greatest challenge for Southern Baptists. The SBC is made up of a wide diversity of constituents. With the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 as a basis, churches must be willing to tolerate one another



on a number of issues beyond the faith statement. There are danger signs about matters that fall outside the BF&M 2000 in the SBC. Valid concerns have to be addressed. Unfortunately, at times when these concerns are confronted, it is the right message but the wrong messenger. If I had a solution on how to bring the varying agenda-driven groups together, I would do it immediately. It is sad to see the greatest missionary force for the gospel threatened by infighting.

Have difficulties related to our strong connection with the SBC been a challenge to our unity?

When the SBC sneezes, we catch a cold. When there is a policy misstep that is unacceptable to local pastors and congregations, we are so closely identified with the SBC that the repercussions fall on us. Even when SBTC leaders would disagree with an SBC position, it still adversely affects the state convention. We are inextricably tied together—not just in giving, though that is a major portion of it—but through our vision for national and international missions. We are sometimes caught between the churches that generally appreciate how the SBTC has helped local churches and churches that are disenchanted with an SBC action or leader.

What's the most encouraging thing you see happening in the SBTC?

Nothing excites me more than our new leadership in the person of Dr. Nathan Lorick. He is connecting with pastors and churches all across our convention. His winsome ways and strong convictions are the tools God will use to continue building the SBTC. He sees the landscape with fresh eyes. He brings new energy to

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It has been my privilege to watch the faithfulness of pastors in out-of-the-way places serve Jesus and proclaim God's Word.

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the same task of keeping the churches moving forward together. He is leading well.

I believe the SBTC—not only in Nathan Lorick, but in other leaders of his generation—has a bright hope and future. This is true of the SBC, as well. These young men and women, if they'll stay the course, and not deviate from who we are, and keep our core values, the future of the SBTC is bright.

What valedictory charge would you make to our fellowship?

The apostle Paul, in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders [Acts 20], captures some of my feelings. He loved the leadership and the church. It has been my privilege to watch the faithfulness of pastors in out-of-the-way places serve Jesus and proclaim God's Word. My heart is knitted to them. Seeing churches determine that their beliefs align with the confession of the SBTC has blessed me beyond words. Having relationships with great leaders has been equally rewarding. Echoing Paul's concerns to the Ephesians, I caution the pastors and churches about those who would lead the churches away from this strong fellowship. Stay faithful! Be courageous! Keep serving! Jesus is coming!



Getting your ministry focused on prayer

BY NATHAN LINO

Fellow church leaders, if you struggle to lead God’s people to pray together, you are not alone. I do, too. A year ago, Jesus Christ directed me to some pastors who taught me best practices for doing so and it is not an overstatement to say that a weekly prayer meeting completely revitalized our congregation, post-COVID. Here are a couple of those best practices that I’ve learned:

1. MAKE PRAYER AS MUCH A PRIORITY AS PREACHING

The pastor must decide in his heart to be as zealous about planning and leading corporate prayer as he is preparing and preaching sermons.

Kie Bowman (senior pastor, Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin) showed me the definite article in Acts 6:4 in the Greek New Testament before the word “prayer.” The definite article does appear in our English translations in Acts 2:42—“the prayers”—and refers to the disciples gathered to pray. In Acts 6:4, the pastors of the early church knew their primary responsibilities were twofold: to plan and lead corporate prayer gatherings and to prepare and preach sermons.

Vance Pittman (senior pastor, Hope Church in Las Vegas) describes the local church as an airplane with the two wings of corporate prayer and the public proclamation of the Word. The wind of God, the Holy Spirit, comes underneath these two wings and lifts the plane into the air where we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, transcending the brokenness of this world. A local church can have the most technically sound preaching, but until it learns how to pray together, she’s a one-winged airplane ... grounded.

As a pastor, I’m learning to devote as much spiritual, emotional, mental, and financial capital to leading corporate prayer gatherings as I do preaching the Sunday morning sermon.

2. CONSIDER THE LORD’S PRAYER TEMPLATE

The following three phases of prayer seem to trigger the movement of the Holy Spirit: personal consecration; talking to the Father about what matters to him; and finally, talking to the Father about what matters to us.

It seems this is at least in part what Christ taught us in the Lord’s Prayer. “Our Father who art in heaven” means we ought to first pray our way to renewed personal intimacy with the God of heaven and earth. This of course includes fresh humility, repentance, and surrender. Then in Phase Two we ought to pray “Hallowed be Your Name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” meaning we ought to talk to the Father about the things that are on his heart. For example, our personal holiness, evangelism, global missions, a greater desire to fast and pray, greater repentance of sin and personal surrender, and the like.

Then finally in Phase Three, we ought to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This is when we talk to our Father about the things on our heart, from big to small.

My church family is learning that the more we desire to gather together to pray like we desire to gather together to hear the Word preached, and the more we pray through this three-phase paradigm, the more we experience the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. If you’d like to know more, please email me at nlino@nehbc.com.



Nathan Lino is senior pastor at Northeast Houston Baptist Church.



5 THINGS FOR PASTORS TO CONSIDER AS THE HOLIDAYS APPROACH



01

USE THE SEASON AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MINISTRY MOBILIZATION

The upcoming holiday season is one where you will certainly talk from the pulpit about being thankful and preach the birth of our Savior. But for many, the holidays are difficult reminders about loved ones who are no longer here. You've always been faithful to minister to the grieving, but this year, share that ministry opportunity and equip the saints by challenging your members to be intentional about reaching out to others who are hurting this time of year. It will bless them, and it will bless you.

