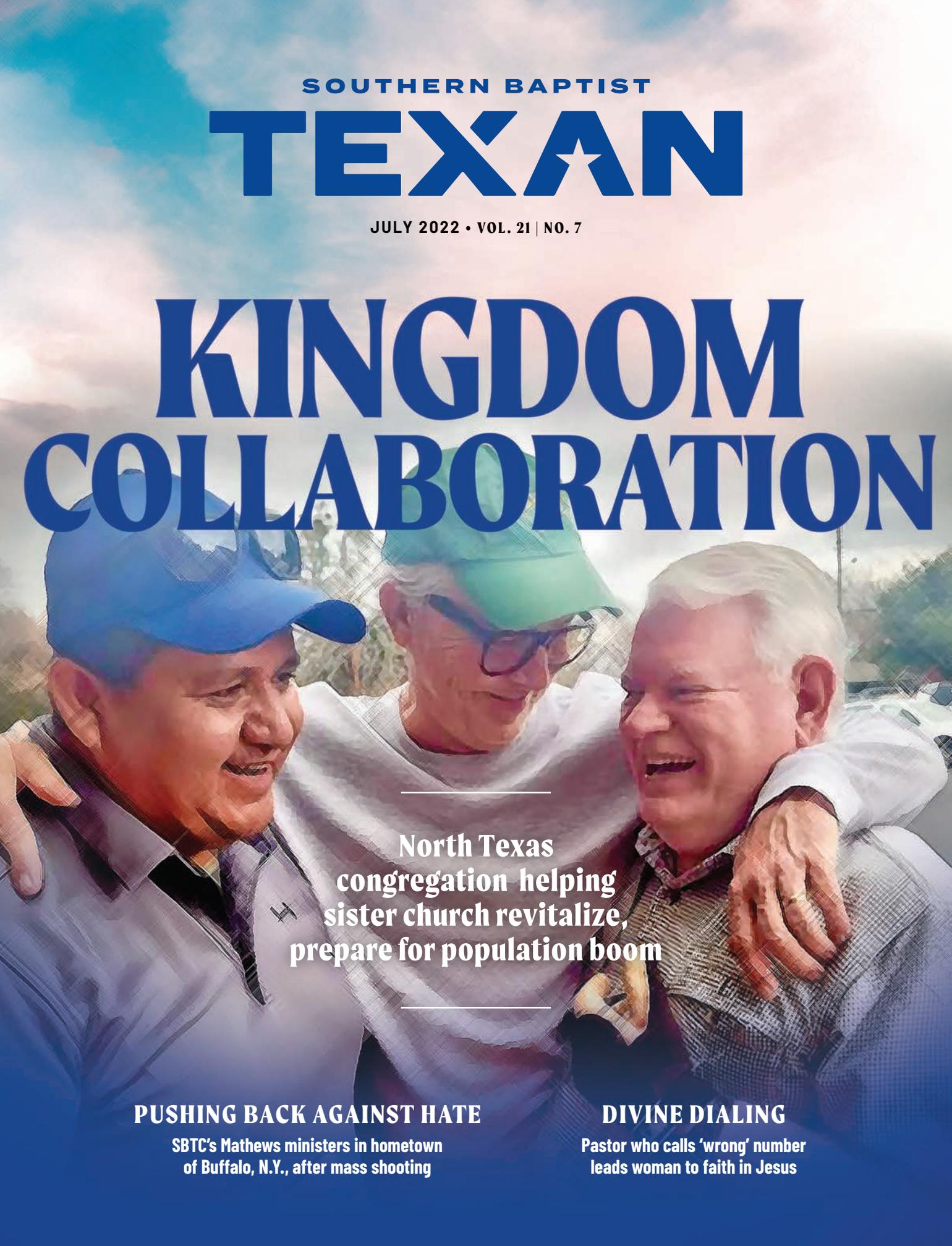


SOUTHERN BAPTIST
TEXAN

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KINGDOM COLLABORATION



North Texas
congregation helping
sister church revitalize,
prepare for population boom

PUSHING BACK AGAINST HATE

SBTC's Mathews ministers in hometown
of Buffalo, N.Y., after mass shooting

DIVINE DIALING

Pastor who calls 'wrong' number
leads woman to faith in Jesus



Growing through criticism

I will never forget that moment. It was a Sunday morning well over a decade ago. I had labored over my message for the church all week. I worked diligently to craft a sermon with the right mix of exposition, illustration, and application. I poured hours of my life into that message.

As I stood behind the pulpit and delivered the message the Lord had prompted in my heart, it seemed to be connecting with everyone in the place. It was one of those days you felt like you hit a home run.

Until the moment came.

As I talked to people after the service, a man walked up to me and gave me some sharp criticism over my message. He strongly disagreed with something I said and wanted to be sure I knew it. I thanked him for his input and moved on to the next person.

The remainder of the day I could not find the ability to celebrate all that God did in that service and in the lives of people simply because of the criticism of that one person. I was blinded to the potential blessings that hundreds may have received because of the sharp and painful words of one man.

Have you ever had that experience? I have had many others like it since then. However, as I have grown in leadership, I have learned how to grow through criticism as well.

Criticism is a natural part of being a leader. The criticism you receive as you lead may or may not be helpful. It may or may not be delivered with the right intentions. It may or may not be substantiated. How-

ever, the criticism itself will not ultimately determine anything in your leadership, but how you respond will.

As I have grown as a leader and in the grace of our Lord, I have learned two significant key components on dealing with criticism:

Don't internalize criticism from someone you wouldn't seek advice from

The presence of critics will be a permanent fixture throughout your leadership. I have learned that the people who truly care about me give criticism in a way that is helpful and profitable in my walk with the Lord and my calling. They are not just out to get me or out to find something to criticize in order to hurt me. These are the people who spur me on to be a better leader every day. If you are in a position of leadership, I encourage you to be diligent and only accept criticism from those you trust.

The best response to criticism is always prayer

As a leader I am constantly drawn back to the life and leadership of Moses. He rarely got a day off from being criticized for the challenges the nation of Israel faced. Almost every time he was criticized by the people or even his own family, you found him on his face praying! Moses knew the best way to respond to criticism was to seek wisdom from the Lord.

I started doing this in my life a few years ago and it was a game-changer. In moments of sharp criticism, nothing calms my mind and heart like taking it directly to the Lord. Praying allows me to guard my heart from becoming bitter or angry at the one who is criticizing. In fact, it puts me in the right place to be objective with the criticism I receive. Prayer should be our first response. Let me encourage you to stop and pray next time you feel the weight and sting of some critic's words.

You will have challenges, you will have critics, and you will have voices seeking to derail you from what God has called you to. However, never let your mind and heart get positioned to listen to those voices above the One voice that called you and equipped you to lead.

I am praying for you as you lead and lead well! I am in your corner. I am your cheerleader. I believe in you! I love you and am honored to serve you!

Dr. Nathan Lorick
SBTC Executive Director



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Connection and conviction in Southern California

ANAHEIM, CALIF.

As the worship singing ended and a line of chairs were queued on the stage at a small Baptist church in this suburb of Los Angeles, those in attendance quickly realized that a sermon wasn't going to be delivered on this breezy and bright Southern California Sunday morning.

What members and guests got instead was a panel discussion consisting of church members who, in various ways and apart from any ministry of the church, have found ways to connect and minister to their communities. One by one, each panelist gave a testimony of how they are planting gospel seeds as they go about their daily routines.

One couple, the Nishimotos, said they decided to go door-to-door during the pandemic and meet the practical needs of their neighbors, distributing hand sanitizer, face masks, and toilet paper at a time when stores couldn't keep them in stock. Another couple, the Spykermans, used their daily walks to engage other walkers who, over time, trusted them enough to share struggles in their lives for which they had no answer.

The pastor, Mike, said he has used walking his dog as an opportunity to talk to people he sees along his regu-

The modern church does a lot of things well. We preach well. We teach well. ... But one thing we struggle to do well is connect with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

lar route. One of the women he greets regularly on those walks, a Muslim, recently told him she has lost two husbands—one to cancer and another to a car wreck. “She was just desperate, and you could tell she wanted to tell someone her story,” he said. “And when she tells me her story, it opens the door for me to tell her my story. And my story is God’s story.”

These couples weren't just describing “buddy evangelism,” a practice of befriending someone with the intent of eventually sharing a gospel message that never seems to conveniently fit in the friendship. They were describing efforts to make personal, relational connections with people they don't know for the purpose of inviting them into a spiritual space—either by praying for people or telling them their own stories of how Jesus has transformed their lives.

The modern church does a lot of things well. We preach well. We teach well. We are great at putting on world-class events. But one thing we struggle to do well is connect with our brothers and sisters in Christ. I'm not talking about small talk and handshakes on Sunday morning. I'm talking about down-and-dirty, sometimes-inconvenient, real-life connections that you can count on when the going gets tough. I'm talking about the manifestation of Galatians 6:2, where the overwhelming burden that you are carrying is lightened by someone who loves and cares about you enough to give their most precious—and rare—commodity: their time.

As needs have been met and the gospel has been proclaimed, several of the panelists testified that they have been blessed in ways they would have never imagined by simply putting in the effort to get to know the people God has put in their lives.

“I can't tell you how much joy there is in loving people without expectation,” one woman on the panel said.

