

SOUTHERN BAPTIST TEXAN

NOVEMBER 2023 | VOL. 22 | NO. 11

SBTC Annual Meeting will be
an occasion to celebrate the past,
unveil exciting vision for the future

+

East Texas church is
experiencing renewal
through refocus on prayer

+

Lorick: 3 reasons
I believe God has
blessed the SBTC

+

'We must not relent':
5 Minutes with Prestonwood's
Jack Graham

Thanking God for the journey

Twenty-five years! What a journey it has been for the network of churches known as the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. In November 1998, 120 churches gathered and officially formed the SBTC. A quarter-century later, it is incredible to see all that God has done.

As I reflect on the SBTC's 25-year history, I see many things we can celebrate. Of those, I am convinced there are three main reasons—call them catalysts to effectiveness—God has blessed this convention:

1. Our churches

There is not a greater family of churches than SBTC churches. Today, nearly 2,800 churches choose to affiliate and cooperate to reach Texas and impact the world. These churches are committed to seeing the gospel advance in our state, nation, and beyond. It is truly an honor to serve these wonderful churches.

2. Our commitment

From our inception, the SBTC has been a network of churches committed to the inerrancy of Scripture. We have not and will not back away from this commitment. We have embraced the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 as our statement of faith. This has allowed us to be doctrinally and missionally unified. Twenty-five years later, we still hold fast to our three core values: we are biblically based, kingdom focused, and missionally driven. These core values continue to drive us as we serve the churches.

3. Our leadership

From the very beginning, God has provided great leadership to the SBTC through committees, presidents, and board members. Many men and women have faithfully served to make the SBTC strong. We are so grateful to every leader God has used to shape us into the convention we are now. As great as each of these have been, I believe one of the greatest blessings God has ever bestowed upon us was to lead Dr. Jim Richards to be our founding executive director. Under his leadership, the SBTC grew from 120 churches to almost 2,800. The Cooperative Program budget has grown from approximately \$900,000 to almost \$28 million. Dr. Richards' leadership, impeccable integrity, and clear vision has led the SBTC to become one of the greatest church networks in the nation.

The SBTC has enjoyed 25 years of blessings from the Lord. We are eternally grateful for all He has done. We are also incredibly excited about what the future holds. We are seeing God do phenomenal things through Regenesys and our church planting efforts. We are also seeing many smaller networks form and help the SBTC develop deeper relationships. God is moving and I believe the next 25 years will be the most fruitful ministry yet.

I am grateful for the SBTC churches' commitment to live on mission together. Texas is huge and lostness is vast. Let's keep pressing forward toward the goal of reaching Texas and impacting the world together! I love you and am honored to serve you.



Dr. Nathan Lorick
SBTC Executive Director



Engage.
Encourage.
Equip.

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SO MUCH MORE THAN A BUSINESS MEETING

I have to admit my cynicism many years ago the first time I heard a church business meeting being referred to as a “ministry celebration.” I remember thinking, “What’s there to celebrate? The pastor presents financial numbers, the church votes, the upcoming calendar is discussed, we go home—end of story.”

I’ve since come to realize the error in such small-picture thinking. I’m not trying to convince you to show up to your next church business meeting wearing football-style eye black and one of those foam “We’re No. 1!” fingers, but what happens at such gatherings is truly worth celebrating. Behind all those financial tables and reports and such is an ongoing story about how God is using your congregation to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in your community.

Or to put it another way: God has used and is using your church to change the eternities of people all around you. Such statements can become well-worn platitudes that speed into our ears and zoom right past our hearts, but the reality is, there’s no greater impact a human being can have than to redirect the eternity of another.



This month, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention will gather for its Annual Meeting. Messengers will witness many of the happenings common to church business meetings: financial numbers will be presented, officers will be elected, ministry updates will be given. But I hope you’ll see this meeting as more than that—it will be an opportunity for us to gather and celebrate how God has used this convention of churches over the past quarter-century. Not only that, we will have an opportunity to celebrate what God can do through this family of churches over the next 25 years so that He may use us in ever greater ways.

I want to encourage you about what God is doing right now. You may not think about it this way, but God is writing Texas history, American history, world history—and kingdom history—every moment of every day. While many of those moments may seem mundane and not worthy of recording for posterity, none are wasted in the hands of our Creator.

Unbeknownst to the whole wide world, a grandmother living in a Texas Panhandle town you’ve never heard of is telling the guy at the grocery store checkout counter about Jesus. Somewhere in Southeast Texas, a shift worker is leaving the refinery after working an all-night turnaround and leading a men’s breakfast Bible study. When we gather in November, you will have the opportunity to hear stories like these of how God is using our churches to impact the kingdom by connecting in our communities.

And that is worth celebrating. Let’s do that when we gather for our Annual Meeting this month.

Eye black and foam fingers are optional.

25 years

of answered prayer

— with Jim Richards —



This month, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention will mark 25 years of answered prayer at its Annual Meeting at Cross City Church in Euless. Each month leading up to the meeting, the Texan has featured a brief conversation with past SBTC presidents about how they have seen God answer their prayers for the convention over the past quarter century and how they are praying God will bless the convention moving forward. This month, we conclude this series by featuring SBTC Executive Director Emeritus Jim Richards.

What were some of your first prayers for the SBTC?

My first prayer was that I would not have to answer the call to start a new convention. I was happy serving as a director of missions in Northwest Arkansas. God was blessing our efforts to start churches and minister to pastors. There were about 100 churches supporting the start of the convention. Many SBC leaders told me not to go due to the tenuousness of the situation. I am blessed that my prayer was not answered. God had a design for me to invest my life in Texas. Once coming to the SBTC, my prayer was for unity and grace to do what we had been called to do.

How have you seen God answer some of your prayers regarding the convention?

God was pleased to produce unity among the churches and in the executive board. With this prayer answered, we were able to pursue the three-fold core values that have defined the SBTC: biblically based, kingdom-focused, and missionally driven. God gave us favor with churches because of our unapologetic stand on the inerrancy of Scripture and the collective pursuit of the Great Commission. God provided for us through the generous giving of the churches through the Cooperative Program. Praying for church planters and plants was always a major focus. Hundreds of SBTC churches exist today that were not here in 1998. SBTC Disaster Relief was started by Gibbie McMillan and has now grown to be a strong service ministry under the leadership of Scottie Stice. Churches needed additional training. Jim Wolfe started the

Church Ministry area that is now Church Health and Leadership. The SBTC Constitution stipulates that the convention will carry no debt. We were able to move into a building without borrowing funds. Joe Davis came as a direct answer to prayer. I spoke with his pastor about our need for a chief financial officer. The pastor said Joe had committed himself to Christian service that past Sunday. I know I am leaving out hundreds of stories of answered prayer, but it would take a book to recount the miraculous journey of the SBTC.

During your service as executive director, what were your most frequent prayers for the convention?

My most frequent prayer as executive director was about my own walk. My fear was that I would fail to hear God's voice as it related to leading the convention. My sin is ever before me. I know I am capable of falling and failing at any time. I praise God He answered my prayer. It is only by His grace that I continue to serve my Lord Jesus.

What is your prayer for the next 25 years of the SBTC?

I pray daily for Dr. [Nathan] Lorick [SBTC's executive director]. He is God's man for the hour. I pray for peace among the churches and progress for the gospel in Texas, North America, and beyond. Should Jesus not return in the next 25 years, my prayer is the SBTC will still be standing on the inerrancy of the Word of God and the doctrines that define us as Baptists. If this prayer is answered, the future is as bright as the promises of God.

REACH TEXAS GIVING IN 2022-23 SETS RECORD

GRAPEVINE With the 2023-2024 Reach Texas State Missions Offering in full swing, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is celebrating the generosity of its churches during last year's campaign.

SBTC churches gave \$1,673,560 to Reach Texas—the most ever collected in a single year for the offering. The offering period covers September 2022 to August 2023. It marked the second time in three years a record Reach Texas offering was collected. The second-highest offering came during the 2020-2021 campaign, when \$1,527,969 was given by SBTC churches.

SBTC Executive Director Nathan Lorick said giving to Reach Texas is critical for the advancement of missions and evangelism strategies across the state and expressed gratitude for yet another year of sacrificial giving on the part of convention churches.

"I am so grateful for the generosity of SBTC churches and their common desire to reach Texas and impact the world together," Lorick said.

Reach Texas funds a variety of gospel-fueled efforts, including church planting, disaster relief, missions mobilization, and the annual Empower Conference, which emphasizes evangelism.

The 2023-2024 statewide challenge goal is \$1.6 million. For more information or to give, visit sbtexas.com/reachtexas.

—TEXAN STAFF

MELTON, A 'GREAT WOMAN OF GOD,' PASSES AWAY AT AGE 90

ABILENE Mary Frances Teaff Melton died Wednesday morning, Sept. 20, in Abilene. She was 90 years old.

A Texas native, she married her husband of 72 years, T.C. Melton, in 1951. Mary Frances was a graduate of Hardin Simmons University and taught in public schools for 20 years.

The Meltons served churches in West Texas for decades as pastor and wife. Later, they became an encouragement to pastors in that part of the state and great supporters of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention as T.C. became a consultant for the convention.



Said SBTC Executive Director Nathan Lorick: "The Meltons have been such a blessing to the SBTC. Mary Frances served the Lord faithfully with such a sweet spirit. Our hearts and prayers are with T.C. and the Melton family as they grieve the loss of a great woman of God."

