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BIG TASK, BIGGER GOD

SBTC CHURCHES ARE CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF LOSTNESS
IN TEXAS AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE: **TOGETHER.**

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- + FBC Three Rivers is refocused, revitalized after RegenesiS boost
- + San Antonio church makes gospel inroads through practical outreach
- + A brief conversation with SBC President Bart Barber

COME ON! LET'S GO!

My wife, Jenna, and I have some close friends who have continuously blessed us over the years. This couple has two teenage daughters who are incredible tennis players. They have excelled in the sport, winning a state championship last year.

One of the things I love about watching their daughters play tennis is that after every winning volley, one yells, “Come on!” quickly followed by the other shouting, “Let’s go!” It is so fun to watch—not only because they are good, but because their passion leads them to know why they are there. These two young ladies remind each other after every successful shot to stay focused and move forward on their mission.

There are things we can learn from that as a network of churches. At our annual meeting this past November, we presented a new mission focus for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention for the next 10 years. We crafted a new mission focus statement while standing firm on the values we have always had.

To put it simply, we are not changing who we are. However, we will be shifting some of how we do what we do to better serve our churches.

This new mission focus identifies five markers of what a disciple-making movement in a church looks like. The list is certainly not exhaustive, but these are five markers we desire to help churches move toward as they reach their communities:

1. Prayer Energized

We would love to see all churches incorporate a culture of prayer. These gatherings will look different and there is no one way of doing them. However, we believe if churches are intentional about praying, we could experience a move of God across our state like never before.

2. Evangelism Prioritized

God is bringing the world to our state. We must recapture a burning heart to reach lost people. We have to equip and send our people out to be intentional gospel-bearers. We want to help churches strengthen evangelism in their context.

3. Disciple-Making Normalized

Our culture is discipling people in all arenas. The church must step up its efforts in making disciples of Jesus. We want to help churches think strategically about creating discipleship avenues in and outside the church.

4. Sending Maximized

We are seeing an incredible movement of church planting in Texas. God is doing a unique work in our partnership with Send Network SBTC, and we believe it is going to grow exponentially. We want to see SBTC churches partnering to plant churches in Texas. We also have missions partnerships outside Texas that we want to mobilize SBTC churches to engage in.

5. Partnerships Maximized

There are so many great opportunities to partner with other churches in the SBTC. One of the greatest ways to partner is through the Cooperative Program. It is our prayer that all 2,749 SBTC churches will partner together with the 47,000 Southern Baptist Convention churches through the Cooperative Program.

Think about what could happen if all SBTC churches are engaged together in these five areas. As we look into 2024, I pray we, as a network, can begin running hard toward these markers. In fact, as we begin this year, close your eyes and envision the five markers in your church and hear me cheering you on by saying, “Come on! Let’s go!”

I believe we can do it because I believe we are in this together. I love you and am grateful to serve you. Let’s do this together!



Dr. Nathan Lorick
SBTC Executive Director



Engage.
Encourage.
Equip.

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JESUS IS WRITING YOUR STORY



While I hope you read the Texan from cover to cover every time it hits your mailbox, there's a particular story in this month's issue I don't want you to miss.

I won't steal all its thunder here, but within these pages you'll find an article about South Euless Baptist Church, located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. It's not a large church (most of our Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches, in fact, are not), but this church has a huge heart for telling people about Jesus. Most Sundays after church, when many of us are hurrying home to watch football or racing to restaurants to beat the "church crowd," a group of South Euless members rushes out to local parks and other locations to evangelize.

That fact alone, though encouraging, may not move the needle for you. But here's what should: during one of those Sunday park visits last year, one of the church's members—the pastor's wife, as a matter of fact—shared the gospel with a homeless woman who decided to turn her life over to Christ on the spot.

A few weeks later, that homeless woman died.

So many thoughts ran through my mind when I first read this article:

What would have happened had this church not been so committed to sharing the gospel?

What an impactful ministry this church is engaged in!

What a great God we serve, who would allow these two women to meet at the right place at the right time!

What a story.

Days later, I was still thinking about the homeless woman. I found myself wanting to know more about her. I wondered about the circumstances that brought her to the park that day. I wondered if she had ever heard about Jesus before that moment. I wondered if she ever thought she'd escape the tormenting cycle of poverty that traps so many.

Regardless of the answers to those questions, this I know: she's never been better than she is today, living in the eternal and perfect presence of our God and Creator.

From the time this woman opened her eyes at birth, Jesus was writing her story. That story included incredibly difficult chapters, but surely it included some good ones, too. At the same time, Jesus was writing the story of the pastor's wife. I'd venture to say she will always remember the day God introduced her to that woman in the park. It will always be a significant point on the timeline of her life.

Jesus is writing your story today. You may be in the middle of one of those tough chapters, but He is still there, offering to guide you through it. You may be in the middle of season of celebration. You may be in a season of doubt, of wonder, of purpose.

This magazine's mandate in 2024 is the same: we're going to continue to tell the stories of what God is doing in and through the lives of His people in SBTC churches. Throughout the year, you'll find articles featuring people who are willing to share how Jesus is writing their story.

As He writes your story, or as you reflect on some of your previous chapters that illustrate His goodness, we'd love to hear from you and share those stories with our readers. When we do that, we will not only encourage and equip one another, but we will shine a light on the One whose story the whole world needs to hear.

Happy New Year!



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Editor's note: During the 2023 Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Annual Meeting in November, Executive Director Nathan Lorick presented a 10-year vision for the SBTC called "Moving Forward Together." To further introduce this vision to our readers, this month's Texan features a brief conversation with SBTC Associate Executive Director Joe Lightner.

BIG TASK, BIGGER GOD

NEW SBTC VISION AIMS TO MOBILIZE CHURCHES TO MULTIPLY
DISCIPLE-MAKING MOVEMENTS IN TEXAS AND AROUND THE WORLD

What is the Moving Forward Together 10-Year Vision?