02

PREACH THE GOSPEL TO OTHERS – AND YOURSELF

The Christmas season presents a unique opportunity to preach the gospel to people you may not see again—if ever again. But as you proclaim the hope the birth of Christ brings, be sure to take time to meditate on that same hope as it applies to your life. As you study to preach about Jesus' life on earth, take time to reflect not just on how he offers new life to others, but how he has given new life to you.

03

CONSIDER COMMUNITY OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

For this year's churchwide Thanksgiving meal, challenge your members to bring one unchurched friend as the cost of admission. Enlist a few members to give brief testimonies during the meal so your guests can hear how God is real and active in the lives of his people. Go door-to-door and sing 2-3 Christmas carols while handing out invitation cards to an upcoming service. Don't get overwhelmed with the endless opportunities here. Just start with one and see what the Lord does with it.

04

PLAN A NEXT STEP

It's one thing to be able to get contact information from your holiday visitors so you can follow up with them. But now what? It's time to follow up. Again, this is a great opportunity to mobilize your membership. Appoint an ad hoc team to follow-up on Thanksgiving and Christmas visitors for the first quarter of 2022. Plan a sermon series or start a small group focused on the basics of faith and invite those same visitors. If they came to church, assume God is doing something in their hearts, minds and lives.

05

MAKE THE TIME TO TAKE THE TIME

We'll say it again for those in the back—no, pastor, it is not honorable to grind yourself into the ground for the sake of ministry. The end of the year can be a great time to catch your breath, spend time with family and, most importantly, rest your mind and your body in the Lord as the world (mostly) slows down between Christmas and New Year's. What can you give to your people in 2022 if you already gave them everything you had to give in 2021?



ANNUAL **2021** MEETING



But God

EPHESIANS 2:4-7

NOVEMBER 8-9 FLINT BAPTIST CHURCH

sbtexas.com/am21

Recognition
Dinner **for**
Jim & June
Richards

Monday, November 8 • 4:45-6:00 PM

Steak Dinner honoring
Jim and June Richards.

Space is limited.



Monday, November 8 • 9:00-10:00 PM

Welcome SBTC Executive Director
Nathan Lorick and his wife Jenna
following Monday night's program.

Welcome
Reception for
Nathan &
Jenna Lorick

Spanish Session

Sunday, November 7 (Please note alternate location)
at Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Pittsburg, Texas
Coffee and Fellowship at 5:00 PM
Service at 6:00 PM and a light dinner at 8:30 PM

SBTC en Español Lunch Panel Discussion

Monday, November 8 • 12:00 PM at Flint Baptist Church • Fireside Room
Topic: The Persecution of the Church in the United States
Speakers: Joshua Del Risco, George Levant, Rafael Rondón

Tuesday, November 9

7:30-8:45am	Breakfast Taco Truck Provided by SBTC Disaster Relief	Worship Center Parking Lot/Tent
7:30-8:45am	Breakfasts (Ticket required)	
	Criswell College Alumni and Friends Breakfast	CLC Fireside Room
	SWBTS Alumni and Friends Breakfast	Kids Center
	SBTS Alumni and Friends Breakfast	Outback Building
12:00-1:55	President's Lunch Panels (see next page for details)	
5-6:30pm	Missional Ministries Dinner (Cost: \$10) Guest Speaker: Jarrett Stephens	CLC
5-6:30pm	BBQ Fellowship Dinner (Cost: \$10)	Tent

Tickets
available at the
Info Booth

PANEL DISCUSSION:
10:25 AM Tuesday

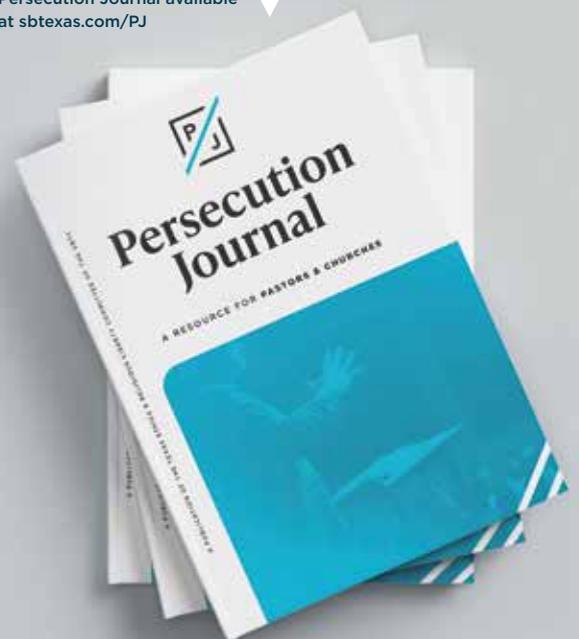
Persecution Journal available
at sbtexas.com/PJ

'PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH IN AMERICA'

Moderator: Nathan Loudin
(Milwood BC, Austin & Texas Ethics
& Religious Liberty Committee chairman)

Speakers:

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



President's Panels

Tuesday, November 9

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

12:15-1:00 PM | Breakout Session 1

1:10-1:55 PM | Breakout Session 2

Separate Breakout (Young Pastors Network, Session 1 only)

TOPICS:

Keeping the Basic: Evangelism and Prayer

Location: CLC

SBTC President Kie Bowman (Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin) will moderate this panel which includes Todd Kaunitz, Nathan Lorick, Jason Paredes, Nathan Lino and Damon Halliday. Prayer and evangelism are two indispensable actions for a New Testament Church. Like never before, churches see the unique relationship between these two powerful forces. Some of the most evangelistic pastors in the SBTC will discuss practical ideas about leading praying, evangelistic churches.