SBTC Executive Director Emeritus Jim Richards, Lorick's predecessor, knew the Meltons well.

"Mary Frances Melton was a supportive pastor's wife and vital ministry partner for over 70 years," Richards said. "It is impossible to tally, this side of heaven, the ways God blessed His people through her. I'm praying for my friend T.C. as we all await the day when we'll see her again."

— TEXAN STAFF

SBTC DR RESPONDS TO FLORIDA AFTER HURRICANE IDALIA

PERRY, Fla. Though national media attention regarding Hurricane Idalia has ceased, recovery from the disaster continues. The category 4 storm slammed into Florida's Big Bend region on Aug. 30. Southern Baptists of Texas Disaster Relief teams answered the state's call for assistance in late September and remained working in Taylor County in early October.

An SBTC DR chainsaw team under the direction of Monte Furrh of Bonham arrived in the Perry area first. Six volunteers worked 10-hour days for a week and completed seven time-consuming chainsaw jobs. That task included removing large limbs—known

as widow-makers due to their dangerous potential to harm people if left in place—from damaged trees or helping homeowners with downed trees. Furrh's team was relieved by another North Texas team directed by Jesse Hauptrief of Anna on Oct. 1.

Florida homeowner Randy Newman posted his thanks for the SBTC DR team's help on Facebook. "Them showing up to our house was a godsend," Newman wrote. "They worked all day cutting trees, most of them 'widow-makers.' They started the day with a prayer for safety, our community, and for me and [my wife] personally. I can't explain the true compassion they have for all of us involved in the storm."

— JANE RODGERS

PRESTONWOOD'S CORREDERA FEATURED IN 'I AM SECOND' VIDEO

PLANO Gilberto Corredera, pastor of Prestonwood en Español, was recently featured in the popular Christian testimony video series, "I Am Second."

In the video, Corredera shares about his life journey. He accepted Christ as a teen in his native Cuba, where he also experienced his call to ministry. He eventually brought his family to America to seek a better life, but before long, found himself out of ministry and washing dishes to make a living. He says his "pride was broken" during that time, but he goes on to share how God eventually



opened doors for him to minister once again.

Now the pastor of one of Prestonwood's fastest-growing ministries, Prestonwood en Español hosts three services and ministers to people in 19 nations. It is also featured on a weekly television program on Telemundo Dallas that is broadcast to thousands of people.

"I never really imagined God was going to take me out of a broken family from a small town ... to bring me to a great nation and to a great church to share my faith and be a bearer of a message of hope to the nations," Corredera says in the video. "It is what God can do by His grace."

— TEXAN STAFF

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Unleashing the power of prayer

What I have discovered in my life, and in the life of most Christians, is that prayer is often relegated to a mere routine, a preparatory exercise before the real action of our day begins. This is why prayer for many is powerless and meaningless.

What is needed is a paradigm shift—acknowledging prayer as not just preparation for the battles of the day, but as a potent weapon and the key to spiritual victory. There are two important truths that reveal the essential nature of prayer, underscoring its urgent centrality in our individual and collective lives:

The Christian life is a spiritual war.

Paul paints a vivid picture of the spiritual battleground we live on every day. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers, cosmic forces, and the dark entities that lurk in heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10-12). This isn't a physical skirmish; it's a spiritual war. The Scriptures acknowledge the existence of two kingdoms—the kingdom of darkness, ruled by Satan, and the kingdom of Jesus. Though Jesus secured victory through His death and resurrection, the full realization awaits His return. In the interim, the church serves as the vanguard, advancing against the kingdom of darkness.

The stark reality is that we face a tangible enemy, an adversary with a relentless agenda to destroy lives. Satan, the god of this world, strategically plants landmines in our paths, capitalizing on our weaknesses and sin tendencies. The Christian life is a perpetual

confrontation with an unseen enemy whose schemes are as ancient as time itself.

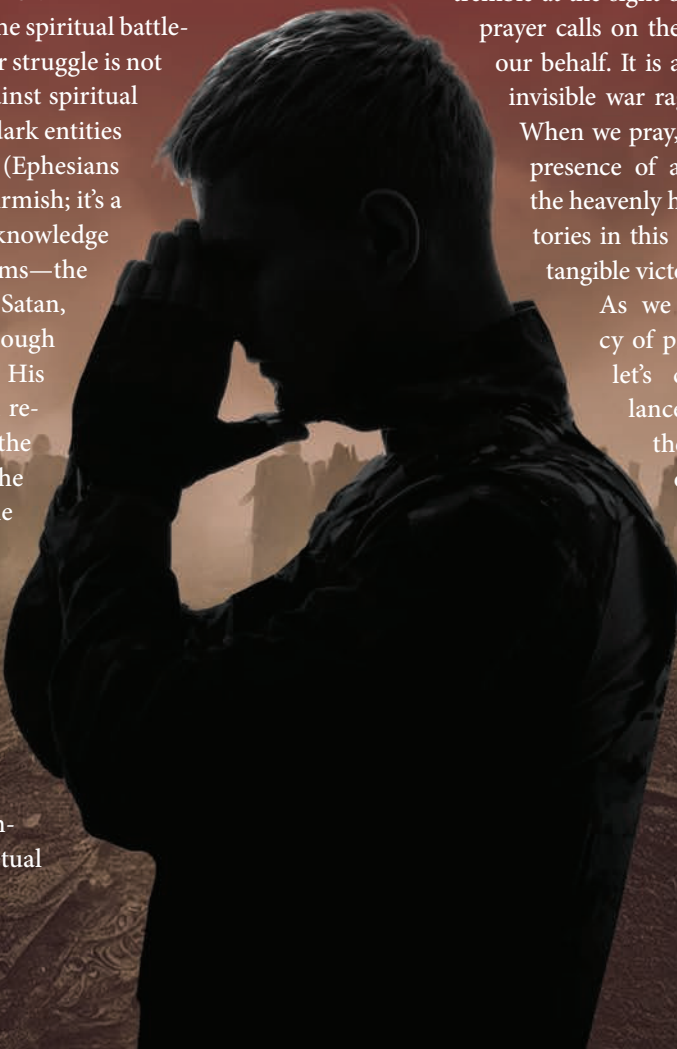
Prayer is the primary way we fight in this war.

Paul presents the armor of God as our defense against the enemy, with one offensive weapon—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Unfortunately, many are unfamiliar with how to wield this powerful weapon. The key lies in prayer—not a superficial knowledge of Scripture, but an active engagement with God's Word through prayer. This is why Paul immediately instructs us in Ephesians 6:18 to pray “at all times in the Spirit ...” It is through prayer that we wield the sword of the Spirit against the attack of the enemy.

The urgency of prayer lies not in its ritualistic repetition but in its potential to transform lives, break strongholds, and secure victories in the spiritual war. Stories of healing, reconciliation, deliverance from addiction, forgiveness, and salvation are all products of engaging in the spiritual battle through the formidable weapon of prayer.

R.A. Torrey said, “When the devil sees a man or woman who really believes in prayer ... he trembles.” Why does the devil tremble at the sight of genuine prayer? Because prayer calls on the army of God to fight on our behalf. It is an acknowledgment of the invisible war raging in the unseen realm. When we pray, we invoke the power and presence of almighty God, unleashing the heavenly host to fight for us. The victories in this celestial war translate into tangible victories on earth.

As we comprehend the urgency of prayer in the spiritual war, let's cultivate alertness, vigilance, and a commitment to the discipline of prayer. Let our lives be a testament to the truth that, in His presence, we find not only refuge but also the ultimate weapon against the forces that seek to destroy. Embrace prayer not as a passive routine but as a powerful offensive against the schemes of the enemy.





JACK GRAHAM



Jack Graham is senior pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, one of the nation's largest congregations with more than 57,000 members and three locations in North Texas. He is the author of numerous books, and his passionate, biblical teaching is seen and heard worldwide on PowerPoint Ministries. The Bible in a Year with Jack Graham podcast, in partnership with pray.com, launched in October 2022 and has now reached more than 30 million downloads. He and his wife, Deb, have three married children and eight grandchildren.

What is something you've been able to celebrate at Prestonwood recently?

I truly believe there's a sense of revival happening at Prestonwood. Our North Campus in Prosper, under the leadership of Connor Bales, has been growing exponentially, so we recently expanded and renovated to keep up with the growing needs. We've celebrated our Prestonwood en Español ministry, led by Gilberto Corredera, which is thriving and reaching the Hispanic community throughout North Texas. We've celebrated our Prestonwood Pregnancy Center, as we have witnessed nearly 7,000 women who were abortion-minded choose life for their babies since the overturning of Roe v. Wade. We continue to work and pray that abortion will be unthinkable. We celebrated nearly 500 professions of faith among children and students through our summer activities. And we're expecting more than 1,100 baptisms this church year. To God be the glory!

What's one lesson you've learned to this point of your ministry that you know you'll never forget?

One of the lessons I learned very early in my ministry was to balance life between the church and home. I always made time for my family. I made sure Deb and I spent time together, and I spent time with our kids, attending whatever events or sports they were participating in while growing up. This is a lesson I try to instill in our ministers and the young pastors and leaders we train through our Prestonwood Network.

What's one thing you want to see God do specifically at or through Prestonwood in 2024?