Joe Lightner: Approaching our 25th anniversary as a convention, our executive director assembled a team of leaders from across Texas to discern God's vision for our future. God allowed the team to glimpse 10 years beyond the horizon to see all SBTC churches mobilized to multiply disciple-making movements. We envision all our churches moving forward together, multiplying impact, and reversing lostness in our state and world. The vision has become the North Star for our convention.



HOW WILL THE SBTC STEP INTO THIS VISION?

JL: The vision requires a new mission focus on mobilizing churches to multiply disciple-making movements in Texas and around the world. This is a renewed focus on mobilizing churches together to multiply their collective impact. Not just any mobilization will do. The church deserves mobilization that:

- ♦ Is anchored in our three long-standing core values: Biblically Based, Missionally Driven, and Kingdom Focused.
- ♦ Is measured by five markers: Prayer Energized, Evangelism Prioritized, Disciple-Making Normalized, Sending Maximized, and Partnerships Synergized. New Testament writers provide example after example of God multiplying these markers into disciple-making movements. Knowing that God multiplies these markers, we are focused on mobilizing churches toward them.
- ♦ Is found on three strategic pathways: Resourcing Churches, Networking Leaders, Advancing Mission. We come alongside churches, mobilizing them onto pathways that multiply their collective impact. We are bringing this new mission focus into all that we do—mobilizing churches to multiply their impact.

WHEN WILL THE NEW MISSION FOCUS BE IMPLEMENTED?

JL: The SBTC has already begun adjusting ministries to refocus on the 10-year vision. The hope is that within 36 months:

- ♦ SBTC ministries will be fully optimized with the new mission.
- ♦ 1,000 churches will be resourced and 350 revitalized.
- ♦ 1,000 leaders will be connected to 75 networks.
- ♦ 1,200 churches will be supporting 120 church plants.

The response from our churches to the new 10-year vision has been overwhelmingly positive. Moving forward together multiplies our impact, and together, we can reach Texas and impact the world. Additional information about the new vision, along with Lorick's annual meeting presentation, can be found at sbtexas.com/mission-vision.



ONE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME

SAN ANTONIO'S FREEDOM HILL CHURCH IS MAKING GOSPEL INROADS THROUGH PRACTICAL OUTREACH



SAN ANTONIO

Freedom Hill Church has been the beneficiary of at least two significant, unique blessings God has placed before it in its short existence: an established church campus and a BMX bike track that attracts thousands.

The church started in Pastor Ryan Napier's home in 2019. Within months, an older, struggling congregation donated 10 acres and 32,000 square feet of building space. The church plant grew to about 120 before COVID hit.

During COVID, the owner of USA BMX built a track on the church's property.

"In the seventh-largest city in the country—San Antonio—if you're going to race BMX, you've got to come to Freedom Hill to do it," Napier said.

About 150 people meet at the track four times a week, and more than 1,000 people come for the state race each

"IN THE SEVENTH-LARGEST CITY IN THE COUNTRY—SAN ANTONIO—IF YOU'RE GOING TO RACE BMX, YOU'VE GOT TO COME TO FREEDOM HILL TO DO IT."

RYAN NAPIER

year. Freedom Hill members have developed "a great relationship with them," Napier said, and church volunteers man the concession stand during the state race, setting up, tearing down, and giving the proceeds to the BMX organization.

"We have people cooking burgers, doing sides, getting ice cream, getting popcorn, getting drinks together—stuff like that," Napier said.

As for the congregation, attendance is around 150 now,



and the pastor believes they're on a steady growth track. They've started ministries for kids and students, and last year when the church took 18 students to camp for the first time, six committed their lives to Jesus.

This year, the amazing work God did at camp was mostly on the Sunday when they returned. They were planning to baptize three students, but the student pastor felt led to offer the opportunity to anyone who needed to take that step.

"He made the plea and we ended up baptizing 17 people that day," Napier said. "We had men taking off their boots and emptying their jeans pockets and getting in fully clothed, women in dresses and jewelry with makeup and hair done, and they're climbing into the water, just being obedient to the Lord."

Also this year, Freedom Hill hired a Spanish-speaking pastor from Venezuela who is building a launch team for Freedom Hill en Español.

"He's got an ESL class started and they do a dinner on Friday nights to gather people and build community [and] cast vision," Napier said, adding that in the past year, more than 100,000 Venezuelans have migrated to San Antonio.

Within a five-mile radius of Freedom Hill are 289,000 residents, and that number is expected to grow to 320,000 in the next five years, the pastor said. He emphasized that Freedom Hill already is a multigenerational, multiethnic church aiming to look more and more like worshipers in heaven.

◀ Freedom Hill Church in San Antonio has a BMX bike track on its property, enabling the church to impact thousands.

▲ On a recent spontaneous baptism day, 17 people were baptized, including men and women who didn't hesitate to get in the water just as they were. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

"WE HAD MEN TAKING OFF THEIR BOOTS AND EMPTYING THEIR JEANS POCKETS AND GETTING IN FULLY CLOTHED ... CLIMBING INTO THE WATER, JUST BEING OBEDIENT TO THE LORD."

RYAN NAPIER

"Our vision is to raise up leaders and future church planters where we can go and plant more churches in San Antonio and around the world," Napier said.

To impact the thousands right around them, Freedom Hill members participate in various outreach opportunities.

"We'll do a free car wash and just pray for people," Napier said. "We've given away free sodas at the light in front of our church while people are driving, just doing things in Jesus' name. [We tell them], 'No strings attached. We just want to let you know that we love you and that if you ever need anything, this church is here for you.'"

Freedom Hill hosts a three-on-three basketball tournament, which is meaningful to people in San Antonio who love basketball because of the NBA team in town, the Spurs.



“... COMMUNITY CAN SURROUND YOU WHEN YOU GO THROUGH SOMETHING HARD IN LIFE AND PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY TO GROW AS A CHRISTIAN. WHEN YOU HAVE THAT COMMUNITY AROUND YOU, THAT’S WHEN YOU SEE REAL GROWTH.”