After COVID: Rebuilding the Pastor and the Church

Location: Kids Center

Join SBTC Associate Executive Director Tony Wolfe as he moderates a panel of speakers featuring Danny Forshee, Jacob Fitzgerald, Ed Johnson III and Ramon Medina. Topics of discussion will include the challenges of pastoring during a pandemic; ministry opportunities in a post-COVID world; and the future of livestreaming services.

The Church and Worship: A Conversation with Matt Boswell Young Pastors Network

Location: Lighthouse Building

Join Spencer Plumlee and Matt Boswell for this conversation about the pressing topics facing worship and the church. The discussion will include the role of the pastor in worship; biblical essentials of a worship service; the viability of online worship; the process for developing worship leaders; and creating a culture of worship in your church.



Bowman



Kaunitz



Paredes



Lino



Halliday



Wolfe



Forshee



Fitzgerald



Johnson III



Medina



Plumlee



Boswell

November 9 • 6:45-8:00 PM

TUESDAY EVENING PRAYER GATHERING

Location: Worship Center

SBTC Executive Director Dr. Nathan Lorick will lead a time of prayer interspersed with worship led by Matt Boswell. Lorick will guide participants on a number of topics as we cry out to God together for revival to break out in our state, nation and across the globe.



NOT ABLE TO MAKE IT TO THE
SBTC ANNUAL MEETING?

 **WATCH LIVE**

VISIT [SBTEXAS.COM/AM21](https://www.sbtexas.com/am21)



Download the **Bizzabo App**

A more interactive Annual Meeting experience with an up-to-date event schedule and information about breakouts.

To access the event in the app, attendees must be registered with a unique email address.



Register online at
[sbtexas.com/am21](https://www.sbtexas.com/am21)

Behind on sermon prep? Look up, in and out

BY MICHAEL CRINER



When I first became a senior pastor, I felt like a kid at a buffet—I had too much on my plate. I preached Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday nights as the senior pastor, though I was also the education minister, administrator, part-time janitor, and fill-in music minister.

Did I mention I was also in the final stages of my dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and my wife was pregnant with our third child?

Because this was a lot, efficiency in my sermon preparation was essential as the alternative would have been a dumpster fire. While we must figure out our own rhythms and work them, there were more times than I'd like to admit that I was up way too late on Saturday trying to finish before Sunday, and sometimes, I was still working on my sermon as the sermon began!

So what would I say to the busy pastor behind on his sermon preparation?

Look up

It seems that prayer should be the persistent practice during a preacher's preparation, but sadly, it is often neglected or outright ignored. When you feel that your sermon hasn't had the attention it needs, look up and pray. Prayer isn't passive; it's a reminder to rely on the one you need to help craft the message.

Look in

At times, I've been so busy *for* the Lord that I haven't spent time *with* the Lord. Even when busy, as a pastor, you have a responsibility to cultivate your own heart. If you've been busy, pause and examine your heart to see where your affections are for Jesus. If your heart is only 10 percent engaged with the Lord, you'll be less than effective when you preach and lead.

Look out

When I've been busy or in a hectic season, I remember the flock that God has called me to shepherd and consider their struggles and joys, pains and successes. Each story helps me think about my sermon (and ministry) with greater compassion and enthusiasm as I consider how a message will benefit them.



Michael Criner is lead pastor at Rock Hill Baptist Church in Brownsboro.

CAN I GET AN AMEN?

GOT SOMETHING YOU'RE CELEBRATING AT YOUR CHURCH?

SBTC churches want to say "amen" with you!

Send your photos and information to jlaron@sbtexas.com.



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An Overwhelming Response Of Love

Church at the Cross in Grapevine, which celebrated Compassion Sunday in September, recently partnered with Dallas Chinese Baptist Church in supporting Compassion International children. CATC had so many members respond to support a child through Compassion International, it ran out of sponsorship packets following the first church service and then depleted the extra packets that had been assigned to the church online! Through the kindness of the church, more than 150 children in Ecuador will have their daily needs met while being taught about the love of Christ.

—CATC PHOTO



Can You Dig It?

What began as a burden in a Sunday school class at FBC Malakoff is now growing into an ever-expanding communitywide ministry partnership. Faith In Action Outreach recently broke ground on a new facility that will help it serve not just residents of Malakoff, but all of Henderson County.

—FBC MALAKOFF PHOTO



Call It 'Spiritually Repurposed'

Sagemont Church (Houston) recently removed more than 1,000 bricks from a site where its original chapel stood. The volunteers who removed the bricks prayed that they would be used by the Lord to produce more fruit in new ways through the ministry of the church. Some of that prayer will be answered literally, as the church plans to use some of the bricks in the construction of its new Sagemont Student Building. Other bricks from the old chapel were made available for church members to take home.

—TERREN HURST PHOTO



It Was An Inside Job

Fielder Church (Arlington) Pastor Jason Paredes leads his staff in prayer over their future office building that is currently under construction. The staff prayed over not just the ministry that will one day happen in the building, but for those who will be ministered to and called out to serve from that location. Staff also wrote scripture and prayers on the inside of the walls that will soon be covered.

—FIELDER CHURCH PHOTO



That's One Tough Trigg!