In this tumultuous world we live in with its increasingly hostile and secular culture, we want our church family to stand firm as believers of Christ. We want them to be equipped and confident in the solid foundation on which they stand. We are more and more intentional about this through our teaching and discipleship and evangelism training, from our youngest to our oldest members. Our church family has always had a heart for reaching people—locally, nationally, and internationally—with the transforming message of the gospel. Evangelism is more critical than ever for our church and every church.

What are some of the biggest challenges facing the church in 2023?

Too many churches are throwing in the towel when it comes to the culture wars and social issues—especially on the sanctity of life. Too many pastors are compromising their calling in the pulpit, watering down their messages from the infallible Word of God for fear of offending. Number one, people are offended too easily these days; and number two, the Bible is offensive because it speaks truth. Now, more than ever, we must not relent. We must be bold and courageous and stand strong for the Lord. We are to fight the good fight of faith, because if we lose the church, we lose everything.

2023 ANNUAL MEETING **FORWARD**

PHILIPPIANS 3:13

Cross City Church, Euless

En Español

Sunday, Nov. 12

5:30-6:30pm Spanish Session Reception

6:30-8:30pm Spanish Session

Monday, Nov. 13

10:00-11:45am Spanish Session Breakouts

12:00-2:00pm Hispanic Luncheon Panel

Monday Evening Session

Nov. 13, 6:30-9:00 PM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

DFW Area Choir

CALL TO ORDER

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Todd Kaunitz, SBTC president

CONSTITUTING OF THE CONVENTION

COMMITTEE ON ORDER OF BUSINESS

Blake White, pastor, South Side Baptist Church, Abilene

INTRODUCTION OF MOTIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Nathan Lorick, SBTC executive director

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Todd Kaunitz, pastor,

New Beginnings Baptist Church, Longview

PRAYER MEETING Led by Nathan Lino

Tuesday Morning Session

Nov. 13, 9:00-11:30 AM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Praise Team, New Beginnings Baptist Church, Longview

LAST INTRODUCTION OF MOTIONS

Todd Kaunitz, SBTC president

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Juan Sanchez, pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin

CHURCH PLANTER COMMISSIONING

SBTC EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT

Caleb Turner, pastor,

Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church, Mesquite

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (PRESIDENT)

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Gregg Matte, pastor, Houston's First Baptist Church

Tuesday Afternoon Session

Nov. 14, 1:30-4:00 PM

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Praise Team, New Beginnings Baptist Church, Longview

SBTC EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT

Caleb Turner, pastor,

Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church, Mesquite

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (VICE PRESIDENT)

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

Madison Grace, member, First Baptist Church, Mansfield

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (SECRETARY)

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

Andy Hill, associate pastor,

Mobberly Baptist Church, Longview

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

Aaron Kahler, pastor, Hays Hills Baptist Church, Buda

COMMITTEE ON ORDER OF BUSINESS: FINAL REPORT

Blake White, pastor, South Side Baptist Church, Abilene

PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BIBLICAL CHALLENGE

Ed Johnson III, pastor,

Harvest Fellowship Baptist Church, DeSoto

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING OFFICERS

RECOGNITION OF INCOMING OFFICERS

DISMISSAL WITH GAVEL

HANDOUTS & MATERIALS

Only SBTC ministries and approved exhibitors may hand out material to the messenger body on the premises hosting the annual meeting.

CHILDCARE

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2023 ANNUAL MEETING
FORWARD
PHILIPPIANS 3:13

Meals

MONDAY

CHINESE PASTOR NETWORK LUNCH

12:00pm

MISSIONAL MINISTRIES DINNER

4:45pm

Our Missional Ministries team will host an interactive panel discussion offering actionable steps to help strengthen programs in your church.

CHURCH HEALTH & LEADERSHIP DINNER

4:45pm

Hear from our Church Health and Leadership team concerning important issues in the church today and connect with like-minded individuals who share a passion for building strong and thriving churches.

YOUNG PASTORS NETWORK DINNER

4:45pm

From biggest mistakes to the nature of Christ-centered preaching, panelists Juan Sanchez, Chris Osborne, and Spencer Plumlee will discuss a spectrum of topics focused on "The Pastor and Preaching."

TUESDAY

WOMEN'S MINISTRY BREAKFAST

7:30am

Fellowship with other SBTC women and hear guest speaker Melissa Spoelstra talk about "Savoring the Peace of Jesus in a Chaotic World."

SBTC DISASTER RELIEF TACO TRUCK

7:30am

SEMINARY BREAKFASTS

Register on seminary website

7:30am Southwestern, Southern, New Orleans

PRESIDENT'S LUNCH PANEL

12:00pm

Join moderator Todd Kaunitz, Nathan Lino, John Meador, Brad Daugherty, Robert Welch, and Bart Barber as they discuss "Five Markers of a Mobilized Church."

REGENESIS LUNCH PANEL

12:00pm

A panel discussion featuring Lee Peoples, David Norman, Kyle Bueermann, and Ed Fenton discussing key elements of church revitalization.

25-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Reception AT 9:00PM

Join us as we celebrate all the Lord has done in the last 25 years and look forward to what He will continue to do in the years to come. Guests can expect hors d'oeuvres and fellowship with other messengers and SBTC staff.



Executive Board Motion

Messengers to the 2023 SBTC Annual Meeting will be asked by the Executive Board to amend the effective date for affiliated churches stated in the constitutional interpretation motion approved by the messengers in 2022 by extending the date from January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2025.

The following is the motion from 2022 with the proposed amendment shown by strikethrough and underline: "... that the SBTC, for purposes of affiliation, interpret the language in the SBTC Constitution, article IV, section 1, to refer not only to the titles of senior pastor or lead pastor, but to any role designated by the noun, "pastor," with the proviso that this new interpretation take effect regarding presently affiliated churches January 1, ~~2024~~ 2025."

* This statement constitutes third notice of this motion.

2023 ANNUAL MEETING
FORWARD
PHILIPPIANS 3:13

Lopez, Cooper to be nominated for second terms as convention officers

Eddie Lopez, pastor of First Baptist Church Forney en Español, will be nominated to serve a second term as vice president of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention at its 2023 Annual Meeting Nov. 13-14 at Cross City Church in Euless. Lopez will be nominated by James Jordan, executive pastor of FBC Forney.

Sharonda Cooper, a member of Emmaus Church in Georgetown, will be nominated for a second term as convention secretary. Cooper, who

has served with the Texas Ethics and Religious Liberty Committee and the Gospel Coalition, will be nominated by her pastor, Marshall Canales.

According to the bylaws of the 2023 SBTC constitution, the duties of convention secretary include receiving copies of motions offered for consideration at the Annual Meeting.

The convention vice president fulfills the duties of the president in the president's absence or when

requested by the president to do so.

Both the secretary and vice president serve on the credentials committee, as outlined in Article III of the convention's constitution and bylaws.

Lopez and Cooper join Danny Forshee, pastor of Great Hills Baptist Church in Austin, as those who have been nominated to serve as officers. Gregg Matte, senior pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, will nominate Forshee.



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PRAYER BEFORE PROGRESS

Renewed commitment to crying out to God is leading to transformation at FBC Troup

TROUP

Preston Lindsey has worn a lot of hats in his lifetime. He's been a logger, pipe-fitter, oil field roughneck, telephone lineman, and a shipping manager and transportation director for a grocery chain. He spent 15 years as an agriculture teacher with the Troup Independent School District before becoming its director of support services, a position he holds today.

One thing the 65-year-old never expected to be was a pastor. Yet, since January 2023, he has worn that hat as well, pastoring at First Baptist Church

in Troup—where, through an emphasis on prayer, the church is experiencing new life.

A native East Texan, Lindsey was raised in Mixon—a tiny community with fewer than 100 residents located seven miles southwest of Troup—trusting Christ at age 10. He married his high school sweetheart, Kelli, attended Kilgore College, and later earned a degree from the University of Texas at Tyler. Lindsey still resides near Mixon on 50 acres with Kelli and two adult children, both with special needs. Another daughter and her family also live nearby.

No stranger to church work, Lindsey served 40 years as a deacon at FBC Mixon, where he led dozens of mission trips. Following a mission trip to Mexico two decades ago, he realized he was serving himself more than serving God.

“I realized then I wanted to serve Christ with all my heart,” he recalled. As he reached his 60s, he “really began to feel the call.” God was doing something. “He was leading me to be a pastor somewhere,” Lindsey said. “It pretty much scared me to death.”

Meanwhile, FBC Troup lost its pastor in June 2022. Lindsey understood some of the circumstances. He knew many people at the church and was saddened by its struggles. One Monday morning, Lindsey drove by FBC Troup as usual on his way to work at the school district. He pulled into the church parking lot to pray for the church, its members, and the community.

Within 30 minutes, he received a call from one of the FBC Troup deacons asking him to fill the pulpit the following Sunday. He agreed, thinking the Lord might use him to help the deacons reorganize. He preached that Sunday and met with the deacons about the church's issues.



The next Monday morning, he once again found himself praying in the FBC Troup parking lot.

“Lord, what are you asking me to do?” Lindsey recalled praying. Within 15 minutes, another FBC Troup deacon called to ask him to preach again the following Sunday. Lindsey agreed. The deacons then asked him to serve as interim pastor until things could be “straightened out.”