RYAN NAPIER

“Parents are watching, and our church is loving on them while their kids are playing basketball,” Napier said.

As an example of God using Freedom Hill to change a life, Napier mentioned a young woman who “just kind of stumbled in” the church not long ago. She had some exposure to church as a child but had encountered hard times and strayed from God.

One Sunday, at the end of the service, the woman went to the altar to pray, and she was weeping and crying out, “I’m just so sick of sinning!” She had made a lot of bad choices, Napier said, but the woman got to the place “we want to get to, that we’re just so fed up with our sin that we just turn from it.”

Now she is a beautiful story of redemption, he said. Another woman in the church is discipling her, even



as her string of better choices led her to move away from the area. “She’s growing. She’s gotten a job. She’s on her feet,” the pastor added.

Looking back, Napier remembers having a calling on his life at a young age to be a pastor, “but I ran from that calling for a long time.” Now that he is living that calling, he respects the importance of the local church.

“That community can surround you when you go through something hard in life and provide accountability to grow as a Christian,” he said. “When you have that community around you, that’s when you see real growth.”

Freedom Hill Church in San Antonio has sent students to camp for two summers now, and spiritual fruit has been evident. Pastor Ryan Napier is pictured at the top. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**



BART BARBER



Bart Barber, who has pastored First Baptist Church in Farmersville since 1999, is halfway through his second term as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. A National Merit scholar, Barber graduated from Baylor University's scholars program. In 2006, he completed his doctorate in church history and theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Barber has been married to Tracy since 1992. The Barbers have two children: Jim and Sarah.

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

We have grown 19% from last year in Sunday school attendance, which is the main thing we measure, and we have seen similar or higher growth rates on Wednesday nights. ... A lot of that growth has come through baptism. I think we're on the kind of pace where we will baptize 25-30 a year. ... God's just really been moving in our church, and it's been exciting to see that.

Have there been any challenges or blessings for your church during your time as SBC president?

The challenge is that I've been gone way more than I thought I was going to be. That makes life harder on everybody else who works for the church, and even for the laymen in our church. In some ways, [being SBC president] also brings a level of attention upon the church that we're not used to, really.

As far as blessings, I think our church has enjoyed going to the SBC Annual Meeting. I took several members to SBC 2023. The choir got to sing there. That's been a blessing to them to get to know our SBC family a little more. [Our worship leader] James Cheesman did such a great job at the AM. They were so proud of him.

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

Probably the idea that character in a relationship with God really is the indispensable thing. You have to make sure that this shapes the difficult tasks you undertake instead of the difficult tasks that you undertake shaping your character and your relationship with God.

What's one thing you would like to see God do in your church in 2024?

We are baptizing people and we are growing. I want us to send people out. We've got a couple who right now are praying through the process with the International Mission Board. That's the first of those we've had in a long time. We've sent some people over my 24 years into pastoral ministry or into student ministry or different places of ministry or churches. ... I would like for us to get to the point where that's not occasional, but it's a steady reality of God calling and sending people out of FBC Farmersville to reach generations away from us and coming after us in time.

How can the churches of the SBTC be praying for you?

I would ask people not to underestimate the value of praying for me to have wisdom, because it is true that I have faced decisions that we did not have a class on in seminary. I don't necessarily have experience that equips me to face these decisions, either. I am dependent upon the gift of the Holy Spirit giving wisdom ... which I think requires me to ask for wisdom. I think it helps for me to ask other people to ask for me to have wisdom, too. I am trying my best to serve our churches well.

IMPACTING HIS COMMUNITY, IMPACTING THE WORLD



After retirement, Turner reflects on four decades of ministry and the road ahead

MESQUITE

Terry Turner stepped down from the pulpit of the church he founded, Mesquite Friendship Baptist, in the fall of 2023. His formal retirement, however, simply signaled a change of vocation, not a cessation of labor.

Turner's remarkable four-plus decades of ministry began in Guthrie, Okla., where he was born in 1957, the eighth child of Julia, then age 47, and Roosevelt Turner, 49.

"They weren't looking to have more kids," Turner said. "God wanted me here even before I was born to give me parents who were almost senior citizens. I was the product of love."

Ten years before Turner was born, Roosevelt's vocal chords were removed in a laryngectomy. "I never heard his voice," Turner said, adding that his father supported the family by running a juke joint by night and working as a handyman and scrap metal dealer by day un-

til his death in 1967. His mom worked as a maid until her right leg was amputated only a few days before his dad passed.

The family survived on one Social Security check and "commodity goods"—a monthly government food distribution.

Spiritually rich

"We didn't have a lot of resources, but I didn't know I was poor," Turner said. Church was a constant. Turner remembers his mother waking him every Sunday morning, tearfully singing to gospel music playing on the radio in the background.

"I can't remember a Sunday morning that she didn't praise the Lord amidst her pain," he said. "She was a strong lady."

At 15, he felt the Lord leading him to preach. Turner responded by telling the Lord he wanted to be a preacher who would

always be true to His Word, but asked if he could wait until he was grown to heed the call.

"That turned out to be a bad decision," Turner said, admitting that as a teen he rebelled and became involved in the pervasive drug culture around him.

But God was persistent. By age 18, Turner said he was a "broken young man." Isaiah Burleigh, his pastor at the time, influenced Turner's turnaround. At age 21, Turner finally accepted God's call on his life to preach.

Proximity to his mom determined his college selection, as he headed to Langston University, 11 miles from Guthrie, after high school. "I wanted to stay close to Mom and be sure she was OK," he said. "Everyone had grown up and moved out. It was just the two of us for years."

There was another woman in his life, however: Nancy Chandler. They dated as teens, went their separate ways, and reunited after both graduated from college.

"She was my childhood love; now she is my senior citizen love," Turner said of Nancy. They married in 1982, the same year Turner accepted the call to pastor a Baptist church in Guthrie located directly across the street from the home in which he had been born.