Ines Cancino, a volunteer at Leon Springs Baptist Church (San Antonio) holds her buddy, Trigg Langford, at church last month. The church has rallied around Trigg and his family after he underwent two open-heart surgeries at just 3 months old. Now approaching his first birthday, Trigg continues to be an inspiration. "Trigg is truly a miracle baby," Leon Springs Pastor Dan Allen said. "That child has always responded to praise music, had big smiles and been a joy to all who see him."

Prayer Here, There & Everywhere

Members of Crossroads Baptist Church in The Woodlands gather to pray during one of their regular prayer gatherings last month. On this occasion, the members did a prayer walk throughout the church, lifting up its various ministries, workers, members and others.

—CROSSROADS BAPTIST CHURCH PHOTO

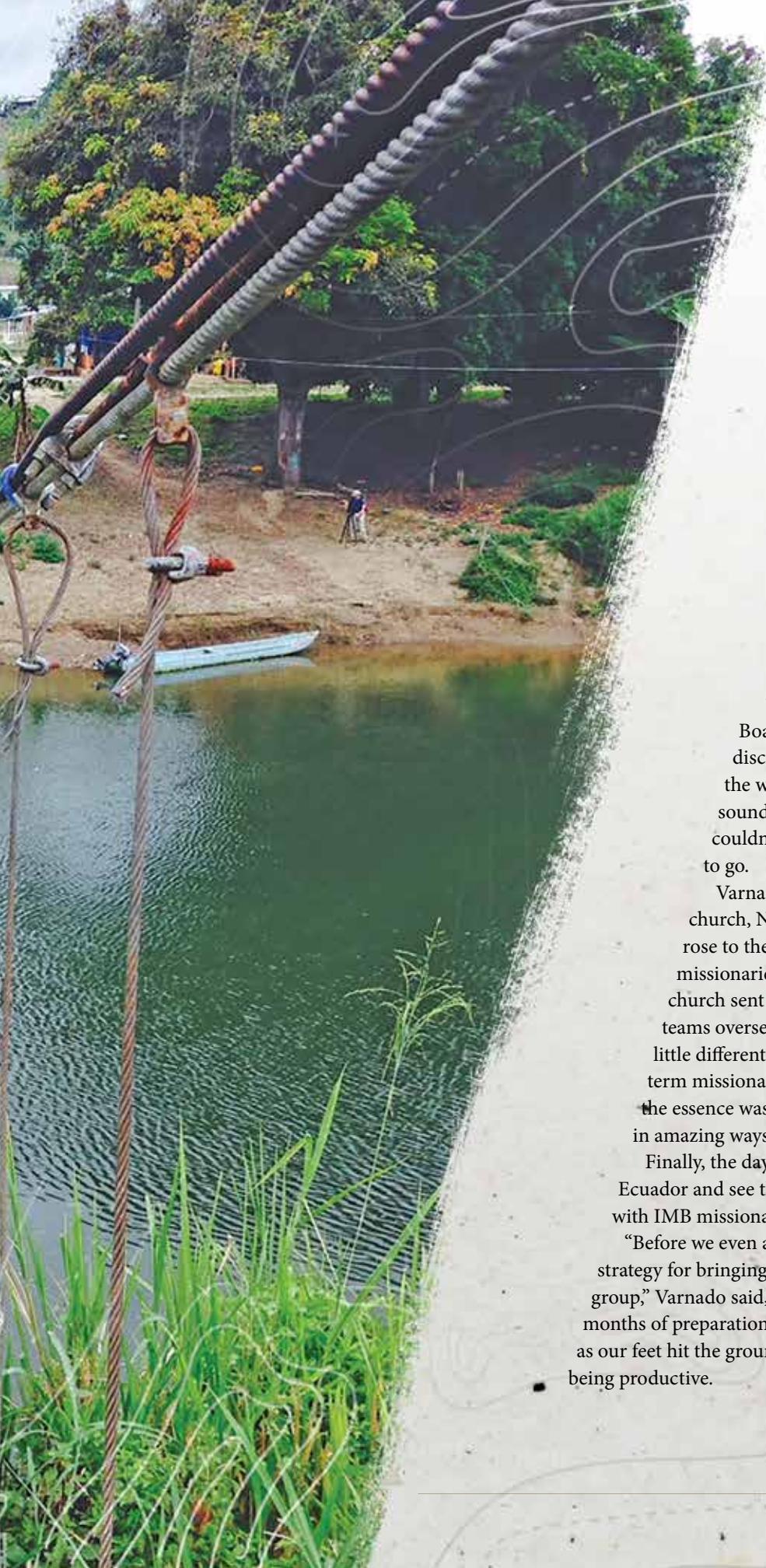
A photograph of a suspension bridge over a river. The bridge has a wooden deck and metal railings. Several people are walking across it. In the background, there are lush green trees and a small building with a thatched roof. A large white arrow points downwards from the top center of the image towards the text.