No, the congregation didn't hear a sermon on this particular Sunday, but that'll preach.

Are you ready for the rest of 2022?

It's hard to believe that half of the year is now gone. Rather than worry about days past, let's focus on preparing for the rest of the year. Use this list as a spiritual checkup to evaluate your walk, and then invite others to pray for you:

01

Am I reading the Bible and praying daily?

If you adopted an annual reading plan at the beginning of the year, is your reading up to date? If you don't have a plan, how are you doing in your Bible intake? Are you praying regularly without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)? Are you praying for lost people (Romans 10:1), for believers to share the gospel boldly (Ephesians 6:18-20), for government and church leaders (1 Timothy 2:2), for your enemies (Matthew 5:44)? If either discipline has been a struggle, you can renew your commitment today.



02

How often have I shared the gospel this year?

Is the gospel so striking to you that you cannot keep it to yourself? Have you reached beyond the church world to develop gospel-centered relationships with unbelievers? For what non-believers are you praying as Paul did (Romans 10:1)? Ask God to increase your burden for lost people throughout the remainder of this year (Romans 9:1-3). Start praying for a few non-believers by name today and ask other believers to pray you will boldly and clearly share the gospel with them.

03

Am I faithfully fighting sin in my life?

Be honest—have you experienced victory over sin this year? Is there a hidden sin that continually haunts you even though you've sought to overcome it? If so, what steps do you still need to take this year? The good news is that God is a God of new beginnings. Turn from that sin, confess it, and seek accountability. Start afresh. God really is "faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

04

Who is walking more with God because of my influence this year?

That is, are you making disciples? Have you purposefully walked with others as they follow Christ? It's one thing to simply live a good life in front of others; it's another matter to intentionally invest in somebody else's life. I would even say that if you can't name someone in response to this question, you may need to refocus your discipling for the rest of the year. At a minimum, schedule a monthly lunch with someone you might encourage.

05

How would my family assess me as a family member and a believer this year?

Those who live with us are most equipped to evaluate our spiritual walk. If I were to ask your family about your walk with God, what would they say? Would they say your life models Christ? Or, might they recognize that who you are on Sunday is not who you are the rest of the week? Again, you have the opportunity beginning today to make adjustments for the rest of the year. That's good news!



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DENISON

There were so many times Mark Baca considered leading his family away from the church they had called home for nine years.

Difficulties at the church abounded. Several pastors had come and gone. Parts of the building were in disrepair. Attempts to set things in order at the church were wobbled by COVID. Attendance began to drop as some members lost patience and went elsewhere.

“There were times when it was really rough,” Baca said. “But every time me and my wife tried to go somewhere else, God kept pulling us back and we felt like He was telling us, ‘I know you want to leave, but you need to stay.’”

Baca and others who stayed at the church are now seeing God’s hand move through a partnership with a sister church located just two miles away, Parkside Baptist Church. In late 2021, leaders at the struggling church approached Parkside’s pastor, Jeff Humphrey, to ask if his church would be willing to take over the property and help revitalize it.

Humphrey, who has been at Parkside for about two years, said he wasn’t sure if his church would be willing or ready to take on that kind of project. But there was a deeper connection between the churches that brought with it a willingness to answer the call for help. In the late 1950s, Parkside was responsible for planting the church, which at the time was called Hyde Park Baptist Church.

But over the years, difficulties led the church to become a campus site of another church in the area.

So in essence, the struggling church wasn’t just a sister congregation of Parkside. It was born of it. Several of the members at Parkside were once members at Hyde Park.

“Because our people had so many fond feelings for the years that they saw ministry going on there, they were like, ‘Let’s do it,’” Humphrey said.

‘A new day’

Parkside took a holistic approach to the revitalization project at the struggling church, which was rebranded Living Hope Fellowship. Part of that approach led Humphrey to ask members of his church to become temporary missionaries who would not only attend Living Hope on Sunday mornings but assist with many of the necessary tasks that would be needed to revitalize the church. Sixteen Parksidiers answered that call, with some of them joining

Brooklynn Burch (left) and Mark Bacca recently became the first two people baptized at Living Hope after its revitalization partnership with Parkside. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**



“ WE WERE VERY SAD IN OUR SPIRIT THAT THE POSSIBILITY EXISTED THAT GOD’S WORD MIGHT NOT BE SHARED ON THAT CORNER ANYMORE. ... WE JUST FELT VERY STRONGLY THAT WE WANTED TO DO WHATEVER WE COULD TO KEEP THAT GOING. ”

JOHNNIE SMITH
Deacon at Parkside Baptist Church

the worship team and others taking teaching roles. That team has also taken the lead in making improvements to the building, which included replacing a cross that had once been fixed to the outside of the facility but had since fallen.

Humphrey said it was critical in the first phase of the revitalization—which is being aided by funding from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention—to create a vibrant worship experience at Living Hope and add Sunday school classes for all ages by Easter. Ed Fleming, a member of Parkside who had been involved with other revitalization-type projects, was called to serve as Living Hope’s interim pastor through the first phase. In addition to preaching, Fleming said he began meeting with members one-on-one to give them an opportunity to be heard after weathering a difficult season for the church. Some of those conversations were difficult, Fleming said, but necessary and productive.

“I was trying to encourage the people and rebuild trust,” Fleming said, “and to show them that it was a new day.”

More healthy churches, not fewer

Denison has a population of just over 26,000 people located in what is known as the Texoma region of the state, consisting of a cluster of mostly rural counties on the Texas-Oklahoma border. According to census numbers, Denison has experienced roughly 10 percent growth since the 2010 count, and in Texas, populations are only increasing and becoming more diverse. In other words, more healthy churches are needed, not fewer. Humphrey said the Texoma population is projected to double in the next 10-15 years.

But there was another reason leaders at Parkside didn’t want Denison to lose another church.

“We hated to see that place not be a church,” said Johnnie Smith, a 77-year-old Parkside deacon who began attending Hyde Park Baptist Church shortly after it was started. Smith is now among the group of temporary missionaries at Living Hope. “We were very sad in our spirit that the possibility existed that God’s Word might not be shared on that corner anymore. ... We just felt very strongly that we wanted to do whatever we could to keep that going.”

Living Hope Fellowship has now moved into the next phase of the project, which will focus on equipping those involved in the worship service and Sunday school classes to reach, teach, and minister. Humphrey said the hope and prayer is that Parkside



“ WE WANT TO COLLABORATE. IF WE CAN DO SOMETHING TO HELP THE OTHER CHURCHES AROUND US BE STRONGER, LET’S GO, BECAUSE IF GOD WINS, WE ALL WIN. ”

JEFF HUMPHREY

can turn the operations of Living Hope back over to its own leaders by the end of 2022 or early 2023.

Encouragement in the congregation is rising as it watches what the Lord is doing through an effort that Humphrey calls “cooperative, not competitive.” When the Living Hope revitalization project began in January, the church had 26 adults and eight children regularly attending. By the end of April, there were 36 adults and 10 children attending. Easter was a particularly encouraging time for the church, as 73 people were in attendance after the congregation did an outreach blitz in the neighborhoods surrounding the church. By May, the church experienced its first two baptisms since the partnership began.

Baca, who was baptized at an early age but realized he had not fully trusted Jesus until years

later, was one of them. He is now serving on the worship team and with the church’s youth.

Humphrey said Parkside has a vision to continue partnering with other churches to revitalize and also to plant new churches. In such partnerships, he sees a picture of the gospel that brings together rather than separates, that cooperates rather than competes.

“Texoma needs a lot of great, healthy churches that have a lot of diversity in reaching a very diverse population that’s coming our way,” he said. “We don’t want to compete. We want to collaborate. If we can do something to help the other churches around us be stronger, let’s go, because if God wins, we all win.”

As part of the revitalization process, Parksiders have had several work days at Living Hope.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

TEXANS PLAY KEY ROLES AT HISTORIC 2022 SBC ANNUAL MEETING

ANAHEIM, Calif.—The Southern Baptist Convention's 2022 Annual Meeting was not only a historic one, but one in which Southern Baptists of Texas Convention pastors played key roles. For more detailed stories on each brief found below, scan the QR code.



MESSENGERS TAKE HISTORIC ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

Messengers to the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting overwhelmingly approved two recommendations presented by the Sexual Abuse Task Force on June 14.



The vote clears the way for the formation of an Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF) and the creation of a database that will allow church and ministry leaders to track, in the words of the recommendation, "pastors, denominational workers, ministry employees, and volunteers who have at any time been credibly accused of sexual abuse with present or past associations with a cooperating Southern Baptist church or entity."

The messengers' actions represent the next step in an ongoing effort to prevent sexual abuse, protect those who have already been abused, and to respond to future allegations of abuse in SBC churches and entities.

FARMERSVILLE'S BARBER ELECTED SBC PRESIDENT

Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church of Farmersville, was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14 following a long day of business that included the entry of a last-minute candidate into the race and a subsequent runoff.



Barber received 60.87% of the vote (3,401 votes) in the runoff to defeat Florida pastor Tom Ascol, who received 38.88% of the vote (2,172 votes). Among the 8,098 registered messengers, 5,587 cast ballots during the runoff.

Barber, 52, is the 47th president in SBC history and the second Southern Baptists of Texas Convention pastor to serve in the position.