The church had been through several pastors, Turner recalled, but he accepted the invitation to assist Pastor Henry Carter, then terminally ill. After Carter passed away, Turner was asked to become the church's full-time pastor.

"If you can learn to pastor us, you can pastor anybody anywhere," members told him.

"There was a lot of truth to that," Turner said, adding that the congregation "taught me church polity like nobody else." God blessed Turner's seven years at the church, and the pastor who succeeded him is still there.

New city, new church

By the late eighties, the Turners had four children as a blended family: daughter Angela and sons Tim, Caleb, and Levi. God was blessing their ministry at their church in Oklahoma. Turner had also been asked to teach Bible classes in Dallas and Oklahoma City.

T.D. Callender, the founder of the Oklahoma City Bible school where Turner was teaching, recommended he attend Dallas Theological Seminary. The Turners followed the advice, arriving in the Metroplex on Dec. 31, 1988.

"We were broke in Texas," Turner said. Moving expenses claimed their last \$500, and nearly penniless, the family rented a home in Duncanville. When the landlord heard Turner was a seminary student, he asked what they could afford. "He never raised our rent," Turner said. "We lived in that home through seminary."

Nancy soon found work as a banker, while Turner attended seminary classes and worked as a security guard. In 1991, after his graduation from seminary, Turner again sensed God's direction to plant a church. Although his Oklahoma churches had not been Southern Baptist, he partnered with the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The SBC had put an emphasis on planting African American churches to bring inclusiveness to the convention. [Mesquite Friendship] was on the ground floor of that in 1991. The rest is history," Turner said.

Mesquite Friendship was constituted as a Southern Baptist church on Jan. 27, 1994.

"We've been SBC all these years. I've been blessed by being part of the convention. They had programs and grants that would bless church planters if they were willing to do the work and do the reports. ... We quickly outgrew our storefront and bought a



"THE SBC HAD PUT AN EMPHASIS ON PLANTING AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES TO BRING INCLUSIVENESS TO THE CONVENTION. [MESQUITE FRIENDSHIP] WAS ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THAT IN 1991. THE REST IS HISTORY."

—TERRY TURNER



Terry Turner's Career Highlights

building with SBC help. They paid my salary and helped with the note. [We] showed progress and they helped us for four years," he said, adding that he was very pleased when the church could start giving through the Cooperative Program.

From a core group of 16 members in 1991, Mesquite Friendship grew to 300 during its first three years. Just before the pandemic, Mesquite Friendship had 2,100 members and held two Sunday services averaging 700 apiece. Since COVID, membership numbers and giving have stayed steady or increased, though some have continued to attend online.

"Terry Turner is one of the most significant contributors to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention since its inception," said Jim Richards, SBTC's executive director emeritus. "Pastor Turner led Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church to affiliate and immediately began participation. His generosity through Cooperative Program giving showed his kingdom investment beyond the local church."

What's next?

Although no longer filling the pulpit weekly, Turner remains busy at Mes-

- + Led in planting nine SBC churches from Texas to Florida
- + Led Mesquite Friendship to support ministries and missionaries in Zambia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, and assisted in planting a church in Chandigarh, India
- + President of the Southern Baptists of Texas Bible Conference, 2011
- + President of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, 2011-2014
- + Spearheaded the SBTC's cross-cultural, multiracial, multiethnic "Look Like Heaven" initiative
- + President of the SBTC African American Fellowship, 2010-2016
- + Trustee, Gateway Baptist Theological Seminary
- + Trustee, Criswell College
- + Invited by Texas Gov. Rick Perry and his wife to participate in the blessing and dedication of the governor's mansion, Jan. 29, 2013

- + Invited by Gov. Greg Abbott to deliver the benedictory prayer at the governor's second inauguration, Jan. 15, 2019
- + Keynote speaker at the Texas Prayer Breakfast, Austin, prior to the opening of the legislative session, Feb. 21, 2019
- + Recipient of the SBTC's W.A. Criswell Award for Pastoral Evangelism, 2023
- + Recipient of the Mesquite NAACP Lifetime Achievement Civil Rights Award, 2022
- + The Terry Turner Education Fund Endowment to Golden Gate, now Gateway Seminary, was established in 2014 to provide scholarships for African American M.Div. students
- + Author of numerous articles and two books: *God's Amazing Grace: Reconciling Four Centuries of African American Marriages and Families* (2019) and *When Grace Flows Backward* (2024)

◀ Turner's family gathered this fall to celebrate his "promotion" to pastor emeritus at Mesquite Friendship Baptist, the church he founded in 1991. The city of Mesquite honored him by naming the street leading into the church property after him. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

quite Friendship as its pastor emeritus, taking an active role in the comfort and support ministry. "When you have pastored people for so many years, you [want to be] there for them at the loss of their loved ones," he said. He continues to provide premarital counseling to couples in the church and community.

A recent appointee to the board of the Dallas Genealogical Society, Turner also researches the past and helps others to do the same. He has engaged in ancestry research for 11 years, the last three professionally, and said he has traced his paternal family lineage back to 1770—including his enslaved ancestors and their slave owners.

"Believe it or not, many of them were Southern Baptist," Turner said, expressing amazement over this long connection to the SBC. His family's history and spiritual heritage are the subjects of his latest book, *When Grace Flows Backward*, due for release in early

"IT'S A BLESSING TO BE ABLE TO RETIRE [AND], ESPECIALLY IN MINISTRY, TO HAVE SERVED THE LORD FOR 41 YEARS."

—TERRY TURNER

2024. Turner also launched a YouTube website called "Embracing our Ancestors" to teach African Americans how to study their lineage.

Through the years, Turner filled his time not only serving his church, but in a variety of roles with the SBTC and SBC. He served as the SBTC's president from 2011-2013 and as president of the SBTC African American Fellowship from 2010-2016.