GIVE & GO

GARLAND CHURCH'S PARTNERSHIP WITH IMB

UNDERScores THE "WHY" OF GIVING

TO LOTTIE MOON OFFERING



BY SUE
SPRENKLE



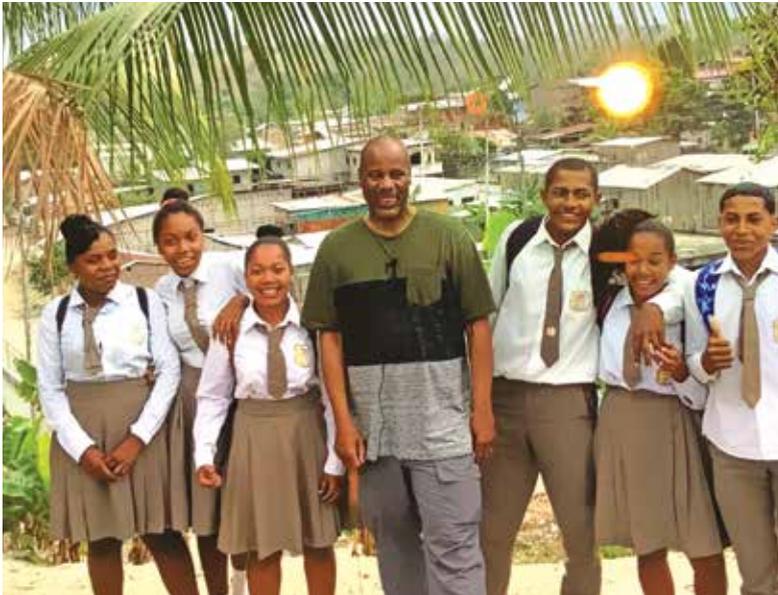
The stories got Lee Varnado's heart pumping.

The visiting International Mission Board missionaries told of their work discipling new believers and paving the way to start new churches. It didn't sound like an easy task, but the engineer couldn't help but get excited and yearned to go.

Varnado watched as members of his church, North Garland Baptist Fellowship, rose to the task of partnering with the IMB missionaries. He heard more stories as the church sent one, two and even three different teams overseas to minister. The stories were a little different in the physical tasks the short-term missionaries from North Garland told, but the essence was always the same: "God is working in amazing ways!"

Finally, the day came for Varnado to minister in Ecuador and see the benefits of churches partnering with IMB missionaries firsthand.

"Before we even arrived, we were part of their strategy for bringing the gospel to an unreached people group," Varnado said, explaining they underwent months of preparation for their assigned tasks. "As soon as our feet hit the ground, they had us plugged in and being productive."



BY THE NUMBERS

Through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Southern Baptists have given more than \$5 billion to international missions yielding:

422

NEW MISSIONARIES

18,380

NEW CHURCHES

86,587

PEOPLE BAPTIZED

144,322

NEW BELIEVERS

769,494

HEARD THE GOSPEL

—SOURCE: IMB



The IMB knows how to take a people group from unreached to reached, so we just hopped on their wheel instead of reinventing it.

BARRY CALHOUN



“This was no vacation or missionaries carting us around like tourists. It was missions in its purest form—believers working together to share Christ’s redeeming love.”

North Garland is no stranger to partnering with IMB missionaries. The church has struck up partnerships in all corners of the globe. Barry Calhoun, North Garland’s director of missions and support ministry, said it was a way to help them become more “holistic” in ministry by praying for those who have not heard about the saving grace of Jesus Christ, giving to missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering which supports the very missionaries they partner with and sending laborers to the nations.

Rather than reinvent the wheel on “going to the nations,” North Garland joined the IMB in its work. Their missionaries were already trained, knew the language, established relationships and had strategies that involved how to enter a ministry in a specific country and how to exit, leaving the work to local believers. Calhoun said this “entry-exit” plan was one of the most appealing aspects because they didn’t want to create something that would be dependent on them but something reproducible by locals.

“I can’t imagine trying to figure all of that out on our own. The IMB knows how to take a people group from unreached to reached, so we just hopped on their wheel instead of reinventing it,” Calhoun said.

The partnerships look different in each place and even from visit to visit. Varnado’s team was made up of professionals who taught workplace skills. The workshop was used as a way to gain trust in a new community. Another partnership in Sub-Saharan Africa involved sending church member George West to live onsite with missionaries for



LOTTIE MOON WEEK OF PRAYER: NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 5

two months in Madagascar. The semi-retired judge house-sat another missionary’s home and lived within walking distance of the church’s partner. He worked in conjunction with local believers in going door-to-door to share the “Creation to Christ” stories. West walked around the community with a translator visiting and sharing while two local believers walked the countryside.

“Because I had been to this location many times to minister, our partner had confidence to send me out with a translator. He didn’t need to babysit every day. He trained me on what was needed and set us loose,” West said.

The judge acknowledged that he benefited from the relationships already established by their IMB partner and the numerous trips North Garland made to this community. He and the translator were welcomed into homes for the sole purpose of listening to the stories of God.

“Having a person onsite like this is important. They know where to go and where not to go,” West said. “They pass on relationships to you. They have a vision and a strategy. I was blessed to be one small part of the bigger picture of reaching this people group with the gospel.”

SEGÚN LOS NÚMEROS

A través de la Ofrenda de Navidad Lottie Moon en el 2020, los bautistas del sur dieron más de 5 mil millones de dólares a las misiones internacionales produciendo

POR SUE SPRENKLE

Corresponsal de TEXAN

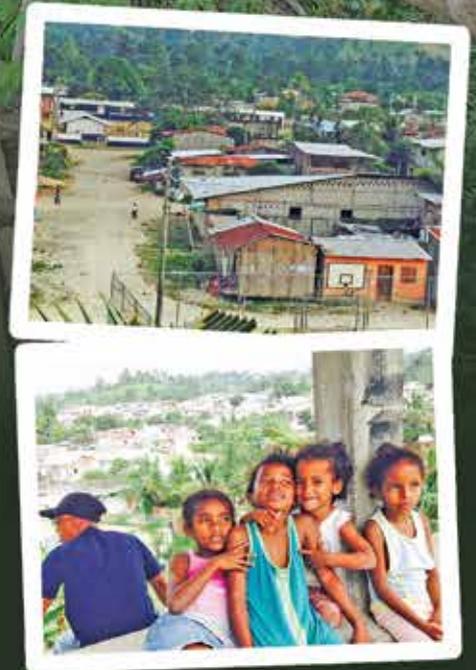
DAR e IR

LA ASOCIACIÓN DE LA IGLESIA DE GARLAND CON LA IMB SUBRAYA EL “POR QUÉ” ES IMPORTANTE DAR A LA OFRENDA LOTTIE MOON

Los relatos hicieron que el corazón de Lee Varnado se acelerara.