ARLINGTON'S WELLMAN ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF SBC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Jared Wellman, pastor of Tate Springs Baptist Church in Arlington, was elected chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee during its June 13 meeting.

The Executive Committee acts as the SBC's fiduciary entity and conducts its affairs during the time between the convention's annual two-day meetings. This work includes receiving Cooperative Program funds and designated gifts and disbursing them according to the allocation budget approved by messengers to the annual meeting, in the case of Cooperative Program funds, and according to the instructions of the donor in the case of designated offerings. Wellman is one of the longest-tenured members of the committee.

Another SBTC pastor, Michael Criner, was elected chairman of the 2022-23 Committee on Nominations.

PASTORS' CONFERENCE FEATURES MANY LONE STAR STATE FACES

From the planning to the worship music to the preaching, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention pastors were a major presence at the Southern Baptist Convention's 2022 Pastors' Conference June 12-13.

Collin Baptist Association Executive Director Matt Henslee served as president of the conference, which featured messages from Colossians and was centered on the theme "We Proclaim Him."

The conference included sermons from Marcus Hayes, pastor of Crossroads Baptist Church in The Woodlands; Matt Carter, pastor of Houston's Sagemont Church; Israel Villalobos, pastor of Spanish ministries at Irving's Plymouth Park Baptist Church; and Julio Arriola, Send Network SBTC director. Worship was led by Matt Boswell, pastor of The Trails Church in Celina, accompanied by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Cowden Hall Band.

—Reporting by Jayson Larson, Gary Ledbetter, and Jane Rodgers.

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Let's charge ahead with confidence

We are seeing something phenomenal happen across our nation. There is a wave of prayer movements rising in various places. I am hearing story after story about churches that are recognizing the absence of the presence and power of God and have called their people to corporate prayer. Churches are returning to weekly prayer meetings and are devoting the entire gathering to calling on the name of the Lord.

The outcome of these prayer meetings has been amazing! These churches are seeing the supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit being poured out among them in exponential and tangible ways. They are experiencing radical conversions, record baptisms, marriages restored, addictions broken, sin confessed, miraculous healings, church unity, and the sweetness of fellowship with Jesus.

New Beginnings Baptist Church, where I serve, is one of those churches. We were a church that found ourselves headed into 2021 in a state of crisis. From the perspective

I TRULY BELIEVE THAT IF WE DEVOTE OUR CONGREGATIONS TO PRAYER, WE WILL SEE A MOVEMENT OF GOD IN OUR STATE AND NATION THAT WE HAVE NEVER SEEN.

of how many churches are measured, we looked healthy. We were growing numerically, we were financially stable, and our ministries were busy and thriving. We looked alive, but we were on the brink of death! We were missionally distracted, spiritually dry, and relationally divided. We had lost our passion, were not seeing spiritual fruit, and were going through the motions of church. Unfortunately, it was difficult for us to recognize.

In this season of darkness, God brought us to a place of brokenness and called us to pray. Our church cleared our Wednesday night schedule and we began to meet weekly for corporate prayer. It is difficult to describe what God has done in our church over the past 18 months. We have seen an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that cannot be explained by preaching or plans. The only explanation is that we called on the Lord and He heard our cry and is answering.

Our story is just one of dozens of stories of churches that have returned to prayer and are seeing God move in power among them. I believe that revival is coming! But it is coming for those who will return to the Lord in prayer. Throughout God's Word and church history, we have seen that when prayer is prioritized among God's people, it becomes a catalyst for God moving with power among His people. Every significant movement of God both biblically and historically is birthed through desperate prayer.

My prayer is that the churches of our convention will prioritize corporate prayer as essential. Let us pray more in our Sunday gatherings. Let us set aside a corporate time of prayer weekly. Let us have special seasons of fasting and prayer built into our yearly rhythms. I truly believe that if we devote our congregations to prayer, we will see a movement of God in our state and nation that we have never seen.

My heart's desire is to see the greatest prayer movement in the history of our nation. I believe that it would lead to us witnessing the greatest revival we could ever imagine. Let us clear our schedules, gather our people, and cry out to the God who hears!



Becoming a church friendly to those with special needs

Editor's note: Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches will observe Special Needs Sunday on July 10. The SBTC can help you evaluate your current level of accessibility and take steps to welcome even more families. Contact Sandra Peoples at specialneeds@sbtexas.com to get started.

When we got our son's autism diagnosis in 2010, a lot changed for our family. Our plans for his schooling changed, the way we spent our money changed ("therapy" got added to our budget), and even our home changed as we turned an extra room in the basement into a safe sensory space for him.

One more important part of our lives also had to change—our church. At the time, my husband pastored a small church in rural Pennsylvania. For us to stay there and serve the congregation God had called my husband to shepherd, they would have to welcome James and make accommodations for him. Thankfully, they did!

God raised up helpers in the church who had backgrounds and experience in therapy and special education, as well as family members of those with disabilities to guide us in those early years of making first our children's ministry and then all our church ministries welcoming for special

needs families. James flourished there, and more families came because our church was known for being accessible. We didn't make it complicated or expensive. We just followed Jesus' example in the gospel of Matthew.

After Jesus' triumphal entry, Matthew 21 tells us He cleansed the temple of moneychangers and those selling animals for sacrifice. They were likely set up in the area open to Gentiles and those who were considered unclean, including people with disabilities. When Jesus drove them out and overturned the tables, Scripture tells us "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them" (v. 14). The barriers were gone—they could enter the temple area and come close to Jesus.

Any church can break down barriers and invite those without access to come close to Jesus and be part of our church families. It takes three simple steps:

Identify the barriers that may be keeping special needs families from attending your church

According to the 2000 census, one in five families in the U.S. has a member with a disability. If that percentage isn't reflected in your church, they may be facing challenges that are keeping them from attending.

Implement changes that will break down those barriers

You don't have to think about these changes as adding programs or taking resources. They are signs of friendship and hospitality. How can our children's ministry be welcoming to a student with autism or our youth ministry to a teenager with Down syndrome? How can we show hospitality to a family in our worship service that has a member who may make noises during what is usually a quiet part of the service? Because we see the image of God in all people He created, we can ask the Holy Spirit to first work in our hearts and then work through our hands as we break down barriers so everyone is welcome in our churches.

Invite families in the community to join you

We consider special needs families an unreached or underserved people group. A great way to start reaching them is to offer respite nights or sensory-friendly events. Encourage your congregation to invite the families they know to special events and services. Word will spread that you are a welcoming church!

Special needs ministry isn't about adding a new ministry to your church—it's about making your existing ministries accessible so special needs families can be transformed by the gospel and use their gifts to build up the church body.



Sandra Peoples is the special needs ministry consultant for the SBTC.

AS THE SECOND-FASTEST-GROWING CITY IN TEXAS

FORT WORTH NEEDS MORE CHURCHES

Through prayer and partnerships, Redemption City is seeing God move in a mighty way

The population of Fort Worth has increased by 30% since 2010, making it the second-fastest-growing city in Texas, according to statistics cited by church planter Matt Kendrick. Projections indicate Cowtown will basically double in population by 2040 compared to 2000, prompting a major need for more churches.

“The counterintuitive thing is how many more churches Fort Worth and cities around Texas need now,” Kendrick, lead pastor of Redemption City Church in Fort Worth, said recently. “A misconception even that I had before planting here was that there are plenty of churches, but that is not the case.”

A culture shift has accompanied the population growth so that fewer Fort Worth residents are attending church today than in 2010, Kendrick said, indicating a need for fresh congregations to reach the city.

People are moving to Fort Worth from other parts of the country and the world. Kendrick said his neighborhood is a good illustration of the trend: he has neighbors from Michigan, California, and a country in the Middle East. “God is bringing the nations to our doorstep,” he said.

▲ Redemption City Church is reaching the growing population of Fort Worth, which is expected to double by 2040. **PHOTO SUBMITTED**





Redemption City Church puts a priority on connecting with its community. Church leaders have a goal of knocking on the doors of 120,000 people in the church's target area over the next decade.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

With Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Texas Christian University, and other colleges, “we see Fort Worth as a strategic city to accomplish the Great Commission,” the pastor said. In its infancy, Redemption City already is sending students to about 10 countries this summer.

Kendrick said 100% of the people attending Redemption City are unchurched, dechurched (haven't attended church in 15-20 years), or are new to the area. In other words, their growth isn't from taking people from existing churches.

The church has identified 120,000 households in its target area, and church leaders have a goal of knocking on all of those doors within 10 years. “We're eating an elephant one weekend at a time,” Kendrick said.



Kendrick served at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano and at Biltmore Church in North Carolina before God led him to plant in Fort Worth in 2020. Redemption City started with four core families, and they officially launched last August at the Benbrook YMCA, where they still meet.

The YMCA is “the perfect location” because it's at the center of a five-mile target radius the church has identified to reach, Kendrick said. Another reason for planting in Fort Worth is its proximity to students.

“ A MISCONCEPTION EVEN THAT I HAD BEFORE PLANTING HERE WAS THAT THERE ARE PLENTY OF CHURCHES, BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE. ”

MATT KENDRICK

With knocking on doors as their primary outreach strategy, Redemption City also has taken a posture of servanthood in Fort Worth, Kendrick said. “We find ways to serve our neighbors. We do free car washes. We go on running trails and give out free bottles of water.