Between continued service to his church, his writing, and spending time with his 12 grandchildren, retirement promises to keep Turner plenty busy.

"I've called it a promotion," Turner said with a smile. "It's a blessing to be able to retire [and], especially in ministry, to have served the Lord for 41 years."



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‘We don’t know what will happen tomorrow’

Homeless woman’s salvation shortly before her death underscores church’s evangelistic drive



EULESS

Pastor Arturo Malacara often tells his congregation at South Euless Baptist Church, “We don’t know what will happen tomorrow, so we must share the gospel [today] in case it is the last opportunity.”

Little did he know that God would provide an opportunity for Arturo and his wife, Marifel, to put those words into practice themselves.

As part of their many community outreach initiatives, a group of South Euless members goes out each Sunday after their worship service to evangelize in different areas of their community. On this occasion, they went to a nearby park where many homeless people are known to congregate. Marifel, who was with the group, approached a homeless woman in her 60s. As they talked, the woman shared her story with Marifel.

The woman said she lost everything, including her car and her home, when her husband went to prison. Area shelters were full, she said, and her mother—living in a nursing home—had no way to take her in. The woman told Marifel she had no other option but to live on the streets, wandering in the park and rummaging through trash cans for food.

Marifel recognized the woman’s needs, including her greatest one—Jesus. The pastor’s wife spoke to the woman about God’s love and shared with her the plan of salvation. In her hopelessness, the woman accepted Christ and was saved that day in the park.

“I saw her go from someone distressed and hopeless to someone who had hope,” Marifel said.

The two exchanged numbers with an intent to stay in touch and a church deacon, Glenn, who lives near the park, offered to follow up with the woman. Two days later, Glenn saw her in the park and she asked him for a tent so she could

have some protection from the elements while she slept outside. A week later, Glenn contacted the woman to deliver the tent, but she never returned his calls. Three weeks later, Glenn received a call from the woman’s mother with the news that

South Euless Baptist Church, led by Pastor Arturo Malacara (seen at left with his wife, Marifel) goes the extra mile to connect with members of the community.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



“The church is experiencing, seeing, and tasting revival.”

—ARTURO MALACARA

her daughter had been found dead due to pre-existing health conditions. Pastor Arturo, along with other church leaders, was able to minister to the deceased woman’s family.

“I was sad [about the woman’s death], but I thank God for meeting her at the park at the precise moment before she died,” Marifel said.

South Eules has proven to be a church with a special heart for evangelism. During the year and a half he has pastored the church, Arturo said he and his family have seen God move because of the love the church shares with the community. “God moves when we love people,” he said.

Arturo said the church intentionally reaches out to families of different nationalities, histories, and cultures—a calling the church has embraced. Consequently, it has brought diversity inside the walls of the church, which incorporates songs in six languages during its worship service: English, Spanish, French, Swahili, Filipino, and Russian. The church’s vision is to celebrate the cultures represented in the congregation and make everyone feel included, he said.

South Eules is always looking for different ways to connect with the community. It offers a drive-thru food distribution and also delivers food to families living in nearby apartments. At one of those apartment complexes, the church held an event that allowed members to share the gospel with parents and their children. South Eules also offers a movie night that is open to the whole community. Last year, the church went to a local school and adopted low-income families to bless and connect with.

“The church is experiencing, seeing, and tasting revival,” Arturo said. “They now come with joy, they don’t want to leave the church, they constantly invite other people to church, and they serve with joy and gladly give to special offerings like the [Lottie Moon Christmas Offering] we just collected.”

Prayer, Marifel added, has been the key to the revival the church is experiencing.

“Prayer is a big priority, especially on the part of the leaders,” she said. “We need to be a church that prays for God to move. We need to be faithful to saturate the church in prayer.”

‘No sabemos qué pasará mañana’

La salvación de una mujer sin hogar poco antes de su muerte resalta el impulso evangelizador de la iglesia



EULESS

El pastor Arturo Malacara a menudo le dice a su congregación en la Iglesia Bautista South Euleess: “No sabemos qué pasará mañana, así que debemos compartir el evangelio [hoy] por si es la última oportunidad”.

Poco se imaginaba que Dios les daría a Malacara y a su esposa, Marifel, la oportunidad de poner en práctica esas palabras.

Como parte de sus muchas iniciativas para alcanzar a la comunidad, un grupo de miembros de South Euleess sale cada domingo después de su culto para evangelizar en diferentes áreas de su comunidad. En esta ocasión, fueron a un parque cercano, donde se congregan muchas personas sin hogar. Marifel, que estaba con el grupo, se acercó a una indigente de unos 60 años. Mientras hablaban, la mujer le contó su historia.

La mujer contó que lo había perdido todo, incluidos el coche y la casa, cuando su esposo fue llevado a la prisión. Los refugios de la zona estaban llenos y su madre, que vive en un hogar de ancianos, no tenía forma de acogerla. La mujer le dijo a Marifel que no tenía otra opción que vivir en la calle, vagando por el parque y rebuscando comida en los botes de basura.

Marifel reconoció las necesidades de la mujer, incluida la más importante: Jesús. La esposa del pastor habló a la mujer del amor de Dios y compartió con ella el plan de salvación. En su desesperanza, la mujer aceptó a Cristo y fue salvada ese día en el parque.

“La vi pasar de ser una persona angustiada y desesperanzada a alguien que tenía esperanza”, dijo Marifel.

Los dos intercambiaron números con la intención de seguir en contacto y un diácono de la iglesia,

Glenn, que vive cerca del parque, se ofreció a dar seguimiento a la mujer. Dos días después, Glenn la vio en el parque y ella le pidió una tienda de campaña para protegerse mientras dormía al aire libre. Una semana después, Glenn se puso en contacto con la mujer para entregarle la tienda,

El pastor Arturo Malacara de la Iglesia Bautista South Euleess (foto superior, extremo izquierdo) dirige a su iglesia para alcanzar a la comunidad en oración e intencionalmente.