Los misioneros de la Junta de Misiones Internacionales (IMB) que estaban de visita hablaron sobre su trabajo discipulando a nuevos creyentes y allanando el camino para iniciar nuevas iglesias. No parecía una tarea fácil, pero el ingeniero no pudo evitar emocionarse y anhelar ir.

Varnado vio cómo los miembros de su iglesia, North Garland Baptist Fellowship, se interesaron en la tarea de asociarse con los misioneros de la IMB. Escuchó más historias mientras la iglesia enviaba uno, dos y hasta tres equipos diferentes al extranjero para ministrar. Las historias eran un poco diferentes en cuanto a las tareas físicas que los misioneros a corto plazo del Norte de Garland contaban, pero la esencia era siempre la misma: “¡Dios está obrando de maneras asombrosas!”



422

MISIONEROS NUEVOS

18,380

IGLESIAS NUEVAS

86,587

PERSONAS BAUTIZADAS

144,322

NUEVOS CREYENTES

769,494

ESCUCHARON EL EVANGELIO

—Fuente: Junta de Misiones Internacionales (IMB)



La IMB sabe cómo llevar a un grupo de personas de no alcanzadas a alcanzadas, así que nos subimos a su rueda en lugar de reinventarla

BARRY CALHOUN



Finalmente, llegó el día para que Varnado ministrara en Ecuador y viera de primera mano los beneficios de las iglesias que se asocian con los misioneros de la IMB.

“Antes de que llegáramos, éramos parte de su estrategia para llevar el evangelio a un grupo de personas no alcanzadas”, dijo Varnado, explicando que pasaron meses de preparación para las tareas asignadas. En cuanto pusimos los pies en el suelo, nos enchufaron y fuimos productivos”.

“No se trataba de vacaciones ni de misioneros que nos llevaban de un lado a otro como si fuéramos turistas. Eran misiones en su forma más pura: creyentes trabajando juntos para compartir el amor redentor de Cristo”.

North Garland no está ajena a la asociación con los misioneros de la IMB. La iglesia ha establecido asociaciones en todos los rincones del mundo. Barry Calhoun, director de misiones y ministerio de apoyo de North Garland, dijo que era una forma de ayudarles a ser más “holísticos” en el ministerio, orando

por aquellos que no han oído hablar de la gracia salvadora de Jesucristo, dando a las misiones a través de la Ofrenda de Navidad Lottie Moon, que apoya a los mismos misioneros con los que se asocian, y enviando obreros a las naciones.

En lugar de reinventar la rueda de “ir a las naciones”, North Garland se unió a la IMB en su trabajo. Sus misioneros ya estaban formados, conocían el idioma, habían establecido relaciones y contaban con estrategias sobre cómo entrar en un ministerio en un país concreto y cómo salir, dejando el trabajo a los creyentes locales. Calhoun dijo que este plan de “entrada-salida” era uno de los aspectos más atractivos porque no querían crear algo que dependiera de ellos sino algo reproducible por los locales.

“No me imagino tratando de resolver todo eso por nuestra cuenta. La IMB sabe cómo llevar a un grupo de personas de no alcanzadas a alcanzadas, así que nos subimos a su rueda en lugar de reinventarla”, dijo Calhoun.

Las asociaciones son diferentes en cada lugar e incluso de

una visita a otra. El equipo de Varnado estaba formado por profesionales que enseñaban habilidades laborales. El taller se utilizó como una forma de ganar confianza en una nueva comunidad. Otra colaboración en el África subsahariana consistió en enviar a un miembro de la iglesia, George West, a vivir allí con los misioneros durante dos meses en Madagascar. El juez semi-retirado cuidó la casa de otro misionero y vivió a poca distancia de un colaborador de la iglesia. Trabajó junto con los creyentes locales yendo de puerta en puerta para compartir las historias de la “Creación a Cristo”. West recorrió la comunidad con un traductor visitando y compartiendo mientras dos creyentes locales recorrían el campo.

“Como había estado muchas veces en este lugar para ministrar, nuestro socio tuvo confianza para enviarme con un traductor. No necesitaba hacer de niñera todos los días. Me capacitó en lo que se necesitaba y nos dejó libres”, dijo West.

El juez reconoció que se benefició de las relaciones ya establecidas por su socio de la IMB y de los numerosos viajes que North Garland realizó a esta comunidad. Él y el traductor fueron recibidos en los hogares con el único propósito de escuchar las historias de Dios.

“Tener una persona local como ésta es importante. Saben dónde ir y dónde no ir”, dijo West. “Te transmiten las relaciones. Tienen una visión y una estrategia. Tuve la bendición de ser una pequeña parte de la imagen más grande de alcanzar a este grupo de personas con el evangelio.”