“At Christmas, we gave all of the teachers in Benbrook—two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school—a coffee gift card or a Sonic gift card of \$25 to say, ‘Thanks for all you're doing. You're surviving the pandemic through all the different things. Way to go.’”

Redemption City had 176 people on Easter this year. The average attendance is around 150, but it has grown by 10 percent each month since the beginning, Kendrick said. “When we were growing from 30 to 33, that was exciting,” he said, “but now that we're at about 145-150 people growing 10 percent a month, it's really kind of snowballing and getting fun.”

Just like Jesus, Kendrick said Redemption City will “take anybody,” but the kind of stories that are emerging of people being reached include that of a couple that got pregnant at age 16 and

CHURCH PLANTING

were “judged harshly” by their church. That was 20 years ago, and they’ve only recently started attending church again, this time at Redemption City.

Now the family has grown to six, and recently the mother, father, and four children received Jesus as Savior, Kendrick said.

“Those are the kinds of people that we’re reaching, and it’s so exciting. From death to life, new kingdom growth,” he said.

Established churches play an integral role in church planting, Kendrick said. Prestonwood is their sending church, and churches across the state, including Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler and Broadview Baptist Church in Abilene, support them monthly or yearly and send mission teams to spur them on.

In fact, mission teams from partner churches have knocked on most of the doors in the target radius on behalf of Redemption City, Kendrick said. Such teams also help set up and tear down at the YMCA on Sundays, “which is such a big feat for us because that’s such a grind.”

All Southern Baptist churches are supporting church planting through the Cooperative Program, Kendrick noted, but he advised churches that don’t currently have a direct link to a church plant to reach out to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention so they can get connected.

“I can’t tell you how many Sunday school classes and Wednesday night prayer meetings are praying for Redemption City,” he said. “All across the country, churches are praying for us, and we are growing and seeing the lost saved. Those two data points are connected.”

Redemption City Church has grown by 10 percent each month since beginning last year. The prayer support of partner churches is key to that growth, Pastor Matt Kendrick said.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



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Guidepost removes paragraph that included out-of-context Richards quote

GRAPEVINE

Guidepost Solutions recently removed a paragraph from its report on how the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee handled sexual abuse issues after repeated requests for clarification were made by Jim Richards, executive director emeritus of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

On page 105 of the original report, a Nov. 16, 2018, conversation between Richards and Phillip Bethancourt is referenced. Bethancourt, who pastors Central Bryan College Station, at the time served as executive vice president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. During that conversation, which focused on a conflict between the SBTC and ERLC's scheduling of events, Richards is quoted as saying, "If you want a war, we'll give you a war."

In comments to the Texan in early June, Richards admitted his remarks to Bethancourt were out of character for him, but said he had been frustrated that the ERLC had not been considerate of the state convention and scheduled an event at the same time of the SBTC's annual meeting. However, when the remark was included in the Guidepost report, Richards felt that many construed it as being made in opposition to efforts within the SBC to create structures of accountability regarding sexual abuse practices and prevention—something he said is false.

"I would just like to get the truth out there that my name should have never been included in that report," Richards told the Texan, "and that my conversation with Phillip had nothing to do with sexual abuse."

Richards pointed out the SBTC's track record under his leadership in 2019 regarding sexual abuse issues, which included committing \$250,000 in funding for MinistrySafe to assist affiliated churches with sexual abuse awareness, training, and prevention; providing \$3,700 for church leaders to be trained at ERLC's Caring Well Conference; and a decision by its Credentials Committee to adopt guidelines that would provide a process to disaffiliate any church that was considered being "indifferent to sexual abuse."

Since his name and his remark to Bethancourt was included in the 288-page report, which was released to the public on May 22, Richards said he has made multiple attempts to protest its inclusion and seek clarification so that it could be understood in its proper context. Part of that effort included contacting Bethancourt, who in turn communicated to Guidepost that Richards' comment "was not related to sexual abuse at all" and that he was "grateful for the work that Jim and the SBTC did on matters related to sexual abuse."

Richards also began reaching out to Guidepost, which he said never contacted him before publishing his name in the report. In response to Richards' request, Guidepost completely removed the paragraph from the report. Even so, Richards still felt that a footnote should be added to page 105 of the report noting why the paragraph including the quote had been removed. As of this publication, the paragraph remains omitted and no footnote has been added by Guidepost.

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WRONG

God uses pastor's misdialed number to lead Fort Worth woman to salvation

HAS NEVER FELT SO RIGHT

Larry Dan Melton, Pioneer Campus pastor at Fielder Church, says that when the church joins together to seek God in fervent prayer and is thirsty to see Him move in their midst, miracles begin to happen.

Even through a wrong number dialed on a phone.

Melton said he recently was debating whether he should tackle one of the many things on his to-do list or make contacts with first-time guests to the church. As he pondered, he said he felt the Holy Spirit prompt him to make phone calls to the new visitors.

“God began to work and move even before I made that call because I had the option to continue with my other ministry tasks, but I felt the Spirit leading me to call,” Melton said.

The church is very culturally diverse, and one of the names written on the first-time guest card was difficult to pronounce, Melton said. So he called the number, introduced himself, and asked the woman on the other line how to pronounce her name.

The woman proceeded to pronounce her name—Daisy—which was not the name Melton saw written on the guest card. It didn't take Melton long to realize he had dialed the wrong number. Even so, he said he felt the Spirit prompt him to continue the conversation. In doing so, he soon learned that Daisy was a woman struggling in deep brokenness.

“When I make wrong number calls, I just usually apologize, wish them a good day, and hang up the call,” Melton said. “On this occasion, I

felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to ask this woman

how I could pray for her, and that's when she started crying and opened the door to talk about the gospel.”

When Melton realized the environment she was in at that moment was not conducive for a longer conversation, he asked her

“

God began to work and move even before I made that call because I had the option to continue with my other ministry tasks, but I felt the Spirit leading me to call.

”

LARRY DAN MELTON
Fielder Church



if she lived in the area and invited her to the office to talk so he could continue to share the gospel with her. Daisy agreed to meet and, a week later, met with Melton. After hearing the good news of Christ, she confessed Jesus as her Savior and was born again that day, which happened to be her mother's birthday.

From that day forward, Daisy began attending Fielder Church, was baptized (one of 152 people who have been baptized at Fielder the past two months), and is part of the discipleship class led by the Spanish pastor, Rafael Rondon. The church is working to help her connect with other believers and continue to grow in her faith.

"Salvation is the starting point, but the goal is for them to be discipled so they can share their story with others," said Melton, who each week works to get new believers connected and discipled so they can then disciple others. "This is not about me, but it's a result of us as a church praying for the move of the Spirit and this story and many more are God's answer to our prayers."

Fielder Church has begun to experience revival from the moment their lead pastor, Jason Paredes, said he heard God tell him, "It's time for you to move from praying about your strategy to making prayer the strategy." From then on, God has been taking this church's three Metroplex campuses on a journey to see Him move like they have never seen Him move before because they are praying like they have never prayed before.

Each week, all three of Fielder's campuses cry out for miracles of God, for marriages to be restored, for addiction

cycles to be broken, for ministries to grow, and people come to faith in Jesus. God is answering.

"Through the journey we have been on as a ministry team and the leadership of our lead pastor, we have learned that our obedience to God must be immediate and complete. This process has helped me to be more sensitive to the Spirit's move and to walk in obedience to His leading," Melton said.

He also shared that through this experience and the process of seeking to become a praying church, God has moved him to stop more often to pray and to be expectant of what God will do next—even through a "wrong" move.

Fielder Church has put an emphasis on crying out to God, and in doing so, is seeing God do amazing things.

**SUBMITTED
PHOTOS**



LO INCORRECTO

Dios usa un número equivocado del pastor para llevar a una mujer de Fort Worth a la salvación

“
Dios comenzó a obrar y a moverse incluso desde antes que yo hiciera esa llamada, porque tenía la opción de continuar con mis otras tareas ministeriales, pero sentí que el Espíritu estaba guiándome a llamar.”

LARRY DAN MELTON
Fielder Church

NUNCA HABÍA SIDO TAN CORRECTO

Larry Dan Melton, pastor del Campus de Pioneer de la Iglesia Fielder, dice que cuando la iglesia se une para buscar a Dios en ferviente oración y está sedienta de ver su mover en medio de ellos, comienzan a suceder milagros.

Incluso a través de una llamada al número de teléfono equivocado.

Melton dijo que recientemente estaba debatiendo si debía darle prioridad a una de las muchas tareas por completar en su lista de pendientes o dar seguimiento a las visitas del domingo. Mientras reflexionaba, dijo que sintió que el Espíritu Santo lo movió a llamar por teléfono a los nuevos visitantes.

“Dios comenzó a obrar y a moverse incluso desde antes que yo hiciera esa llamada, porque tenía la opción de continuar con mis otras tareas ministeriales, pero sentí que el Espíritu estaba guiándome a llamar”, dijo Melton.

La iglesia es muy diversa culturalmente y uno de los nombres escritos en la tarjeta de visitantes era difícil de pronunciar, dijo Melton. Así que llamó al número, se presentó y preguntó a la mujer que respondió cómo pronunciar su nombre.