FOTOS COMPARTIDAS



**“La iglesia está experimentando,
viendo y saboreando un avivamiento.”**

—ARTURO MALACARA

pero ella nunca le devolvió las llamadas. Tres semanas después, Glenn recibió una llamada de la madre de la mujer con la noticia de que su hija había sido hallada muerta debido a problemas de salud preexistentes. El pastor Malacara, junto con otros líderes de la iglesia, pudo atender a la familia de la mujer fallecida.

“Estaba triste [por la muerte de la mujer], pero doy gracias a Dios por haberla encontrado en el parque en el momento preciso antes de que muriera”, dijo Marifel.

South Eulless ha demostrado ser una iglesia con un corazón especial para la evangelización. Durante el año y medio que ha pastoreado la iglesia, Malacara dijo que él y su familia han visto a Dios moverse debido al amor que la iglesia comparte con la comunidad. “Dios se mueve cuando amamos a la gente”, dijo Malacara.

Malacara dijo que la iglesia intencionalmente busca alcanzar a familias de diferentes nacionalidades, historias y culturas—un llamado que la iglesia aceptó sin problema. Como resultado, esto ha traído diversidad dentro de las paredes de la iglesia, que incorpora cantos en seis idiomas durante su adoración: inglés, español, francés, swahili, filipino y ruso. La visión de la iglesia es celebrar las culturas representadas en la congregación y hacer que todos se sientan incluidos, dijo Malacara.

South Eulless siempre busca formas diferentes de conectar con la comunidad. Ofrece un servi-carro para dar alimentos y también comparten comida con familias que viven en apartamentos cercanos. En uno de esos complejos de apartamentos, la iglesia celebró un evento que permitió a los miembros compartir el evangelio con los padres y sus hijos. South Eulless también ofrece una noche de cine abierta a toda la comunidad. El año pasado, la iglesia fue a una escuela local y adoptó familias de bajos ingresos para bendecirlas y conectar con ellas.

“La iglesia está experimentando, viendo y saboreando un avivamiento”, dijo Malacara. “Ahora vienen con gozo, no quieren irse de la iglesia, invitan constantemente a otras personas a la iglesia, sirven con alegría y dan con gusto a ofrendas especiales como la [Ofrenda de Navidad Lottie Moon] que acabamos de recoger”.

La oración, añadió Marifel, ha sido la clave del avivamiento que está experimentando la iglesia.

“La oración es una gran prioridad, especialmente por parte de los líderes”, dijo. “Necesitamos ser una iglesia que ora para que Dios se mueva. Necesitamos ser fieles en saturar la iglesia de oración”.



WAITING ON GOD

Wait on the LORD, and keep His way,
and He shall exalt you to inherit the
land; when the wicked are cut off,
you shall see it.

PSALM 37:34

Editor's note: Each month, the Texan features a column written by the president of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. This is the first of those columns written by Danny Forshee, who was elected SBTC president at last November's SBTC Annual Meeting.

Some of you are waiting on God for big things in your life. You have prayed and you are ready for the answer to come. You may be waiting on God for the person He wants you to marry. Some are waiting for a breakthrough in a relationship, or perhaps in your church. Others are waiting on God for a job or a promotion. There are numerous things for which you may be waiting on the Lord to help you and come through for you. You have been faithfully praying; however, the answer has not come yet.

At this point, you have a few options:

1. Continue to be patient and wait on God, knowing He has a plan and will come through for you when the timing is right.
2. Grow impatient with God and become bitter and angry with Him.
3. Make things happen on your own. In this instance, you take matters in your own hands, telling God He is taking too long and that you can handle it from here on out. Let me encourage you to not do that. It never—and I mean never—ends well.

Psalm 37:34 offers an example in Scripture where God commands us to wait. Notice that He also gives us a promise to bless. When we choose to wait on God, obey Him, and trust Him, we position ourselves to be very blessed by Him. I like the way the psalmist states the promise of blessing: “And He shall exalt you to inherit the land.” Focus on the two words “exalt” and “inherit.” These are words of blessing. Your reward for waiting on God may not be a literal piece of property (although it may be), but whatever you are praying about and waiting on God for, know that He will come through and He will bless you far more than you can imagine.

Psalm 37:34 was Pastor Charles Stanley’s favorite verse in the Bible about waiting on God. In preaching on this subject of waiting on God, he shares many helpful truths with the child of God: “People may criticize you for waiting on the Lord. It does not matter what others think. Someone might say, ‘But if I were you ...,’ but they are not you. Do not listen to those who would discourage you from waiting on the Lord. Resist the tempting voices that would say, ‘Hey, you have waited long enough; it is time for you to get going and make things happen.’ Keep on waiting in faith. When you wait on His timing, you are waiting on God’s very best. He will not give you what is less than best.”

I am praying for all our 2,700-plus churches in the SBTC. May God richly bless you as you seek Him and wait on His perfect timing. Great days are ahead!



Experiencing revitalization through clarity, alignment

I arrived at First Baptist Church in Three Rivers in October 2020, both terrified and excited to step into my first pastorate. I knew right away this was a small-town church in need of revitalization, so I reached out to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Church Health & Leadership department right away.

Shortly after my arrival, the SBTC began a new program called Regenesiis that aims to help churches walk through a revitalization process. As I sat in on an informational call, I knew this was the direction our church needed to go. I was hoping and praying there would be others in our church willing to join me as we plunged into the unknown. God sent those people and, with a team assembled, we jumped in and began the process.

FBC Three Rivers had suffered from declining attendance over the past 20 years. The church lost its pastor in 2019, and three months later, the COVID-19 pandemic left the church wondering where it was going and if there was any hope of moving forward. Regenesiis helped us address those questions. Here are just a few lessons our church has learned by walking through this process:

Clarify your target.

Zig Ziglar said, "If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time." He was exactly right. Our church was struggling because it had lost sight of the target. If you want to see your church revitalized, you must clarify your target. What is unique about your church? What are the demographics of the area? What are the opportunities? How has God uniquely wired your church to make disciples and advance the kingdom of Christ? Clarifying your target is the first step in church revitalization.