Lindsey was astonished. Yes, he was a lifelong Bible student, but he had no formal seminary training. He had just gotten through studying Moses with the youth group at FBC Mixon. Was it time to step out in faith?

“I wanted to serve the Lord,” he said.

So he said yes.

What followed is a “crazy story of what God’s doing,” Lindsey noted.

A matter of prayer

If his ministry at FBC Troup was to honor God, Lindsey knew it had to begin in prayer—a truth he had learned at the 2021 Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Annual Meeting in nearby Flint. At that gathering, he said he heard “preacher after preacher” talking about how prayer had changed their lives and their churches.

“I brought that focus to Troup,” he said. If his involvement at the church began with prayer in the parking lot, his time as pastor would also start with prayer.

Whereas FBC Troup had once averaged around 120 in services, only 35-40 attended during the new pastor’s first month. The four deacons and Lindsey committed to pray, a commitment the church body, though small, also embraced.

They focused on 2 Chronicles 7:14-16, Lindsey said, spending weeks on that passage.

“We prayed in church services. We prayed as a deacon group. We really wanted to understand what humbling ourselves meant,” he recalled. The church held a 12-hour prayer vigil in 2022 and again in fall 2023, with people signing up for time slots and coming to the church to pray.

“After our church fell on our knees and asked the Lord for His direction, things happened,” Lindsey said.

It started in the youth department.

Tragedy brings unity

“Our youth exploded,” said Lindsey, crediting youth director Matt Ranshaw and his wife, Brooke, for bringing new life to the group and encouraging mission trips. Like Lindsey, Ranshaw is bivocational, serving also as a policeman for Tyler ISD.

“We’ve had 60 baptisms so far this year. We’ve seen amazing things through our youth and the leadership. All that is of the Holy Spirit.”

—PRESTON LINDSEY

Students started sharing Christ with their friends. The youth brought their parents, friends, and family to church. More than 170 kids and 35 volunteer workers participated in a mid-October Wednesday night youth group meeting, Lindsey said. That increase has spilled over into the church, which now averages 200 on Sundays.

“We’ve had 60 baptisms so far this year,” Lindsey said. “We’ve seen amazing things through our youth and the leadership. All that is of the Holy Spirit.”

Some of those amazing things started after a tragedy.

Youth camp at Piney Woods in July 2022 started out as a struggle, Ranshaw said. Kids were not gelling. Groups kept to themselves. Ranshaw was discouraged. Wednesday of camp week, he called Lindsey and learned that the congregation had prayed for youth camp that evening.



The revitalized youth department (seen on pages 11 and 13) at FBC Troup has embraced prayer and mission trips. (Right) Pastor Preston Lindsey baptizes member Bracey Cover, one of 60-plus baptisms since Lindsey’s arrival at FBC Troup.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



“After our church fell on our knees and asked the Lord for His direction, things happened.”

—PRESTON LINDSEY

Things started changing quickly. Kids at camp started opening up that same night: students shared their struggles, some admitted to needing salvation, and others revealed brokenness. Camp ended on a spiritual mountaintop for many, and the students wanted to continue that when they got home.

The youth group started growing in numbers and spiritual maturity, which would soon be tested. On Sept. 9, 2022, during the Troup homecoming football game, junior player Cooper Reid—Lindsey’s cousin’s son—collapsed on the field. Cooper had gone to camp with the FBC Troup kids, although he attended another church.

Instead of the planned homecoming the following night, the school held a community prayer vigil for Cooper. FBC Troup kids attended, as did pastors, kids from other schools, and community members.

Ranshaw saw his students’ faith in action.

“Sometimes you can teach kids all you want. Until they experience it, they won’t buy in,” he said, adding that he told his youth group, “Now you understand intercessory prayer.”

The youth and church continued to pray for Cooper, who has since returned home and continues to make progress.

Progress is real for Ranshaw, Lindsey, and FBC Troup. And all the progress has come as God has continued to show Himself faithful through their continued prayers.



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MAKING THE *IMPOSSIBLE* POSSIBLE

East Texas church has one explanation
for the renewal it's experiencing—Jesus

MALAKOFF

Every morning, Scott and Brandi Plemons get on their knees and say a prayer like this: “Lord, thank you for our blessings. Thank you for our struggles. We are nothing without you. Please keep us from our addictions.”

Drugs and alcohol have been a part of their lives almost as long as they've been part of each other's. They grew up in Arlington (in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex) and met several decades ago as teenagers. Both grew up in the church and both ended up walking away from God.

Scott's destructive path began around college, when he said he began to take advantage of the freedom most teens discover after high school. But his choices didn't liberate him; they shackled him—literally—landing him in prison.

Brandi began to stray from the Lord after a crushing series of deaths in her family, including the loss of her mother when she was 13. Angry at what she perceived God had taken from her, she ran as far from Him as she thought she could.

“I just kind of went left and didn't stop,” she said.

After trips in and out of jail and numerous failed attempts to shake their addictions, Scott and Brandi decided to flee the city and, on the advice of a family member, move to rural East Texas—where they thought they'd have a far better chance to stabilize their lives. Before long, they began attending a church, where they were saved and baptized.

But the hooks of addiction were still deep within them, so much so that they began to fear they were on a path

to certain death. Scott said he has always felt like he and Brandi were meant to help others, but as they wallowed in the mire of addiction, they couldn't even help themselves.

“I kept telling Brandi, ‘This isn't how life's supposed to be,’” Scott said. “God's got something greater for us.”

In their quest to get help, Scott felt led by God to find the man who had pastored him at the Arlington church he grew up in. He was Scott's pastor from grade school through high school, until he left the church to answer God's call to lead the First Baptist Church in Malakoff. Scott, who now lived a short drive away from FBC Malakoff, learned from a friend that his former pastor was still at the church, though no longer as the senior pastor.

So, on a Sunday morning Scott and Brandi set out for FBC Malakoff to find his former pastor, to see if maybe—just maybe—he might be able to help them break away from the bondage of addiction. When they pulled into the drive that morning, they were met by one of the church's parking lot greeters. They explained to the greeter they were looking for a man they were told would be inside.

The man's name was Casey Perry.

‘I was praying without ceasing’

Casey Perry doesn't have a go-to place when it comes to his prayer life. He prays everywhere. He prays in his bedroom. He prays in his truck. He prays in public places. He prays for people he knows. He prays for strangers. The sum of all this is that he can't begin to tell you all the places he prays or all the faces he prays for—for the most part.

Perry, who will turn 90 next April, clearly remembers the two things he was praying for most fervently as the

calendar flipped to 2020: He was praying the Lord would allow him to live long enough to care for his wife, Lettie, who was struggling with Alzheimer's disease, and he was also praying for the First Baptist Church in Malakoff.

Perry served as FBC Malakoff's pastor from 1992 until 2000. Those were good years. Among other blessings, he recalls how FBC Malakoff started eight new churches during those eight years. It was also a time of tremendous growth fueled by young families bringing their kids, who, in turn, invited their school friends.

But as 2020 wound down, and with Perry now a member having long ago stepped away from full-time pastoring, the church found itself without a senior pastor and in decline. Salvations and baptisms slumped. Attendance followed suit. There was a general sense in the congregation that the movements of God so fondly remembered by its longest-standing members were just that—memories.

“Every time I'd think of it—and I thought of it often—I'd breathe a prayer for the Malakoff church.”

—CASEY PERRY

Watching the church struggle grieved Perry's heart, so he did all that he knew to do. He prayed.

“It wasn't just daily,” Perry said. “It was kind of like Paul said—I was praying without ceasing. It was a constant time of prayer. Every time I'd think of it—and I thought of it often—I'd breathe a prayer for the Malakoff church.”

Perry wasn't praying for a return to better days. That, in a sense, would be praying backward. Instead, he prayed forward—for God to move in a fresh way, opening new doors to reach the lost through the ministry of the church. He also prayed for the man he was certain God already knew would be the next pastor to lead the church into that season.

Yes, God knew precisely who that man was. But Perry didn't, and as the time for accepting resumes ticked down, neither did the pastor search team prayerfully sorting through them.

As it turns out, one resume made it onto the stack toward the end of the process. It was from a worship pastor with no senior pastor experience serving at a sister church 30 miles down the road. His name was familiar to some on the search team, as he had previously served as FBC Malakoff's worship pastor.

The man's name was Ed Fenton.

Undeniably Him

In May 2022, Ed Fenton began keeping a prayer journal. He doesn't remember exactly what prompted him to start, other than he wanted some kind of record to help him identify and remember the work of God resulting from his own prayers and those lifted up corporately at FBC Malakoff.

► Ed Fenton (left) and Casey Perry are seen during a recent time of prayer. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**



The first entry is dated May 2, 2022: “Last week was one worth remembering. For seven months, we’ve been praying for God to work and move among us, and the Lord blessed in some unique ways. On Wednesday (April 27), the church celebrated its first baptism since June 2021—my first baptism as a senior pastor. On Sunday (May 1), we celebrated our second baptism. ... On top of that, on Wednesday (April 27), my youngest daughter, Brenna, trusted Christ to be her Savior and Lord. He is doing a work that’s undeniably Him.”

Undeniably Him. He’s not sure, but Fenton feels like that phrase is starting to resonate with church members. Not only because it is spoken often at worship services and during Wednesday night prayer meetings, but also because members are seeing—no, experiencing—things that seem to happen only because God made it so.