La mujer procedió a pronunciar su nombre -Daisy-, que no era el que Melton vio escrito en la tarjeta. Melton no tardó en darse cuenta de que había marcado el número equivocado. Aun así, dijo que sintió que el Espíritu lo inquietaba a continuar la conversación. Al hacerlo, pronto se enteró de que Daisy era una mujer que luchaba en un profundo quebranto.

“Usualmente, cuando llamo a un número equivocado, suelo disculparme, desearles un buen día y colgar la llamada”, dijo Melton. “En esta ocasión, sentí que el Espíritu Santo me impulsaba a preguntar a esta mujer cómo podía orar por ella y fue entonces cuando ella comenzó a llorar y se abrió la puerta para hablar del evangelio”.





Cuando Melton se dio cuenta de que el ambiente en el que se encontraba en ese momento no era propicio para tener una conversación más larga, le preguntó si vive en el área y la invitó a la oficina para hablar y poder seguir compartiendo el evangelio con ella. Daisy aceptó reunirse y, una semana después, se reunió con Melton. Después de escuchar las buenas noticias de Cristo, confesó a Jesús como su Salvador y nació de nuevo ese día, que casualmente era el cumpleaños de su madre.

Desde ese día, Daisy comenzó a asistir a la Iglesia Fielder, fue bautizada y forma parte de la clase de discipulado dirigida por el pastor de español, Rafael Rondón. La iglesia está trabajando para ayudarla a conectarse con otros creyentes y seguir creciendo en su fe.

“La salvación es el punto de partida, pero el objetivo es que sean discipulados para que puedan compartir su historia con otros”, dijo Melton, que cada semana trabaja para que los nuevos creyentes se conecten y sean discipulados para que luego puedan discipular a otros. “Esto no

La Iglesia Fielder ha estado clamando a Dios en oración y la congregación está viendo cada vez más que Él hace obras sorprendentes.

FOTOS COMPARTIDAS



se trata de mí, sino que es el resultado de que nosotros, como iglesia, oramos por el mover del Espíritu y esta historia, junto a muchas más, son la respuesta de Dios a nuestras oraciones”.

La Iglesia Fielder ha comenzado a experimentar un avivamiento desde el momento en que el pastor principal, Jason Paredes, dijo que escuchó a Dios decirle: “Es tiempo de dejar de orar por su estrategia, para hacer de la oración la estrategia.” Desde entonces, Dios ha llevado a esta iglesia, en sus tres localidades en el Metroplex, en una jornada de verlo moverse como nunca lo habían visto, porque están orando como nunca lo habían hecho.

Cada semana, la iglesia clama por milagros de Dios, para que los matrimonios sean restaurados, para que los ciclos de adicción se rompan, para que los ministerios crezcan y personas vengana a la fe en Jesús. Dios está respondiendo.

“A través de la jornada en que hemos estado como equipo ministerial y por medio del liderazgo de nuestro pastor principal, hemos aprendido que nuestra obediencia a Dios debe ser inmediata y completa. Este proceso me ha ayudado a ser más sensible al mover del Espíritu y a caminar en obediencia a su dirección”, dijo Melton.

También compartió que a través de esta experiencia y del proceso de búsqueda en convertirse en una iglesia de oración, Dios lo ha movido a detenerse con más frecuencia para orar y estar expectante de lo que Dios hará, incluso a través de un suceso “equivocado”.



MINISTRY — By Texan Staff

‘WE’VE JUST GOT TO DO SOMETHING’

For SBTC’s Mathews, mass shooting in Buffalo hit close to home—literally

BUFFALO, N.Y.

Tony Mathews has shopped at the Tops Friendly Market on Jefferson Avenue in his hometown of Buffalo, N.Y., more times than he can remember. It’s located just a few minutes away from the home of his 83-year-old mother, Juanita, and other family members.

Tony Mathews (standing at left) talks and ministers to a woman at a communitywide cookout following a shooting in his Buffalo neighborhood in May.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

“I can step out of my mom’s house, get in my car, and I’m at the Tops Market in three-and-a-half minutes. I mean, it’s like super, super close,” Mathews, senior strategist of missional ministries for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, recently told Baptist Press.

On May 14, Mathews was eating a meal in the Dallas area with his wife when he began receiving a series of phone calls from his mother informing him that there was a shooting happening around the block at Tops. She first reported that three people had been shot and killed ... then five ... then eight.

“ We just can’t let hate breed hate in us. We have to battle hate with the care and love of Christ. ”

TONY MATHEWS

Before the shooting stopped, 10 people—all Black—were killed by an 18-year-old White gunman who police say targeted his victims because of the color of their skin. The gunman has been charged with 10 counts of murder and domestic terrorism.

Mathews said his mother was “just devastated” by the shooting that, likewise, left the community grieving, angry, and numb. While



Mathews experienced all those emotions and more, the tragedy also sparked a strong desire in his heart to minister to his hometown.

“I felt like I had to do something because it’s home. It’s my backyard,” Mathews said. “Knowing that I had those connections, along with the devastation, and along with me being a former pastor, I said we’ve just got to do something.”

With the support of SBTC Executive Director Nathan Lorick, Mathews traveled to Buffalo May 27-29 to minister to the hurting. Upon arriving in Buffalo, Mathews connected with Frontier Baptist Association Director of Missions Mike Flannery who, in turn, got him in touch with North American Mission Board church planter Eric Napoli, pastor of Amherst Baptist Church in Amherst, N.Y. Napoli has organized a series of outreaches to help the Buffalo community mourn the killings and meet practical needs by providing food. National Public Radio recently reported that the closure of the market created a food shortage in a community where many without vehicles were

About 100 volunteers fed around 600 people at a May 28 cookout. Ministers also prayed with and comforted many attendees and distributed Bibles and gospel tracts.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

able to walk to the store to get groceries. The store has remained closed since the shooting.

By meeting practical needs, those ministering to the community also found an open door to share the gospel. About 100 volunteers fed around 600 people at a May 28 cookout, prayed with and comforted many attendees, and distributed Bibles and gospel tracts, Napoli said.

“For a large number of the volunteers, their entire ministry is just to make people feel welcome, find out what their spiritual needs are, (and) break into some spiritual conversations,” Napoli told Baptist Press. “It’s all about the kingdom.”

Mathews describes his family and the community as still hurting but processing the pain.

“It’s still raw. They are still just shocked. There is also a little bit of fear there. They said that they just can’t believe that people would target them because of the color of their skin, and that we are still living in a day and age where this is happening,” he said. “To be targeted because of the color of your skin is traumatizing, but Black Americans are an extremely forgiving people, we are a praying people, and we are for unity, but the shooting definitely impacts us.”

His mother’s church, Mount Olive Baptist Church, hosted the final funeral May 28 for a victim of the massacre—86-year-old Ruth Whitfield, whose service was attended by U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris.

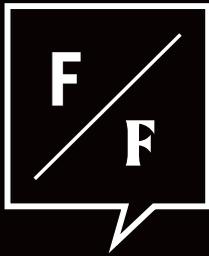
Mathews said his mother, whom he described as “a great lady of faith ... a praying woman,” has a solution to the frequent mass shootings and the subsequent trauma they bring.

“People need the Lord. She said people need to get back into the church,” he said. “My mom always says folks need the Lord and people need to live for the Lord, because He will be the One to get all of that hatred out of us.”

Mathews also said he appreciates and sees healing happening through the multicultural response to the Buffalo shooting.

“There’s hope and there’s healing,” he said. “My entire ministry has been characterized by bringing people together. ... We just can’t let hate breed hate in us. We have to battle hate with the care and love of Christ.”

Information from Baptist Press was used in this report.



FACES OF THE FAITHFUL

A guide to celebrate—and pray—for those standing on the frontlines of the faith



ANGIE CATRON

▶ Age: **47** ▶ Spouse/Children: **Tom/Courtney & Austin**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **23** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Administrative Assistant, Graceview Baptist Church, Burleson (11)**

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

No matter what is happening around me in ministry, God requires me to be obedient and faithful in serving Him and others. That includes sharing the gospel.

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

I want to see members be obedient and faithful to the Lord and His church by being faithful in attendance, serving, giving, and sharing the gospel.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Prayer for us to remain obedient and faithful to serving the Lord and His church—to have true joy in serving.



KEITH PATE

▶ Age: **61** ▶ Spouse/Children: **Julie/Emily, Jonathan & Allison**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **38** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **New Hope First Baptist Church, Cedar Park (11)**

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

About three years ago, New Hope celebrated 150 years of ministry in our community and around the world. We used it to not only celebrate God's grace for the last 150+ years, but to cast vision going forward. New Hope is not a dying historic church, but a very vibrant community of faith with a good balance of young, median, and senior adults with families. We have seen recently some real progress in terms of being a missional or sent people.

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

Create further the heart and habit of living on a missional basis. I pray that in the near future, living on mission is such a part of our DNA that everyone who walks onto our campus knows it. We desire to reach the vast lost culture around us and even around the world.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray that our ongoing intensive Missional Living Training will bear eternal fruit.