Clarify your process.

What is a disciple? How do you know you are making disciples? What is the path of discipleship for someone who joins your church? These are all questions every church must wrestle with. It was vital that we wrestle with this because we did not have an answer. By defining a disciple and crafting a pathway for discipleship, we have begun to gain clarity on a process for existing members and newcomers alike to enter. Our process is designed to develop the disciple we defined.

Align your leadership.

Pastor, you already know you cannot do this work alone. You were never meant to. You need people around you who will share the vision and be committed to that vision. This is not easy to do, but I'm confident God has placed you in a congregation with people who are willing to help. I asked the Lord for five people. I got all five. We did not all agree when we came to the table the first time, but now there is unity among the team.

The Church Health & Leadership team will tell you Regenesiis is not a silver bullet. FBC Three Rivers has not arrived. We are still working, refining, and clarifying. I can tell you it gave us the platform to have discussions that would have taken years to do otherwise. The sense of urgency compelled us to act and we followed God's lead. Now we're watching Him take us in amazing places.

Interested in Regenesiis?
Scan the QR code for more info.



Jesse Hammonds is pastor of First Baptist Church in Three Rivers, located about 75 miles south of San Antonio.



CONNECTING CULTURES TO CHRIST

'Life-giving' trip builds bridge between international students and the gospel

ARLINGTON

When Jessica Ren began reaching out to churches in Houston about partnering for a weekend mission trip, she was initially met with silence.

Ren, a member of Arlington Chinese Bible Church who works with international college and graduate students in the Metroplex, wanted to plan a trip that would move her students, most of them non-Christians, out of their comfort zones and expose them to the gospel. The attraction for most of the students was a tour of Houston's Johnson Space Center and time to hear from NASA Flight Director Ed Van Cise.

"It's about planting gospel seeds," Ren explained, "and what better way to do it than combine it with an opportunity to see a place like NASA?"

Ren finally connected with Bruno Molina at the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, who put her in touch with the convention's Asia consultant for Houston, Michael Liga. It was Liga who reached out to

Tyler McKinney, pastor of Shadycrest Baptist Church in the Houston suburb of Pearland, which ended up being exactly the church and pastor Ren had been praying to find.

"God had laid it on my heart to pursue college ministry, and it's just difficult in our setting because most of the colleges are community or commuter colleges," McKinney said. "I knew it was something God wanted us to do, so about February of last year I started praying about it."

Once they were in touch, Ren and McKinney discussed details of the trip over the next couple of months through Zoom while he worked on finding host homes in the church. Eight families volunteered to host the group of students Ren would bring from DFW.

"It's a miracle that God provided all the lodging—the best ... precise matching for our group," Ren said.

According to Ren, three quarters of international students never set foot in an American home while they live and study in the U.S. She said some students shared

“It was like a revival for the church. They’re fired up because of these international students that they’re hosting.

—MICHAEL LIGA

after the trip that they were a bit hesitant when they were first matched with their host homes on Saturday night. After eating dinner in their homes and engaging them in conversation late into the night, however, the students opened up to talk about their lives, families, and beliefs.

“They cannot understand [why] all these people who do not know us [would] open their homes to host us. For non-believers, this is surely very hard to understand,” she said. “But all of them feel they are loved.”

The connections made between the families and the ability for the host home families to share the gospel so directly with the students is what made the trip such a resounding success, McKinney said.

“Most people don’t even have their neighbors in their homes,” McKinney said. “So it was just beautiful the way our families connected and shared the love of Christ with these people who had never had any interaction with any Christian families. ... It was life-giving to our church.”

One poignant encounter shared by both Ren and McKinney was the interaction between Alex, a post-doctoral student, and McKinney’s mother, Janice, who just a week before had discovered that her breast cancer had returned and was classified as stage four.

“As they talked, my mom shared what was going on with her. And when [Alex] got back to Dallas, he told Jessica that [with all that my mom] was going through with her joy and the way that she approached life, that he had seen true



A group of international students (opposite page) from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex recently had the opportunity not only to visit NASA in Houston, but to connect with believers at Shadycrest Baptist Church in Pearland. Through these interactions, many students had spiritual conversations and heard the gospel. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

faith,” McKinney said. “It was incredible. I mean, we’re asking God why, or just struggling through the reality of what it is, but God immediately showed us part of the why.”

McKinney changed his sermon text that Sunday to preach on the woman at the well in John 4, keeping in mind that he was going to be speaking to an audience with little to no understanding of the gospel.

“Think about how different this is to this Muslim girl, about how Jesus treated women, how He valued people and how He brought them up,” he said. “It was just a beautiful opportunity to share who Jesus is.”

From Ren’s perspective, the trip could not have gone better, especially as it exposed the students to the love of Christ.

“Now they not only hear, but they see with their own eyes and experience the love of God through these people,” she said.

McKinney expressed gratitude for the Lord’s sovereignty in connecting him with Ren.

“God worked it out and put us together. [Jessica] had never done one of these, and I’d never done one,” he added. “So it was just kind of a unique pairing that God worked out.”

Liga, the SBTC consultant who put them in touch, thanked God for the opportunity and for the gospel seeds planted, not just with the students, but also with the church.

“It was like a revival for [the church],” Liga said. “They’re fired up because of these international students that they’re hosting. It was like a mission trip for Shadycrest Baptist Church. They’re looking forward to [working with] another ministry with a [similar] mission or the Asian ministry with the SBTC that they can connect with.”

SWBTS SEES RECORD NUMBER OF HISPANIC GRADUATES

FORT WORTH

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary celebrated a milestone in December when 124 of the 336 students who graduated at the fall commencement were Hispanic. The trend underscores Southwestern's goal of becoming the premiere theological training institution for Hispanics worldwide.