THE
GOOD
THE
BAD
AND THE
GOSPEL
+

BY JANE
RODGERS

MINISTERING IN A HURRICANE ZONE

IS AN EXHAUSTING – BUT REWARDING – CALLING

As hurricane season nears each year, many pastors—especially those in the storm-prone Golden Triangle of Texas—watch weather reports with a mix of angst and awe: will their churches and communities be spared, or will the next hurricane deliver yet another gut punch from the Gulf of Mexico, leaving their congregations and neighborhoods reeling?

It takes a special person to be a disaster pastor.

Theological training isn't enough. One must know how to mobilize volunteers, marshal resources ... and sometimes man a chainsaw, mud out a flooded home or operate a ham radio.

Daniel White of First Baptist Church Kountze and Terry Wright of First Baptist Church Vidor are just two of hundreds of Southeast Texas pastors who know firsthand about the human and spiritual challenges of living—and ministering—in a hurricane zone.

A DR whirlwind

The 2021 Atlantic hurricane season is just about over—it begins June 1 and lasts through the end of November. Its arrival each year sets into motion a train of thinking and a posture of preparation for pastors that can leave their minds swirling.

“Your mind just starts going through what you need to do,” White said. “What preparations do we need to make? Who is evacuating from among the congregation? Whose home will need to be checked on? Which church members have generators?”

It can be overwhelming, said White, a long-time Southern Baptists of Texas Disaster Relief volunteer who also became a part-time SBTC DR associate in 2015.

Involvement in disaster relief has characterized White’s pastoral career for the last 15 years. While pastoring First Baptist Eagle Pass in 2006, he was recruited by Scottie Stice, then director of missions of the Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association, to use his ham radio skills to run communications for SBTC DR.

White quickly trained to become a credentialed SBTC DR volunteer.

“There are other groups out there doing DR, but very few can minister in the way that we do,” White said. “Very few are sharing the gospel.”

He got a chance to employ his DR skills sooner than expected when a tornado hit Eagle Pass within a month of his training. Immediately, he phoned Stice and then SBTC DR Director Jim

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**—DANIEL WHITE OF FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH KOUNTZE**

Richardson, both attending the National SBDR Roundtable in Alabama. Stice and Richardson hopped a plane back to Texas to arrange for help for Eagle Pass and Mexico, also hit hard by the twister.

“It’s been a whirlwind ever since,” White said.

First Baptist Eagle Pass opened its doors to hundreds of SBDR volunteers following the tornado: mass feeding crews and recovery teams, all of whom ministered on both sides of the Rio Grande.

“There were cots and sleeping bags everywhere. One volunteer

even slept in the baptistry,” White recalled.

“Daniel’s churches always serve as ministry centers for us,” Stice, SBTC DR director, said. “They open their doors whenever we need a staging area or facilities.”

First Baptist Kountze: above the storm

Tornadoes may be rare in Eagle Pass, but hurricanes and floods are common in Southeast Texas, as White found out soon after assuming the pulpit at First Baptist Kountze in November 2015. A major storm system dumped record rainfall, causing flooding in Lumberton and Deweyville. FBC Kountze, located 25 miles north of Beaumont, opened its doors as a staging ground for relief efforts.

Then came Harvey in 2016, which pummeled Aransas Pass and the Gulf Coast with damaging winds and days of torrential rain which stalled over Houston before moving to the Golden Triangle.

Although out of Harvey’s path, FBC Kountze became, at the county’s request, “a shelter of last resort,” a respite stop for evacuees awaiting transport to larger shelters.

They came. And they stayed, as many as 60-70 at the height of the crisis.

So what does a small church do when faced with such a daunting task?

Said White: “The best we could.”

They wrangled cots and accepted donated food from grocery stores and restaurants. Volunteers from the church and other

congregations came to cook. “We made it happen,” White said. The fact that FBC Kountze had established SBTC DR teams in place helped.

When most evacuees cleared out after a week, White and the congregation still fixed meals for those remaining and for first responders.

“When disaster happens, the community can rely on us,” White said. “Our involvement gives us a good image in the community. We have a witness and a testimony. Sometimes people get involved in our church who might not otherwise.”

First Baptist Vidor: a tale of four storms and a pandemic

A mixture of involvement with SBTC DR and Texas Relief/Rebuild is a hallmark of Pastor Terry Wright’s DR ministry at First Baptist Vidor. With four hurricanes in 14 years directly impacting his church, Wright understands the challenges of living through disaster.

“Rita, Ike, Harvey, Imelda—four major hurricanes and seven smaller storms that caused some kind of response,” Wright said, summarizing the weather events affecting the church from 2005-2019.

Wright said Harvey was the worst by far. The Category 4 storm stretched resources thin across the region and damaged half the church’s property.

The buildings at FBC Vidor that did not flood were used to shelter families who had lost their homes and relief groups who came to help.

Then Imelda struck in 2019 with a vengeance.

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“Everything we owned was flooded during Imelda except for the office building,” Wright said. Suddenly there was “no place to go” for services.

A recent merger with the former Northwest Baptist Church on the north side of Interstate 10 eased the situation as FBC Vidor focused efforts on repurposing that property while dealing with insurance and other issues in rebuilding the main campus.

FBC Vidor moved into the old Northwest Baptist Church property. Then the pandemic hit, complicating things because the facilities

were not large enough to allow for COVID protocols and social distancing.

“Imelda made the pandemic very, very hard on the church,” Wright admitted.