JACOB FITZGERALD

▶ Age: **42** ▶ Spouse/Children: **Micaela/Samuel & Grant**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **22** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Lead Pastor, Denman Avenue Baptist Church, Lufkin (5)**

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

God blessed us with unprecedented enrollment in our 2022 Vacation Bible School. God has opened doors to ministry in neighboring apartment complexes, which has allowed us to share the gospel and build relationships with unreached families. God saved over 150 souls during a recent mission trip to Nepal. Our faith family is stepping up their commitment to serve for the advancement of God's kingdom.

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN YOUR MINISTRY LATELY?

Balancing the needs for counseling those who are struggling while protecting time for other pastoral responsibilities has been a challenge. Pastoring a church amid societal division, SBC issues, and economic uncertainty has been a challenge. Leading a church to embrace intergenerational ministry and experiencing measurable growth has created a number of challenges.

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

I am specifically asking God to humble our church that we might experience the liberty of complete dependence upon Him, which will position us to be used more effectively for His honor and glory.



KASON BRANCH

▶ Age: **44** ▶ Spouse/Children: **Shanea/Owen & Kayden Grace**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **12** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Senior Pastor, Creekstone Church, North Richland Hills (6)**

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

We recently finished a strong season of mentorship at our local high school, which actually completes year three! We have nearly 50 young men in the program and celebrate as nine are graduating high school this year! We've also purchased our first facility in the North Richland Hills area through a partnership with the Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation. It's a real game changer for us! As such, we've been able to canvas our local neighborhood several times this past spring going door-to-door doing evangelism and praying for our neighbors. God is moving!

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

I want God to continue strengthening us into a healthy congregation focused on taking our territory for Christ! As we focus on authentic Christian community and prayer, I'm asking God to give us a heart for the lost and broken in our city.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

Pray for God's protective hand to be with us as we seek to reach the harvest!



FRANK PACHECO

▶ Age: **52** ▶ Spouse: **Petra**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **25** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Pastor, Primera Iglesia Hispana, Fort Worth (15)**

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

I have been called to ministry by God, therefore I trust in Him in everything.

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

We want to see everyone get involved in sharing the good news of salvation.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

For the church to feel the need for missions and evangelization.



LAKAN MARIANO

▶ Age: **67** ▶ Spouse/Children: **Kim (deceased)/Micah, Joshua & Rachel**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **34** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **College Hills Baptist Church, San Angelo (34)**

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

Being in the same church for over 30 years has allowed me to see the ripple effects of discipleship over several spiritual generations. It has also been a joy to see the leadership of College Hills, especially the elders and the Bible teachers, to be biblically sound in their teaching and conduct of life and leadership in the church.

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

A friend and a mentor, Ken Sheppard, challenged me before I came to College Hills. He said to make sure that the focus of my ministry is about the only two things that will last: God's Word and people. Through the ups and downs of life, it is this focus that has kept me encouraged, persevering even when it was hard, knowing that God's Word will not return to Him without accomplishing its purpose.

HOW CAN OTHER SBTC CHURCHES BE PRAYING FOR YOU?

I covet the prayers of my brothers and sisters as College Hills prepares to transition to new leadership.



SUSAN GOBERT

▶ Age: **59** ▶ Spouse: **Ricky**

▶ Total Years in Ministry: **36** ▶ Church/Years at Current Church: **Cedar Creek Baptist Church, Whitney (4)**

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

We have seen an influx of new people to our community and have had many visitors every week in church.

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

That He would use our very loving congregation to reach out to our community in a more tangible and hands-on way.

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

That I cannot fill every hole that comes open. Trying to fill a role that I'm not called to just robs my joy and someone else's opportunity to serve.

GOD SENT HELP IN A GREAT TIME OF NEED

One Saturday morning last fall, I decided to water flowers that were planted a few days prior. There was no thought on that bright sunny day that I was about to face death.

Our townhouse is only 10 feet or so from Lake Conroe. My wife, Joyce, and I are blessed to have lived 17 years in a place with such beautiful surroundings: a 180-degree view of the marina with dozens of docked sailboats, the yacht club's stately building further away but in clear sight, and several large three-storied condos across the water.

I was walking backward pulling on a water hose, not realizing how near I was to the lake's edge. As I tugged at the hose, I plunged backward, head-first into the cold lake waters, clothes and all.

When I surfaced, regaining my feet, I heard a lady's voice coming from the condo area. "Are you all right?" she hollered.

I immediately yelled back, "Sure, I'm OK!" as I waved, but I wasn't OK. The water was up to my chest and the bulkhead wall was over a foot higher with nothing for me to grab. My fingers could not grab the wood top. Trying to swim to a more acceptable place in full clothing was not an option. I knew then I didn't have a chance to get out by myself.



My continued calling to Joyce was so weak I just stopped trying. I began moving step-by-step through the water toward our patio area where our wall-to-wall large windows were located. Perhaps, I thought, Joyce might be able to clearly see me.

I was in and out of consciousness as I continued to move more slowly toward my goal. Out ahead I could see our boat dock, which is connected to the bulkhead boards. It now seemed even more difficult to move forward. Just as I was in full view of our windows, I slipped underwater again. Up I came, this time with the fear of drowning. I felt that another episode would be my last. I was facing death.

I inched forward until I reached the corner of the bulkhead board and our boat dock. I felt totally exhausted and could barely stand up, so I clung even closer to the boards. I was still in chest-high cold

water and hoped if I could hang on long enough, Joyce could see me. I felt a huge anxiety because I knew I was stuck. Energy and time were running out.

Hanging on, I looked up and to my grateful surprise a lady was standing in front of me. Weakly I begged, "That's my house, go get my wife!" I assumed she was the lady from the condos across the lake.

As Joyce retrieved a ladder, the unknown lady grabbed it out of her hands and rushed to me. She quickly lowered the ladder into the water to me. I hardly had enough strength to take step one, and as the ladder was sinking in the mud, I made one wobbly final step on the white handle of the ladder. With a push from my foot, I crawled onto the deck on my stomach and laid there, so exhausted I couldn't move.

When I looked up, there were six blue-uniformed 911 men. Two guys picked me up and dragged me to our patio where Joyce was waiting. As I sat dazed on the patio edge I said, "Just let me rest here awhile, then I'll go into the house to lay down."

"You're not going anywhere," they quickly responded. "What hospital do you want us to take you to?" With that, they lifted me on to a gurney and put me in the ambulance.

My "guardian angel" neighbor lady had disappeared after the 911 men appeared. Who was she? My wife only caught her name: "Debbie." Maybe she lived across the lake in one of the three-storied condos? Without a doubt, God allowed this guardian angel to see me fall into the lake, and led her to follow through to my rescue, both in person and by calling 911. She was God's messenger for me.



Want to share a story of what God is doing in your life or your church?
Scan the QR code or e-mail jiarson@sbtexas.com to tell us your story.



“
**What's my
story? It's
God's promise
in Psalm 91:11:
'For He will
command
His angels
concerning you
to guard you in
all your ways.'
God keeps His
Word!**
”

FRANK MINTON

I spent a week in hospital care with a heart catheterization by my cardiologist, which revealed no heart attack. My knees were so battered and bruised from trying to get out that it took three days before I could walk. Our family physician told me that the hospital reports said that my strength was nearly gone and that I would have likely died if not for a timely rescue.

Today, reflecting upon my near-death experience causes me to feel closer to God. Certainly, God has yet a plan for my life. I continue to thank Him for His guardian angel! We found her, by the way. Debbie is a librarian. Yes, she lives in one of the three-storied condos across the lake. She saw me fall in the lake and called 911 while driving over to try to help me. God bless her!

What's my story? It's God's promise in Psalm 91:11: "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." God keeps His Word!

Church Positions

For the latest listings, visit texan.digital/church-positions

PASTOR

Avenue D Baptist Church in Snyder is seeking a FT senior pastor. Send resume to Doug Scott at dougscott8441@gmail.com.

Stonebridge Fellowship of Plainview is seeking a PT bi-vocational pastor. We are a small Baptist church committed to Gospel-centered, Bible-believing teaching and service in our community. Email: ryan.oglesby87@gmail.com.

Lost Pines Cowboy Church, Elgin is seeking a PT interim pastor to shepherd the church for approximately 6 to 12 months and support the congregation, teams, and church staff in performing their tasks. The interim pastor will not be considered for the permanent position of senior pastor. Email: personnel.lpcc@gmail.com.

South Eules Baptist Church 1000 Simmons Dr., Eules 76040 is in search of a FT pastor. Mail resumes to church.

Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida Freeport is seeking a bi-vocational and bilingual (Spanish, English) pastor to lead a congregation of about 60 members. Email resumes to Reynaldo Cantu at rcantu1954@yahoo.com.

First BC of Splendora is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. Church is located just outside of Houston in a rural area with great potential for growth. Send resume to wecare@fbcsplendora.org.

First Baptist North Zulch is seeking a FT pastor. Email resumes to: fbnzpastorsearch@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church of Dean is seeking a FT pastor. Rural church looking for a shepherd to lead our members. We are in desperate need of revival! Must be ordained. Schooling is preferred. Experience is a must! Email: dpmurphy1980@yahoo.com.

Second BC, Angleton seeks a FT senior pastor. He will be responsible for preaching God's Word, be the spiritual and administrative leader for the staff and congregation and give general leadership to the total ministry of the church. Email: pastorsearch@yoursecondfamily.org.