After two people were baptized following nearly a year of stilled baptistry waters, three more would follow before year’s end. So far in 2023, 24 have been baptized. Worship attendance has grown from about 160 in the fall of 2022 to 250-300 this fall. The next gen departments are blossoming, with the kids ministry more than doubling and the youth growing from fewer than 10 regular attenders to 35-40 students showing up for midweek services. Weekly visitation—spearheaded by Perry and Stan Smith, the church’s missions team leader—is thriving. The church is reaching people who are subsequently joining the visitation team to reach others with the saving message of Christ that once reached them.

New leaders often bring with them a renewed sense of hope and excitement, which, in turn, can boost attendance. New ideas and textbook



(Top) Servants at FBC Malakoff help build a wheelchair ramp for a local resident. (Middle) The church works hard to reach out to the community, hoping for opportunities to share the gospel. (Bottom) Scott and Brandi Plemons are married by Casey Perry, who served as Scott’s pastor when he was a child.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

church growth strategies can be effective in bringing people outside the circle in. Fenton credits none of those things—nor the preaching, nor the music—for what is happening at FBC Malakoff. The church, he says, is experiencing what it is experiencing only because people are desperately and more frequently calling out to God in prayer.

Fenton the worship pastor turned to prayer before answering God’s call to leave nearby Rock Hill Baptist Church to accept a new role as senior pastor. Fenton, the new senior pastor, turned to prayer when trying to figure out how to lead the church in Malakoff.

“If it’s going to happen here,” Fenton said, “it’s going to happen because our people have been on their knees praying and asking God to do it. ... We have staked the success of the ministry of this church on God answering the prayers of His people.”

For Fenton, pastoring has been an emotional tightrope—one of learning how to balance the celebratory shouts lobbed from the congregation as a new follower of Christ takes the baptism plunge with the tears of hopelessness he sees on the faces of people in crisis. It’s seeing a sanctuary filled to near capacity most Sunday mornings but knowing that same room faces no such threat during Wednesday night prayer meetings.

There is still so much Fenton feels like can happen—needs to happen—at this church.

Even so, FBC Malakoff has come a long way.

“I just believe this so much—God can take 20 serious people who are desperate for Him in prayer and He can do the impossible,” he added. “He has done that and He is doing that.”

One way God is doing that is through transforming the lives of those desperately seeking Him.

'He can do the impossible'

It's a Tuesday night and Scott and Brandi are sitting inside a Dairy Queen, staring across the table at a young couple they invited to dinner. A few minutes earlier, Scott and Brandi had gone to the young couple's house during FBC Malakoff's regular weekly visitation. Their own history of substance abuse helped them quickly recognize the tell-tale signs of addiction displayed by the young couple now sitting in front of them. As the young couple bickered, a thought ran through Brandi's mind:

"We're looking in a mirror at our former selves."

Only months earlier, it was Scott and Brandi sitting in a rural diner across the table Smith and Perry—who met

**"I just believe
this so much—
God can take
20 serious
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He can do the
impossible."**

—ED FENTON

them for breakfast days after the pair were reunited with Perry after decades that first Sunday morning at FBC Malakoff.

"Tell me what's going on," Perry inquired.

"Brother Perry, we're both struggling with alcohol," Scott replied.

"Well," Perry matter-of-factly shot back, "we're going to whoop that."

God has transformed Scott and Brandi in so many ways, not the least of which is this: they who once had a great need to be ministered to are now ministering to others as members of FBC Malakoff. Even as they minister alongside people who feel like family and under a pastor in Fenton who they say has been there for them anytime they've needed him,

Scott and Brandi readily admit they have not conquered all their struggles.

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CALLING AN AUDIBLE

Richardson pastor with football dreams instead follows God's call into ministry

RICHARDSON

Jose Arzate had a clear vision for his life as a young man: he wanted to play professional football in the U.S. and possibly even coach.

The next step on that journey would be a stop at West Texas A&M, where he received a scholarship offer to play football in 2013. Arzate, along with his parents and siblings, made the 14-hour move to Amarillo so he could pursue his dream in nearby Canyon.

The transition was harder than they could have imagined. His family was unable to find housing or jobs and often had to depend on the generosity of others to eat. Then it got worse. The coach who wanted Arzate to play football at the university left and a new coach was brought in.

That closed the door for Arzate to play football there. He felt like he had let his family down and that his world was falling apart. Two years later, in the midst of continued uncertainty, he called his former pastor, Rolando Aguirre.

"Things didn't work out the way I planned," Arzate told Aguirre.

"I'm glad they didn't work out," Aguirre replied, "because I could see that wasn't for you because you have a call to [pastoral] ministry."

Being a pastor had never crossed Arzate's mind. But after the conversation, he began to see his life through a different lens and sense God moving him in a new direction.

"If I hadn't gone through that desert," Arzate said, "I wouldn't have understood that I had a pastoral calling."

God was now opening new doors. Arzate enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and answered a call to serve as an interim youth pastor at a church in Amarillo. It was at this church he



“If I hadn’t gone through that desert, I wouldn’t have understood that I had a pastoral calling.”

—JOSE ARZATE

met his wife, Natalie, who was active in worship and missions. As they served the church together, they saw a need in their community for a Christ-centered, biblical Hispanic congregation. Since God had put it on his heart to start such a work, Arzate volunteered to help his church start a Hispanic ministry.

Little did he know, God would soon change Arzate’s path once again.

‘Planting is a long-distance race’

Before long, another Amarillo pastor, Andrew Hébert of Paramount Baptist Church (who now pastors Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview), reached out to ask Arzate advice about how to start a Hispanic ministry at his own church. The two made a strong connection that day, and eventually Paramount invited Arzate to lead that new Hispanic ministry.

God blessed the ministry greatly. In less than six months, 20-30 people were attending the church’s Hispanic service. By the time it hit its one-year anniversary, 100 people were attending. The Arzates remained there for two years before answering a call to lead the En Español ministry at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

It was at Travis Avenue that God would begin to guide Arzate in a new direction. Though his call to ministry had led him mostly to Spanish congregations and efforts, he and Natalie began to see the need to minister to overlooked populations in multicultural settings.

What followed was another call—a literal one, from Northridge Baptist Church in Richardson. Church leaders reached out to Arzate to share with him their vision of reaching a more diverse population. They told Arzate that the church, once strong and well-known in the community, was in decline. It struggled to reach younger people. A new vision was needed, and they asked Arzate if he would come and lead the church.



Jose Arzate and his wife, Natalie (top) have followed the Lord’s leading—even when it required them to change their own plans. (Bottom) The Bridge Church, where Arzate pastors, is working to connect with a diverse community. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

Once again, he answered the call. Only this time, rather than starting a church from scratch, he and church leaders at Northridge were faced with a decision: replant, revitalize, or relocate? Ultimately, he reached out to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, which helped the church make the decision to replant.

Working with the SBTC brought valuable benefits, Arzate said. He and his wife both began to receive church planter training. He also began to develop a close relationship with Julio Arriola, who directs Send Network SBTC—a planting partnership between the SBTC and the North American Mission Board. Arzate said Arriola has served as one of his mentors.

“Jose has a deep-rooted passion for multicultural church planting,” Arriola said. “He recognizes the significance of preaching and serving a community that encompasses a variety of ethnicities, not limited to Hispanics or Anglos, but embracing a multitude of ethnic groups.”

Because of its heart to reach its community, Northridge took on a new name during the replant process—The Bridge Church. As its name implies, the church wants to be a bridge between the nations and the gospel of Jesus Christ. It desires to connect people to the Word of God, to other people, and to their God-given purpose.

Arzate knows the work won't be easy. He feels like another part of his ministry is to encourage other planters who may get discouraged when they don't see progress as soon as they'd like—just as other people have encouraged him along the way.

“Every week I've considered throwing in the towel because it's hard,” Arzate says. “Planting is a long-distance race. It is for the one who endures, and not for the one who [wants to see] fruit quickly. When a vision is about reaching the nations and the next generations, the enemy gets restless and attacks to bring discouragement, but God gives us the strength to persevere and fulfill His purpose through prayer.”

CAMBIO DE JUGADA

Pastor de Richardson deja atrás su sueño de ser futbolista para seguir el llamado de Dios al ministerio.

RICHARDSON

José Arzate tenía una visión clara de su vida cuando era joven: quería jugar fútbol profesional en los Estados Unidos y posiblemente incluso ser entrenador.

El siguiente paso en ese viaje sería una parada en la Universidad West Texas A&M, donde le ofrecieron una beca para jugar al fútbol americano en el 2013. Arzate, junto con sus padres y hermanos, hizo el traslado de 14 horas a Amarillo para poder perseguir su sueño en Canyon.

La transición, sin embargo, fue más dura de lo que podían imaginar. Su familia no pudo encontrar vivienda ni trabajo y en ocasiones tuvieron que depender de la generosidad de otros para comer. Luego las cosas empeoraron. El entrenador que quería que Arzate jugara fútbol en la universidad se marchó y trajeron a un nuevo entrenador.



Eso cerró la puerta para que Arzate jugara fútbol allí. Él sintió que había defraudado a su familia y que su mundo se desmoronaba. Dos años más tarde, en medio de una continua incertidumbre, él llamó a su antiguo pastor, Rolando Aguirre.

“Las cosas no salieron como yo había planeado”, le dijo Arzate a Aguirre.