Yet these days the waters are smoother.

“We are back into our regular facilities,” Wright said, noting that both sanctuary and educational spaces damaged during Harvey and Imelda have been remodeled.

The process has been lengthy, involving insurance challenges resulting from the settlements of multiple claims, but the church emerged without having to take on additional debt, Wright noted with gratitude.

Disasters demand a plan

In the Golden Triangle region, the only things certain are death, taxes and storms.

When a hurricane is brewing in the Gulf, Wright said “an immediate apprehension” sets in. He and his staff adopt a mindset of preparedness.

“You not only have your own property to prepare [for a storm], but you have to prepare for insurance issues. Do you have the right documents?” Wright said. “You have to prepare your people, too. There will always be folks who do not have a place to go. The church helps them in evacuation.”

Wright called the safety of his people the “first priority,” adding that every story is different. “Some you cannot really prepare for. You have to wait and see what happens and come back and deal with it.”

The staff has a procedure it exe-

cutes when a hurricane warning or watch is announced. Church members are notified electronically of the threat. Staff members identify people's needs. Others secure the buildings and property. They prepare for the aftermath, ensuring there is fuel on site and that the church's generators are operational. The church's "rolling stock"—trailers, vans, buses—must often be relocated to higher ground. Deacons and members help the staff with the process.

The preparation alone can exhaust a church days before a storm actually hits.

Rita's evacuation was the largest in U.S. history, Wright said, occurring when the trauma of Katrina was still fresh. Houston was evacuated first and many headed eastward to the Golden Triangle. Then the storm changed course and came there.

Evacuation was a surreal event, Wright said, proving for many to be just as stressful as what they would encounter in terms of damage after the storm.

Harvey brought more than its share of flooding. "There was water in Orange County deeper than anyone living had ever seen," Wright said. "Senior adults lost all the mementos of their lives. If you didn't flood, your house became a dormitory for people whose houses had flooded."

Month after month of people helping people took a toll, he added. The stresses on church staff, leadership, and members were constant.

"You have to be careful that it doesn't take a toll on your re-

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—TERRY WRIGHT

lationships," said Wright, who has pastored his home church for nearly three decades. "Heavy stress brings out the best and worst in people. It affects the family. It affects the church family."

With crisis comes opportunity

Even so, there is a refining process that can happen for the churches that trust the Lord to work all things together for good in the midst of challenging seasons.

"Hurricane Rita changed our church for the better," Wright said. "We saw spiritual maturity. We learned what really mattered and what didn't. People and the Lord are what matter."

His congregation experienced

blessings in the crisis: enriched fellowship, renewed commitment, the chance to show younger generations the benefit of denominational cooperation. Wright also said he personally received the blessing of getting phone calls and texts from people across the nation who have previously assisted his church after a storm—including from SBTC executive director Jim Richards (who has since retired) and chief financial officer Joe Davis.

Like White, Wright affirmed that disasters also provide gospel opportunities. Recalling the old gospel song, "The Lighthouse," which depicts Christ as a lighthouse in times of storm, Wright said the Lord also expects the church to "be a lighthouse."

"In your community, people who have been hard-hearted toward the gospel—their hearts are softened," he said. "When you minister in a tangible way, when a mud out unit pulls up and they stop and build a relationship, preconceived notions about the church vanish. Hearts melt."

Though the physical and mental toll have been heavy, Wright admits that his story and the stories of other "disaster pastors" is one that mimics the biblical account of Jonah—who was "stretched beyond his comfortable comfort zone."

"If you had told me 35 years ago—I was a church planter—that this is going to be what you do, [be] a disaster pastor, I wouldn't have gotten in line," Wright said. "Who wants to be in that group?"

Only those who are called to it.



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▶ **Adam W. Greenway**

President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
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WHAT'S UP NEXT?



For more about SBTC events or to view a more detailed calendar, visit sbtexas.com/events

Empower Conference

Feb. 28-Mar. 1 • IRVING
sbtexas.com/empower

Heart of the Child Conference

April 1-2 • OKLAHOMA CITY
heartofthechild.net

Breathe Deep Retreat

MAY 5-7 • MARRIOTT DALLAS
ALLEN HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER
sbtexas.com/breathedeep

Israel Pastors Trip

July 12-21
sbtexas.com/israel

EQUIP Conference

August 13 • SWBTS, FORT WORTH
sbtexas.com/equip

SBTC Annual Meeting 2022

Nov. 14-15 • AMERICAN BANK
CENTER, CORPUS CHRISTI
sbtexas.com/am22

ALSO COMING IN 2022

TAX SEMINARS – all in January

- 18 Tax Seminar, Online Event
- 19 Tax Seminar, Online Event
- 25 Tax Seminar, Online Event
- 27 Tax Seminar, Online Event

PASTOR/WIFE DATE NIGHT

- Jan 21 Pastor + Wife Date Night, Rockpointe Church, Flower Mound
- Feb 4 Pastor + Wife Date Night, FBC McAllen
- Mar 11 Pastor + Wife Date Night, Spring Baptist Church
- Sept 9 Pastor + Wife Date Night, Paramount Baptist Church, Amarillo

FEBRUARY

- 25-26 Spanish Session of Empower Conference, Fielder Church, Arlington

M3 CAMPS

- July 14-18 Student M3 Camp, Glorieta Conference Center, Glorieta, N.M.
- June 20-24 Student M3 Camp Highland Lakes, Spicewood



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But | God

EPHESIANS 2:4-7

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