Security First Baptist Church in Cleveland is prayerfully searching for a FT/bi-vocational pastor in a growing community. Submit resume to sfbcsecretary@yahoo.com.

Calvary Hills BC in San Antonio is seeking a FT senior pastor. Send resumes to calvaryhillspsc@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church Mixon, a vibrant rural East Texas church, is seeking a FT pastor. Resumes will be accepted until July 15. Email: reherring1954@gmail.com.

FBC Anton is prayerfully looking for a pastor. Anton is a small town of 1,200 people in West Texas, 25 miles NW of Lubbock. Active congregation of 40-45 and median age is 50. If the Holy Spirit is leading you, please send a resume to antonfbc196@gmail.com.

Indian Creek Baptist Church of Mineral Wells is an elder-led, congregationally governed church in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention looking for a FT energetic, relational pastor who can partner with parents and church leaders to evangelize and disciple the next generation of our community. Email resumes to ICBCYouthandChildrenPastor@gmail.com.

MUSIC

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.

Southmayd BC is seeking a PT worship leader. Send resumes to smaydbaptist@gmail.com.

Cleburne Community Church is seeking a PT worship leader. Send resumes to Ryan Michels at: cleburnepastor@gmail.com.

The Well Baptist Church of Greenville is seeking a PT worship leader. The Well is a vibrant church with a casual atmosphere, a contemporary style, and a family feel. Our mission is to help generations experience the goodness of following Jesus. Please send inquiries to worship@thewellbaptistchurch.org.

Calvary Baptist Church of Bastrop is seeking a PT classic worship leader whose responsibilities include leading worship, selecting appropriate music and leading the choir. To CBC, "classic" style means an energetic vibrant choir-led worship service that worships God using traditional hymns and choruses. Email office@cbcfamily.net.

Audubon Park BC, Garland is seeking a PT music leader. Blended service, small congregation. Resumes: apbcstaff@att.net or APBC PO Box 495277 Garland, TX 75049-5277. Is God sending you our way?

FBC Palestine is seeking a PT associate pastor of worship to lead two Sunday morning worship services - one traditional and one contemporary. We have a great team of musicians and singers in place. Send questions or submit a resume & cover letter to Tony Watson, Senior Pastor, at tony@firstpalestine.org.

FBC Merkel is looking for a PT worship pastor leading a blended/contemporary worship service each Sunday and other special occasions. For more information, please contact the church office at 325-928-5351. Resumes may be submitted to office@fbcmerkel.com.

The Heights Church, San Angelo is seeking a FT worship minister and media/technology administrator to plan and lead varied, creative, enthusiastic worship services, develop praise team, plan music for special events, administration of live stream and all media and technology for the church. Send resumes to loukduncan@yahoo.com.

Trinity Baptist Church, Kerrville is seeking a FT minister of worship for thriving, multigenerational Baptist church in Kerrville, TX! See tbck.org for complete job description. Email resumes to sowens@tbck.org.

STUDENTS

Central Baptist Church, Livingston is seeking a FT student pastor who loves reaching and discipling students, equipping parents, and calling out and developing leaders. Email resume to students@centrallivingston.com.

FBC La Grange is seeking a PT youth minister (middle and high school students). Responsibilities include leading the youth ministry through intentional relationships and discipleship and to recruit, train, and

mentor volunteers to help fulfill the duties of the youth ministry. Email: personnel@fbclagrange.net.

West University Baptist Church in Houston is looking for a FT youth pastor to run our student ministry for our Crosspoint Campus. This is one of our three CityRise campuses and requires a team player who is self-initiated and understands relational ministry. Email: Robby.dobbs@cityrise.org.

First Baptist Church Whitehouse is seeking PT youth director. Email Alicia Coats: alicia@firstw.org.

The Servant House in Lewisville is seeking a PT youth pastor requiring 5-10 hours a week. Please send your resume to theservanthouse@aol.com.

FBC Carthage is seeking a FT youth pastor who will provide leadership and oversee all aspects of the student ministry. Email resume to James McRight at james@firstbaptistcarthage.com.

Grace Baptist of Groves is seeking a FT student pastor. Parsonage available, provided 3/2/2. School districts: Port Neches/Groves, Nederland, Port Arthur, Bridge City, and Hamshire/Fannett. Send resume to philsigman@gmail.com.

Inglewood BC in Grand Prairie is seeking a PT student minister with a heart for discipling youth. The youth minister coordinates Sunday School and Wednesday night Bible Study, oversees regular youth events, and builds relationships with youth and their families. Submit resume to jobs@inglewoodbaptist.com.

Grace Life Baptist in Houston is seeking a paid PT student minister (20 hrs/weekly). Grace Life is a growing multi-ethnic ministry that averages 250 on Sundays. Includes seminary reimbursement. For more info contact jmosier@gracelifebaptist.org.

The Heights, San Angelo is seeking a FT youth pastor to lead youth to Christ, to grow them in faith, to develop their gifts to serve the body of Christ, and to share their faith to lead others to Christ. Email resumes to loukduncan@yahoo.com.

CHILDREN

First Baptist Church Orange is seeking a FT children's minister to partner with parents in equipping and empowering their children to know and follow Christ. FBCO is a growing church with a highly active children's ministry. Email Josh Fuels at josh@fbco.org.

First Baptist Church, DeKalb is searching for a FT children's minister. Email resume: dekalbfbc323@gmail.com. Contact: James Sparks, 903-809-3932 for any questions.

First BC of Port Neches is seeking a FT children's minister who is a creative self starter who loves the Lord and feels called to children's ministry. Contact Rob Jones. Email: rjones@fbcpn.org.

Gateway Church of Spring is seeking a FT children's pastor/minister with a dynamic personality for preschool through sixth grade children. Responsibilities include overseeing, directing, educating, counseling and fellowshiping within each unique age group. Email resumes to jannie@discovergateway.com.

Inglewood BC in Grand Prairie is looking for a PT children's minister with a passion for growing a

Church Positions

For the latest listings, visit texan.digital/church-positions

children's program. The children's minister arranges curriculum, schedules and trains teachers, organizes annual events, and maintains relationships with the children's families. Submit resume to jobs@inglewoodbaptist.com.

Central Church in College Station is seeking a FT director of kids ministry who will be responsible for leading a comprehensive ministry grades K-5 within a growing community, a large and thriving kid's ministry, and a state-of-the-art facility. Applicants may submit their resumes to dpatterson@centralbcs.org

COMBINATION

Main Street BC in Grand Saline is seeking a FT associate pastor of family & worship with focus on youth first and worship ministry second. Experience preferred. Will need to be a people-oriented team player willing to be involved in the local schools and community. Email Tina Smilie at tsmilie@dts.edu.

Pathway BC in Odessa is prayerfully seeking a FT associate pastor of family/worship. After prayerful consideration, please submit a resume, with a cover letter and references in PDF form to charles@pathwayodessa.org. Be sure to include a link to any preaching, teaching, and/or worship videos.

FBC Crane, a growing rural church that has 100+ in Sunday worship and 45-50 students on Wednesday nights, is looking for a FT worship & student pastor. Visit fbccrane.com. Send resume to Pastor Farrell at chris@fbccrane.com.

Emmanuel BC in Arp is looking for a FT youth & education minister. Send resume to kelly@arpebc.org.

Broadview Baptist Church of Abilene is looking for a FT (with benefits) associate pastor of student & family discipleship. For more information or to apply visit broadview.church/search.

FBC Wortham is praying through hiring a FT associate pastor of youth/education. For more information or to send a resume, contact Justin Colquette at justincolquette@fbcwortham.com.

Sherwood Baptist Church is seeking a FT minister of music and youth to lead Christ-Centered worship, introduce young people to Christ, teaching them to become spiritually mature followers of Christ, and equipping them to become disciple-makers. Send resumes to: personnel@sherwood.church.

FBC Grapeland is seeking a minister of music and youth. Position includes planning, preparing, and leading the music portion of weekly worship services and designing, planning, coordinating, and carrying out successful discipleship and fellowship programs designed for 6th-12th graders. \$35,000 to \$50,000 depending on experience. Send e-mail to musicsearch@FBCGrapeland.org.

OTHER

Turning Point Fellowship Church is seeking a church planter to revitalize church in the Austin Area. Contact Wes Porter; Email: wes@turningpointfc.org.

Mobberly Baptist Church Longview is seeking a FT director of video production with excellent benefits. Contact: scottl@mobberly.org.

The Servant House in Lewisville is seeking a PT life group coach to build into the life of life group (small

group) leaders to help connect and grow members in Christ to grow a healthy church for KOG. Send resumes to: theservanthouse@aol.com.

South Side BC Abilene is looking for a FT college minister who will lead the college ministry by teaching, overseeing, planning, and developing leaders. We are looking for someone who is passionate about discipling college students and training them to disciple others. Please send resumes to blake@ssbaptist.org.

South Side BC Abilene is looking for a FT family minister/pastor who will set vision, recruit, equip, and encourage leaders and volunteers within our Children's Ministry. This person needs to be passionate about training and equipping parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children. Please send resumes to blake@ssbaptist.org.

FBC Celina is looking for an administrative assistant to partner with our ministry. This individual needs to have great people skills and good computer skills ranging from Word processing, database, and website abilities. Contact Kevin Lykins. His email: pastorkevin@firstcelina.org.