“Me alegro de que no funcionaran”, respondió Aguirre, “yo pude ver que eso no era para ti, porque tienes un llamado al ministerio [pastoral]”.

Nunca le había pasado por la mente ser pastor, pero después de la conversación, Arzate empezó a ver su vida con otros ojos y a sentir que Dios lo movía en una nueva dirección.

“Si no hubiera pasado por ese desierto”, dijo Arzate, “no habría entendido que tenía un llamado pastoral”.

Dios ahora estaba abriendo nuevas puertas. Arzate se matriculó en el Seminario Teológico Bautista Southwestern y respondió a un llamado para servir como pastor interino de jóvenes en una iglesia de Amarillo.

Fue en esta iglesia donde conoció a su esposa, Natalie, que participaba activamente en la adoración y las misiones. Mientras servían juntos en la iglesia, vieron la necesidad en su comunidad de una congregación hispana bíblica centrada en Cristo. Ya que Dios había puesto en su corazón comenzar tal obra, Arzate se ofreció como voluntario para ayudar a su iglesia a comenzar un ministerio hispano.

Poco sabía él, que Dios pronto cambiaría el camino de Arzate una vez más.

‘Plantar es una carrera de largo tramo’

En poco tiempo, otro pastor de Amarillo, Andrew Hébert de la Iglesia Bautista Paramount, se acercó a Arzate para pedirle consejo sobre cómo iniciar un ministerio hispano en su propia iglesia. Los dos hicieron una fuerte conexión ese día, y finalmente Paramount invitó a Arzate a dirigir ese nuevo ministerio hispano.

Dios bendijo grandemente el ministerio. En menos de seis meses, 20-30 personas asistían al servicio hispano de la iglesia. Cuando se cumplió un año, ya asistían

“Si no hubiera pasado por ese desierto, no habría entendido que tenía un llamado pastoral”.

—JOSÉ ARZATE

100 personas. Los Arzate permanecieron allí por dos años antes de responder a un llamado para dirigir el ministerio en Español de la Iglesia Bautista de Travis Avenue en Fort Worth.

Fue en Travis Avenue donde Dios comenzaría a guiar a Arzate en una nueva dirección. Aunque su llamado al ministerio lo había llevado principalmente a congregaciones y esfuerzos en español, él y Natalie comenzaron a ver la necesidad de ministrar a poblaciones ignoradas, dentro de entornos multiculturales.

Lo que siguió fue otra llamada, literalmente, de la Iglesia Bautista Northridge de Richardson. Los líderes de la iglesia se pusieron en contacto con Arzate para compartir con él su visión de poder llegar a una población más diversa. Le dijeron a Arzate que esa iglesia, que había sido una sólida y conocida en la comunidad, estaba en declive. Les costaba llegar a los jóvenes. Se necesitaba una nueva visión, y le preguntaron a Arzate si quería venir a dirigir la iglesia.

Una vez más, Arzate respondió al llamado. Sólo que esta vez, en lugar de empezar una iglesia desde cero, él y los líderes de Northridge se enfrentaron a una decisión: ¿replantar, revitalizar o relocalizarse? Finalmente, se puso en contacto con la Convención de los Bautistas del Sur de Texas, que ayudó a la iglesia a tomar la decisión de replantar.

Trabajar con la SBTC aportó valiosos beneficios, dijo Arzate. Tanto él como su esposa empezaron a recibir



formación para plantar iglesias. También comenzó a desarrollar una estrecha relación con Julio Arriola, quien dirige Send Network SBTC, una asociación de plantación entre la SBTC y la Junta de Misiones Norteamericanas. Arzate dijo que Arriola ha servido como uno de sus mentores.

“José tiene una pasión profundamente arraigada por la plantación de iglesias multiculturales”, dijo Arriola. “Él reconoce la importancia de predicar y servir a una comunidad que abarca una variedad de etnias, no se limita a los hispanos o anglos, sino que incluye una multitud de grupos étnicos.”

Debido a su deseo de alcanzar a la comunidad, Northridge adoptó un nuevo nombre durante el proceso de replantación: The Bridge Church. Como su nombre indica, la iglesia quiere ser un puente entre las naciones y el evangelio de Jesucristo. Desea conectar a las personas con la Palabra de Dios, con otras personas y con el propósito que Dios les ha dado.

Arzate sabe que el trabajo no será fácil. Siente que otra parte de su ministerio es animar a otros plantadores que pueden desanimarse cuando no ven el progreso tan pronto como les gustaría, así como otras personas lo han animado a él a lo largo del camino.

“Cada semana he considerado tirar la toalla porque es difícil”, dice Arzate. La plantación es una carrera de largo tramo. Es para el que perdura, y no para el que [quiere ver] frutos rápidamente. Cuando una visión se trata de alcanzar a las naciones y a las próximas generaciones, el enemigo se inquieta y ataca para traer desánimo, pero Dios nos da las fuerzas para perseverar y cumplir Su propósito, mediante la oración.”



(Arriba) Equipo de alabanza de la iglesia The Bridge dirigiendo durante un servicio reciente. (Abajo) Arzate considera que su función pastoral no es sólo predicar, sino también animar. **FOTOS COMPARTIDAS**

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What I have learned about prayer

Have you ever prayed and felt God was directing you a certain way? I have! In May 2023, I graduated from seminary and found a number of opportunities presenting themselves to me. I had an opportunity to travel on mission, to help with Bible literacy through storytelling, and to write about hope in Christ. My family and I prayed and knew God was directing us this way. He provided the funds for me to travel, and it was only a matter of time before I could step into the other roles, as well.

However, as days, weeks, and months passed, those doors started to close, one after another. I could not travel and the Bible literacy and writing opportunities were suddenly gone. I felt discouraged, disappointed, and hopeless. I blamed myself for not trying hard enough. I felt stuck as I watched others move on with their plans. It was a difficult season.

As I look back, though my circumstances did not change, I have changed. The Lord taught me lessons about prayer I had not learned before:

Prayer teaches discernment.

Waiting can leave us vulnerable and susceptible to deception. The enemy, who is a false shepherd, is always looking to mislead us. It is only when we stay focused on Christ in prayer that we discern His voice and follow Him. Christ said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:3).

Prayer renews our confidence that God exists.

When we pray, we are reminded we are praying to a living God. “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). The God who created the universe and powerfully holds all things together by His Word not only exists, but He also rewards us for our persistence in prayer.

A prayer of faith begins with hearing God.

Paul said in Romans 10:17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” As we pray, we learn to cultivate the discipline of saying less and tuning our ears to hear God speak to us through His Word in the Bible. We learn to pray with our Bibles open. We remember that God loves us more than we love ourselves. He knows us more than we can ever know ourselves. And He always wants to give us His very best.

God always answers our prayers.

As we align ourselves to God’s will, we see our circumstances and prayers through His lens. God’s will is a done deal! While I did not go on mission that summer, I prayed for those who went. God answered, and more than 1,200 high school students came to Christ. Opportunities to teach Bible literacy to my family, church, friends, and strangers, were plenty—I just needed to see and accept them. God is using my writing, including what you’re reading, to share the message of hope. God always answers our prayers, and He shows us how if we are willing to see with His eyes.



Chao Tsuma is a teacher, author, speaker, and member of Fielder Church in Arlington. She also serves on the women's ministry team for the SBTC.

NEVER GIVE UP ...

*God can do
anything!*



I attended my first Southern Baptist Convention meeting in 1980 and served on the denominational calendar committee. Even though I attended the next 20 SBC meetings and served on [what is now the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission] and then the International Mission Board in later years, that was my most memorable time in the convention.

The big issue that year had to do with whether the convention would adopt a sanctity of human life Sunday on our calendar. We had never done that before, and I was surprised to find that some of our denominational

leaders were opposed to it. It was my pleasure to cast the deciding vote to recommend that pro-life commemoration be added to the calendar. Convention messengers approved it in 1980.

My husband, Don, and I were also involved in the early days of starting a new, more conservative, convention in Texas. The Southern Baptists of Texas, Inc. was the predecessor to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, and I was on the board for that. In fact, I had accumulated a mailing list for my work with various causes and we used that list to help build a newspaper list for the conservative Texas group. I also edited the Plumblane [the newspaper for the Southern Baptists of Texas, Inc.] for a while. When the new convention launched in 1998, I was one of those who became part of the new executive board.

I've been very involved in issues and public policy over the years. Don has been, as well. I've walked neighborhoods in support of candidates and policies. Don has lobbied in Austin to support facilities for young people who get in trouble. But none of those have turned out to be the most important thing we've done.

For years, Don and I have been involved in Pray America. Our group meets at our church, and we've had as many as 48 come to pray. We've had people from 11 churches involved and sometimes we have strangers come, sometimes candidates for local office come—they are starving for prayer. I'm sure not all of them are Christians so I always give them a Four Spiritual Laws tract. We just think America's got some real problems. I was reading recently the things that Israel and Judah did when they rejected God. And the list in the prophets is exactly what we're seeing in America. I don't think if God judged Israel He's going to just let us get away with the same things. We're praying right now that God will tell us who to vote for the president. And He has a way of really showing us. We've seen so many miracles in this prayer group. God loves it.

Our pastor was driving with his brother from fishing late one night when someone shot at them. The bullet went right between them through the truck. He [David Wilson, pastor of Southcrest Baptist Church, Lubbock] came to our meeting and he just was so pleased. He said, "I believe y'all's prayers saved our lives."



Skeet Workman (pictured at left with her husband, Don) has been involved in a group called Pray America. Through their involvement, they have had the opportunity to pray with strangers and even candidates for political office. "They are starving for prayer," she said. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

"I just love seeing how prayer is the most important thing we can do. Nothing compares to it. We just ought to be thankful God gave it to us."

—SKEET WORKMAN

Prayer is more important than [anything], and right now, God is the only one who can save America. I guess we just pray for America. That's what we do.

I thought after my knee surgery that I might retire. And then a whole bunch of people showed up for our weekly prayer meeting and I knew I couldn't retire. God doesn't want it to end yet. So I've never told Him I was going to retire. Don and I are just going to keep on keeping on.

I guess that's my story: Never give up! God has a time schedule, and I have seen enough miracles through this prayer group and the SBC that when it comes to God, He can do anything. And when we ask Him in faith, He may answer at a different time and in a different way, but I've seen Him answer many prayers. I just love seeing how prayer is the most important thing we can do. Nothing compares to it. We just ought to be thankful God gave it to us.

**what's
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story?**



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PASTOR

Calvary Baptist Church in Cleveland, located 45 miles north of Houston, is seeking a FT senior pastor to replace our retired pastor. Please send resumes to calvarypastorsearchteam@gmail.com. Please include links of past sermons when sending resume.

Crescent Valley Baptist Church in Victoria is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. Please send resume to CVBCPastorSearch@gmail.com, or mail to CVBC Pastor Search Committee, 6679 State Hwy 185, Victoria, Texas 77905. For additional information about our church and the community, visit www.CVBCVictoriaTX.org.

Fitzhugh Baptist Church in Austin is seeking a FT senior pastor. We are a declining church in need of revitalization in the growing West Austin area. Submit resumes to fitzhugh.search.2023@gmail.com.

FBC Groom is seeking a FT pastor that God has already chosen to lead our congregation that includes all ages. We are located in a small farming and ranching community 42 miles east of Amarillo. Resumes will be accepted until Nov. 15, 2023, at Groomfbcsearch@gmail.com.

Cedar Springs Baptist Church in Rosebud is seeking a FT senior pastor. Resumes can be sent to baptistresumescs@yahoo.com.

West End Baptist Church in Beaumont seeks a FT or bivocational pastor. We are a financially secure, loving congregation that enjoys traditional worship. Email resume to webcbeaumont@gmail.com.

Calvary Baptist Church in Hamilton is seeking a FT lead pastor. Email resume to cbcsearchhamilton@gmail.com or call Derek Dittrich, search committee secretary, for more information at 312-835-4304.

Northside Baptist Church in Lamesa is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. We are a financially secure, small congregation seeking a pastor who is committed to biblical authority, dedicated to prayer, and a text-driven expositor. Mail resume to Northside Baptist Church, 406 N. 12th, Lamesa, Texas 79331 or email resume to northsidebaptistchurchlamesa@gmail.com.

Harmony Baptist Church in Weatherford is seeking a FT or PT senior pastor for a small but growing church. Seminary degree and pastoral experience preferred. Send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, 242 Harmony Rd., Weatherford, Texas 76087. Email: harmonybaptistchurch50@gmail.com. Web: harmonybc.org.

Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving is interviewing candidates for our FT senior pastor position. PPBC is dually aligned with both Texas conventions, as well as with the SBC. Please send your résumé to pastorsearch@plymouthpark.org.

Pine Drive Baptist Church in Dickinson is seeking a FT senior pastor to serve as the spiritual leader of our church. Please apply by sending an email to pinedrive.search@gmail.com.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Texarkana is seeking a FT senior pastor. Church is located at 6601 Jones Lane, Texarkana, Texas 75503. Forward resumes to Debbi at dmjones00@windstream.net. Please include links to past sermons.

Harvest Point Church in Nacogdoches seeks a FT pastor/elder. Please find out more about our church and review our constitution at hpcnac.org before applying. Resumes must be received by Nov. 30 and include a letter of reference. Send to Pastor Search Team, 2708 South Street, Nacogdoches, Texas 75964.

Northside Baptist Church in Mineral Wells is seeking a bivocational pastor. Parsonage w/utilities included. Send resume to nbscmwresume@yahoo.com.

North Oaks Baptist Church in Spring is seeking a FT or bivocational Spanish ministry pastor (Spanish speaking).

Second Baptist Church of Jacinto City, located in Houston,

seeks a bilingual (English/Spanish) bivocational pastor to shepherd our church to its next chapter of God's plan. Please respond by submitting resume to SecondBaptistJC@outlook.com.

Bethel Baptist Church in Appleby is seeking a bivocational pastor who possesses the biblical qualifications to lead and teach our church family by sharing his love for Jesus along with his passion for enthusiastically preaching His word in truth. Please submit a resume along with a cover letter to bethelbaptistchurchappleby@gmail.com.

East Side Baptist Church in McCamey is seeking a bivocational pastor. Parsonage and utilities included. Mail resume to Eastside Baptist Church, Box 786, McCamey, Texas 79752 or email to angelawrighteastsidebaptistchurch@gmail.com.

Calvary Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational senior pastor. Our church family places great value on biblical preaching, Spirit-lead worship and being engaged in the Great Commission as given by Christ Jesus. Mail resume to Calvary Baptist Church, 210 W. Myrtle Ave, Aransas Pass, Texas 78336 or email CalvaryBaptistChurch.sbtcl971@gmail.com.

New Hope Baptist Church in Big Sandy is seeking a PT senior pastor. Please email resume to Mike at nhbcbcs@gmail.com or call and leave a message with our church secretary at 903-636-4711.

MUSIC

FBC Fredericksburg is seeking a FT music minister. Mail resume to First Baptist Church, 1401 E. Main, Fredericksburg, Texas 78624 or call 830-997-9511 for more information.

Cedar Valley Baptist Church in Elgin is seeking a PT music/worship director, less than 20 hours/week, to coordinate and lead the music for Sunday morning worship services and special events for Easter and Christmas. Salary up to \$18,000 annually depending on qualifications. Additional benefit includes two Sundays paid leave per fiscal year.

Deer Park First Baptist in Deer Park is seeking a PT worship pastor. If interested, please send resume to Dpfbcssearch@gmail.com.

Coastal Oaks Church in Rockport is searching for a PT worship leader to lead us in a contemporary/modern worship context. Submit your resume to cirving@coastaloakschurch.org. Windom Baptist Church is seeking a PT music leader. Send resume to WindomBaptist@gmail.com.

Cross View Baptist Church in Texarkana is seeking a PT worship leader. Send resume to rahiggins9220@gmail.com.

Lake Church in Arlington seeks a PT contemporary worship associate. Send resume pmason@lakechurchdfw.org.

Faith Baptist in Chandler is looking for a PT, bivocational worship leader for a single blended service on Sunday mornings. Email resumes to office@faithbaptistchandler.org.

Trinity Hills Baptist Church in Benbrook is seeking a PT interim minister of music. Pay is \$20 per hour.

Email resume to pastorsearch@trinityhills.org.

STUDENTS

Second Huntsville is seeking a FT student pastor. Our church is a young, vibrant, growing community of believers located in Huntsville. If you feel you would be a great candidate, please check the website at www.SecondHuntsville.org or email your resume to Garrison.Pastor@gmail.com.

FBC Odem is searching for a FT youth pastor. Responsibilities include organizing and implementing outreach ministries to local youth and teaching/discipling 6th-12th grade students. Salary: \$31K-\$33K, plus 3br/2bath family home. Mail resume to First Baptist Church of Odem, P.O. Box 550, Odem, Texas 78370 attn: Pastor Terry Little. 509-999-2187.

FBC Mesquite is seeking a PT student minister whose primary responsibility will be to minister to students and their families

to help them be faithful followers of Jesus Christ by sharing the gospel with those who do not know Him and discipling those who do. Please email fbc127email@yahoo.com.

FBC Howe is seeking a FT youth minister. Please send application to roger@fbchowe.org. If you have any questions, please text 903-294-6496.

FBC Crane is seeking a FT student pastor or FT student and worship pastor combo. This is an exciting opportunity in a growing church. Email resume to chris@fbccrane.com.

FBC Granbury is seeking a FT student pastor. Email resume to bgee@fbcranbury.org.

FBC Nixon is accepting resumes for the position of PT youth director. Housing and salary available. Please email resumes to Pastor Terry Davis at davismterry@gmail.com.

Plainview Baptist Church in Krum is seeking a PT youth minister to develop, organize, and direct our church youth program. Minimum requirements: high school or GED diploma plus two years relevant work or an associate's degree with one year of relevant work. Email resume and three reference letters to trustees@pbckrum.org.

Community Baptist Church in Crosby is seeking a PT youth leader for a small group of teens. This will be a paid position. Email resume to pastor@cbccrosby.org.

FBC Queen City is seeking a FT youth minister. Submit resumes to youthpastorsearch@fbqc.org. Visit nextstep.sbtexas.com to view job posting and description.

CHILDREN

The Church at Quail Creek in Amarillo is looking for a FT children's minister. This individual needs to have experience serving in children's ministry and have a calling of the Lord on their life to serve in this area. Email resume to kclayton@tcqc.org.

FBC Granbury is seeking a FT children's pastor. Email resume to bgee@fbcranbury.org.