City Church Del Rio is searching for a FT associate pastor of discipleship and worship. For more info, or to apply, visit citychurchdelrio.com or send interest letter and resume to ccdrpastor@gmail.com.

Williamson Baptist Association d/b/a Strategic Church Solutions, is seeking a FT director for Williamson County. Please visit www.wbatexas.org/church-employment to review criteria, job description and submit resumes. Resumes will be accepted through July 8, 2022. Email resumes to: Mandy@wbates.org.

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DEADLINE FOR SBTC COMMITTEE/BOARD NOMINATIONS

The Committee on Nominations is receiving nomination forms to fill upcoming vacancies on the SBTC Executive Board and committees. Nomination forms can be completed online or downloaded at www.sbtexas.com/nominations. The deadline to receive nomination forms is August 1, 2022.

The vacancies to be filled are as follows:

Executive Board – 12 vacancies (5 eligible for renomination).

Note: The composition of the Executive Board is based on certain considerations: 1) one-fourth of the membership must be laypersons, 2) one-fourth of the membership, at the time of election, must be a member of a church of 400 or less in membership, 3) at least five representatives from each quadrant of the state.

Texas Ethics and Religious Liberty Committee – 3 vacancies;
Credentials Committee – 2 vacancies; **Committee on Order of Business** – 3 vacancies.

Also: Criswell College Board – 3 vacancies (all eligible for renomination); Jacksonville College – 1 vacancy (eligible for renomination); Texas Baptist Home for Children – 1 vacancy (eligible for renomination); Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation – 5 vacancies (2 eligible for renomination).



PASTORS BOSWELL, LINO JOIN SBTC AS CONSULTANTS

GRAPEVINE Matt Boswell, pastor of The Trails Church in Celina, and Nathan Lino, pastor of First Baptist Church of Forney, have joined the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention as consultants.

Boswell will serve as a worship consultant in the Church Health & Leadership department. His duties will include establishing and developing a young worship pastor's network where leaders will not only meet with one another on occasion, but be encouraged, resourced, and coached in their respective churches and ministries. He is the founding pastor of The Trails Church, has been involved in church planting and pastoral ministry since 1998, and is an author and hymnwriter.

Lino will serve as a ministry consultant in the Missional Ministries department. Among his duties, Lino will host periodical Zoom meetings to assist pastors in a variety of ministry areas; provide evangelism support and training for pastors; and help pastors learn how to lead corporate prayer meetings as requested. He will also stand ready to assist pastors and churches implement a global missions strategy. Lino, the founding pastor of Northeast Houston Baptist Church, recently answered a call to serve as senior pastor at FBC Forney.

KAUNITZ OFFERS UPDATE ON SEXUAL ABUSE TASK FORCE

LONGVIEW SBTC President Todd Kaunitz said its Sexual Abuse Task Force that has been asked to review the convention's sexual abuse practices and policies has entered a season of evaluation as it moves closer to possibly bringing recommendations for changes to annual meeting messengers in November.

The update from Kaunitz, pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Church, was provided via a video released on SBTC social media accounts on June 8. In the video, he says the seven-member task force has completed the first phase of its work wherein it evaluated current SBTC sexual abuse policies and procedures and those of other, similar organizations. The second phase is an evaluation of those findings, and the final phase will include the drafting of possible changes to convention policies. Those proposed changes will then go to the SBTC Executive Board, and finally, church messengers, for consideration.

The 2022 SBTC annual meeting is scheduled for Nov. 14-15 in Corpus Christi.

"I encourage you to continue to pray for us as we examine all of these areas," Kaunitz says in the video. "It is so important that we as a state convention are doing everything we can to not only protect people from sexual abuse, but also have a proper response when those unfortunate cases occur. ... We're so excited to be a part of a convention that takes these things seriously."

EAST TEXAS PASTOR HONORED FOR 7 DECADES OF MINISTRY



HUGHES SPRINGS Charles Russell, pastor of Turkey Creek Baptist Church, was recently honored for 77 years of ministry during a meeting of the Enon Baptist Association, which covers deep Northeast Texas. Russell has pastored at Turkey Creek for 22 years.

Among the honors, Russell was given a plaque expressing gratitude for his ministry by Roy Ford, the Northeast Texas field representative for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

"I love my people," said Russell, 93. "It's a small, rural church, a very loving people. I enjoy the fellowship of working with a local church."

With the exception of a pastorate in Bonham, Russell's ministry has been in Northeast Texas. He also has served as director of missions for three counties around Jacksonville.

SBTC CHAPLAINS, MINISTERS RESPOND TO UVALDE SCHOOL SHOOTING

UVALDE Pastors, chaplains, and Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Disaster Relief volunteers were among those who responded to the May 24 shooting that claimed the lives of 19 students and two teachers at Robb Elementary School.

Veteran Quick Response Unit (QRU) feeding volunteers set up a mobile food truck and served meals to first responders from federal, state, and local government agencies. SBTC DR chaplains made themselves available at the QRU site to talk and pray with visitors as needed.

"This is where we need to be," SBTC QRU volunteer Ronnie Roark said, noting that they had been feeding 85-100 at each meal. His wife, Connie, added, "A meal and a prayer. That's what we bring."

SPECIAL NEEDS SUNDAY SCHEDULED FOR JULY 10

Special Needs Sunday, which is observed by Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches the second Sunday of each July, will be July 10 this year.

This yearly event reminds followers of Jesus of their calling to make the gospel accessible to all people. It also provides an opportunity to celebrate those in the church who can often feel forgotten or neglected and educate church members about ways they can make accommodations for those who need them as an outreach to special needs families who are longing for a church home.

For more information, contact Sandra Peoples at specialneeds@sbtexas.com.

WHAT'S UP NEXT?

2022 CALENDAR

FOR MORE ABOUT SBTC EVENTS OR TO VIEW A MORE DETAILED CALENDAR, VISIT [SBTEXAS.COM/EVENTS](https://www.sbtexas.com/events)



SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY SUNDAY

JULY 10

[sbtexas.com/specialneeds](https://www.sbtexas.com/specialneeds)



EQUIP CONFERENCE

AUGUST 13 SWBTS, FORT WORTH

[sbtexas.com/equip](https://www.sbtexas.com/equip)



PASTOR/WIFE DATE NIGHT

SEPT. 9 AMARILLO

[sbtexas.com/datenight](https://www.sbtexas.com/datenight)

July

14-18	Student M3 Camp, Glorieta
19-23	Youth Week, Glen Rose

August

4	Young Pastors Network Regional Gathering, Marshall
12	Interim Pastor Equipping, Fort Worth
27	She Stands Women's Conference, Conroe

September

1-8	55+ Adult Ministry Training, Conroe & Corpus Christi
8	Young Pastors Network Regional Gathering, Cleburne/Burleson
16	She Stands Women's Conference, Longview
16-17	Florece Women's Retreat, Glen Rose
18-25	Reach Texas State Missions Offering Week of Prayer
19, 20, 22	Disciple Making Forum, West Texas & South Texas
20	Strengthening Racial Harmony Panel, Grapevine
27	Children & Family Ministry Luncheon, SWBTS



FOR MORE SBTC EVENTS
SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH
YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA





EQUIP

conference

Saturday
AUGUST 13
8:45 am–3:00 pm

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS
FOR A NEW SEASON

Join us for the 2022 Equip Conference with more than 200 breakout sessions, as well as five strategic lunch panels.



LUNCH Y PANEL DE DISCUSIÓN

Renovar. Reforzar. Restaurar El panel de discusión explorará maneras en que la iglesia puede ser renovada por el Espíritu Santo, reforzada en sus fundamentos y restaurada en la unidad para tener una iglesia vibrante. José Pacheco, Bruno Molina, Juan Puente, Diana Puente, Luis Gonzalez

PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN'S LUNCH PANEL

The Pros Know Hear from veteran teachers on the ups and downs of teaching in preschool and children's ministry. Keri Meek, children's minister from Hillcrest Baptist Church, will lead the discussion with four veteran preschool and children's ministry teachers.

FAMILY MINISTRY LUNCH PANEL

REBOOT 2022 What did we learn from 2020? How can we reach families more effectively in 2022? Join us for a panel discussion with family ministry leaders: Larry Dan Melton, Fielder-Pioneer campus pastor; Jonathan Williams, executive director of Gospel Family Ministries and adjunct professor of family ministry at Southwestern Seminary; Amy Mora, director of family ministries at University Baptist Church, San Antonio; and Keirstin Wood, next gen minister, FBC Justin.

WOMEN'S LUNCH PANEL

Reconstruction in Women's Ministry Join our M.C., Laura Taylor, and hear the panel of Cheryl Bell, Ashley Allen, Carrie Bond, and Melissa Meredith discuss practical ideas and strategies for rebuilding women's ministry.

GEN Z/YOUTH LUNCH PANEL

Going Beyond Equip Does the SBTC offer more than Equip? Yes! What other event, resource, and training does the SBTC offer Next Gen volunteers? Enjoy lunch and hear the SBTC Next Gen Team (Brandon Bales and Mitch Tidwell) share about next steps beyond Equip.

SESIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

FORT WORTH

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

COST: \$ 10
(includes lunch)

Theme:
Reset | Replenish | Rebuild

Register today at



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LUNCH PANELS