New Beginnings Baptist Church (Gilmer campus) is looking for a FT preschool and special needs minister who will be responsible for providing leadership to the spiritual needs of preschoolers, those with special needs, & their families. They must be a highly relational and prayerful team player and leader. Email resume to aowens@nbbctx.org.

Trinity Hills Baptist Church in Benbrook is seeking a childcare worker to help in nursery 3 hours a week. Salary will be \$15 an hour. If you have any questions or interest, please email Kyle Harris at youth@trinityhills.org or call 817-249-0704.

COMBINATION

Macedonia Baptist Church in Longview is searching for a FT worship & discipleship pastor. If you are interested, please send your resume to search@macbc.org.

FBC Blue Ridge is seeking the man God would have to lead the music ministry, as well as the youth ministry, in our congregation. This is a full-time position. Send resumes to ipad@firstblueridge.org.

OTHER

Cross City Church in Eules is searching for a FT art & design director to create, commission, & approve design work. Please submit your portfolio & resume to hr@crosscity.church.

The Corpus Christi Baptist Association is searching for the man whom the Lord has chosen to serve our churches in a FT role as the director of our association. Please submit a resume via email to info@ccbaptistassociation.org.

First Baptist Church of Lakeside is seeking a FT (40+ hours/week) church business administrator to assist the senior pastor with overseeing the business and finances of the

church and ensuring staffing, facilities, and programs are aligned to meet our strategic goals. Email resume to ron@fbakeside.net.

Woodridge Baptist Church in Kingwood is looking for a FT visual storyteller. Email resumes to Ed Hancock at ehancock@woodridge.org.

FBC Sherman is seeking recommendations and/or resumes for interest in a newly redesigned, FT minister of church life. The ideal candidate will have experience in developing and managing a full-scale discipleship ministry within the church. A job description with instructions for submitting resumes is posted on our website at www.fbcsherman.org.

Fellowship Church in Nederland is seeking a FT associate pastor responsible for overseeing fellowship groups, discipleship groups, guest assimilation, and our facilities team, all of which play a crucial role in nurturing spiritual growth and

fostering community engagement. For more information or to apply, send your resume to daniel@fellowshiptx.org.

Calvary Hills Baptist Church in San Antonio is seeking a FT associate pastor. Send resume to apsc.calvaryhillsbaptist@gmail.com.

FBC Forney is seeking a dedicated and detail-oriented FT or PT personal assistant to the executive pastor to join our staff. You will play a crucial role in assisting the executive pastor as he manages the day-to-day operations of the church. Email resume to jjordan@fbcforney.org.

Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview is seeking a FT visual content creator/media technician. Email resume to Scottl@mobberly.org.

The Leon Baptist Association seeks a PT associational ministry consultant to lead our 12 member churches of Leon County in Central Texas on I-45, midway between

Dallas and Houston. Contact Mark Gray at mark@lclifechurch.com or 936-436-2016.

Lake Church in Arlington seeks a FT administration pastor. College degree, call to ministry, & skill in administration and accounting/financial planning required. Send resume to pmason@lakechurchdfw.org.

Lake Church in Arlington is seeking a FT worship/music pastoral resident for its 3-year program to train with the pastor to lead a church or ministry. For more information and to send resume, email pmason@lakechurchdfw.org.

FBC Forney is seeking a dedicated and detail-oriented business manager to join our staff. As the business manager, you will play a crucial role in helping manage the financial aspects of our church's operations while ensuring accuracy and compliance in financial reporting and record-keeping. Email resume to jjordan@fbcforney.org.

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PASTOR

FBC Roswell, N.M., is seeking a FT lead pastor. Bold in principle, gifted in preaching, strong in leadership. Submit resumes or questions to pastorsearch@fbcroswell.org.

FBC Independence in Kansas seeks FT salaried senior pastor. Church has 155 Sunday worshipers, elder led, also has deacons/deaconesses. Founded 1872, debt free, good financial condition, many younger families. Staff includes FT salaried family pastor and two-thirds time administrative assistant. Candidate needs some senior pastor experience. Email resumes to pastorsearch@webmail.org or call Gary Follmer, elder, at 620-330-4906.

FBC Haynesville, located in rural North Louisiana, is seeking the next FT pastor that God has chosen for us. If interested, please mail your resume to First Baptist Church of Haynesville, 2021 Main Street, Haynesville, La. 71038, attention Pastoral Search Committee, or email hfbpastorsearch@gmail.com.

YOUTH

FBC Ruston in Louisiana is seeking a FT youth pastor for a great opportunity leading a large youth ministry with lots of potential. Please send resume to Ed Colvin at ed@fbcruston.org or brenda@fbcruston.org.

FBC Bloomfield in Bloomfield, N.M., is seeking a FT student pastor to invest in future generations and their families. Resumes may be submitted to studentposition@fbc bloomfield.com.

COMBINATION

Calvary Baptist Church in Tishomingo, Okla., is seeking a pastor whose primary responsibility will be to lead our youth, with secondary responsibilities as worship leader. For more information, call 580-371-9296 or 423-217-5570. Email resume to secretary@cbctish.org.

OTHER

FBC Ruston in Louisiana is seeking a FT young adult pastor to lead a large young adult group with lots of potential. Please send inquiries to Brenda Martin at brenda@fbcruston.org.

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FBC Mansfield has a portable building (90'x25') for sale. Beige and brown trim color, concrete siding, used as youth ministry building. Two entrance doors on side and end entrance. Windows in unit. Insulated with lighting. Two HVAC units. Front and side entrance doors with entrance ramp and steps. \$19,500 OBO. Please direct inquiries to our facilities director at tray@firstmansfield.com or call FBC Mansfield 817-473-1161.

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TREASURER'S QUARTERLY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

	YTD Totals
Cooperative Program	\$19,644,003.63*
SBTC Reach Texas Offering	825,258.91
SBTC Designated	100,213.88
SBTC Ministry Specific Designated	95,163.61
Grant from the SBT Foundation	187,499.97
Grants from SBC Entities	25,922.39
Pass Thru Giving:	
Lottie Moon	6,570,632.55
Annie Armstrong	2,896,768.22
SBC Designated	211,345.6
SBC Ministry/Entity Designated	89,198.03
Gifts to Other Ministries	163,383.69
TOTAL	\$30,809,390.48

*Cooperative Program receipts through September 2023 are \$818,612 under budget.



EXAMINING SOCIAL MEDIA AND OUR MOTIVES AS PASTORS

Pastors and social media are sometimes a dangerous duo. I am obviously not opposed to social media, as many of you would not even see this article without it. It can be a great way to stay connected with friends and family, as well as to inspire, inform, and equip your people.

Although I have used media tools extensively in my pastorates, as well as my ministry to pastors in North America, there is a blurred line between connecting and overconnecting. Let's take a minute to unblur that line by auditing our motives with three questions:

1. Are you are overexposing your 'acts of righteousness?'

I started writing this post on an airplane after my wife Janet and I spoke at a ministry marriage retreat. That event went well, yet no one posted or tagged any pictures of it on social media. Last week, I spoke at three events in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, and again, no pictures or tags were to be found on the social channels I use.

Did these events even happen if there was no evidence of it on social media? More importantly, why should I even care?

Jesus warned the religious leaders of His day, "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1 CSB).

2. Are you overconnecting to the point of not being present?

I find it ironic when older adults with Apple watches get annoyed by younger people who stare constantly at their phones, because I experience more interruptions from watch alerts than I do phones. I am not suggesting you shut everything down. Just consider dialing back your notification settings a few notches and see if it improves your conversations and thought life.

3. Are you overly concerned about what others think about you?

Everyone likes to be liked, but the Pharisees were putting on a show as they prayed, gave, and fasted. Preachers become posers when we go out of our way to draw the attention and applause of people.

"Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding" (Matthew 6:1 MSG).

If you are interested in pastoring with a basin and a towel instead of a picture and a post, here are a few practical ways to help you connect with others better online and offline:

- ➔ Write a note to someone who cannot help move the needle on your ministry.
- ➔ Comment on a social media channel about something a small church pastor said or did that blessed you.
- ➔ Practice generosity without using it as a sermon illustration.
- ➔ Visit a nursing home without being asked or posting a picture.
- ➔ Take a social media fast for a week and use that time to invest it in your soul.
- ➔ Audit your time on media and social media this week.

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you discernment about your motives and methods of using media and social media in your ministry, then make whatever changes He leads you to make.

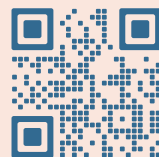


Mark Dance is director of pastoral wellness for Guidestone Financial Resources.



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2023 CALENDAR



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SBTC ANNUAL MEETING

NOVEMBER 13-14 Euless

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

6	Bivo Pastors Network Remote Gathering (online)
11	Crossover Evangelism, DFW
12-13	SBTC Annual Meeting Spanish Session, Euless
13	Interim Pastor Equipping, Euless
30-12/2	Student Ministers Getaway, Austin



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DECEMBER

6	Evangelism Connections, Forney
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JANUARY

8	Evangelism Connections (online)
12-13	M3 WKND, Euless
22	Regenesis One-Day, Abilene
26-27	M3 WKND, Marshall
27	Women's Roundtable Conversations (multisite)
29	Bivo Pastors Network Regional Gathering, DFW
29	Regenesis One-Day, Diboll



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