The historic number of Hispanic graduates was preceded by a celebration banquet the night before which gathered Hispanic leaders, many of whom are also students, from all over the country and world, including Puerto Rico, South America, Mexico, and Brazil.

"The work for the Spanish program is very important for the vision of the future at Southwestern," Southwestern President David Dockery said to the students. "Southwestern is committed to you and we ask for you to renew your commitment to Southwestern. We want you to think of this seminary as your seminary ... a place providing Spanish language education not only in Texas but across this country and around the world."

— CLARA MOLINA



PHOTO COURTESY MOBBERLY BAPTIST CHURCH FACEBOOK

LONGVIEW CHURCH BREAKS GROUND ON HOPE ROAD COUNSELING CENTER

LONGVIEW Mobberly Baptist Church held a groundbreaking ceremony in December at the location where a building will house its Hope Road Counseling Center.

The counseling center was established in October 2018 and operates out of office spaces in Longview and Marshall, according to its website. Its mission is to "provide gospel-centered professional therapeutic care for all of East Texas." Hope Road currently offers counseling for individuals and couples, as

well as premarital counseling and spiritual formation counseling.

A post on Mobberly's Facebook page, which included photos of the groundbreaking ceremony, stated, "What a joy and honor it was to break ground on the new Hope Road Counseling Center! We are praying that God will continue to use this ministry as a place of healing and restoration."

— TEXAN STAFF

SBTC DR DIRECTOR PRAISES WORK WITH SALVATION ARMY

ARLINGTON A working model developed between Texas Salvation Army Disaster Services and Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Disaster Relief is being evaluated for its national potential, said Scottie Stice, SBTC DR director.

"SBTC DR has long worked closely with the Texas division of the Salvation Army Disaster Services during mass feeding deployments," Stice said. "Our teamwork has been so good because both organizations are faith-based.

Our relationship is mutually complementary and supportive. The gospel first, that's the big thing."

Seamless, shared deployments between SBTC DR and Texas Salvation Army workers to Gonzales, La., and Fort Myers, Fla., caught the attention of other state Baptist DR teams and Salvation Army crews alike, Stice said, adding that a meeting in Arlington just before Thanksgiving 2023 with personnel from both organizations featured preliminary discussions of standard operating procedures should the teams mutually deploy.

— JANE RODGERS

GEORGIA BAPTIST LEADER CALLED TO LEAD SAGEMONT

SUWANEE, Ga. Georgia preacher Levi Skipper will be heading west to serve as lead pastor of a Texas megachurch.

Sagemont Church, a Southern Baptist congregation with some 16,000 members in Houston, announced Dec. 10 that Skipper had been called as lead pastor. Skipper, with 17 years of experience as a senior pastor, has led the Georgia Baptist Mission Board's church strengthening and evangelism teams since 2019.

Skipper has been a regular speaker at evangelism conferences and revivals and has held numerous evangelistic crusades overseas. He also was instrumental in founding a theological school that has equipped more than 300 pastors in Ethiopia.

Georgia Baptist Mission Board Executive Director W. Thomas Hammond Jr. said Sagemont is getting one of the Southern Baptist Convention's most gifted preachers, a loving pastor, and a strong administrator.

"His evangelistic zeal will lead Sagemont to new heights," Hammond said.

The Skippers have four children: Garrison, 20; Mattie, 18; Gavin, 16; and Marlee, 14.

— BAPTIST PRESS

DOCTORS OPTIMISTIC FOLLOWING STEVE GAINES' CANCER DIAGNOSIS

CORDOVA, Tenn. In a short video posted on YouTube Dec. 6, former SBC President Steve Gaines announced that doctors have found cancer in his lungs. The announcement comes a few weeks after Gaines announced he'd been diagnosed with kidney cancer.

Gaines, longtime pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church, appears in the video with his wife, Donna.

"Donna and I have been overwhelmed by your love, your prayers and your words of encouragement," Gaines said in the most recent video. "... Words are inadequate to express our love and our gratitude."

Gaines said testing that happened after the initial diagnosis showed that cancer had also spread to his lungs. Donna Gaines then said he will soon be having a port implanted to allow for chemotherapy treatments to begin as soon as possible.

The Gaineses were expected to travel to MD Anderson in Houston in early January for a consultation with doctors there, who will confirm his treatment plan.

The couple asked for continued prayers as they "seek the Lord, that we may be able to glorify Him in this journey."

— BAPTIST PRESS



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GOD IS THE HERO OF MY STORY

During the past 45 years, after the Lord called me to preach, I have pastored two churches and spent five years in full-time evangelism. My first pastorate saw about one person a week baptized over the course of 15 years. My current church, a church plant that began in my home with nine people, has grown to about 2,500 people. But before that happened, the Lord took me down to zero.



My path to ministry was unusual. As a young man, I was in sales, a director of marketing for a large grocery company. I was also offered an opportunity that could have made me wealthy. That didn't happen because I knew the Lord was calling me to preach. My pastor at the time was a former Folgers coffee salesman. He and another preacher gave me good advice, and they both came to the same conclusion. Reverend Neil, the former salesman, said, "You do anything you can to keep from preaching. If God won't leave you alone, you'll know that He's in it." The other man said, "Who has God not used that was willing?" The Lord used them to stir my heart toward letting go and letting God have His way.

The transition had its challenges, of course. Over the course of a week, our income was reduced by two-thirds as I moved into my first church as pastor. After 15 years in that church, I felt like I could reach more people if I was in full-time evangelism. I didn't think I was going to be the next Billy Graham, but I thought the Lord was going to use me. Looking back, I see that all the money I had left was spent [trying] to stay in evangelism. That's probably been the most important thing the Lord has done—teaching us to trust

That's probably been the most important thing the Lord has done—teaching us to trust Him in every area of the ministry and finding out that He's sufficient.



Him in every area of the ministry and finding out that He's sufficient. So, The Country Church [in Marion, located about 30 miles northeast of San Antonio] is a result of failure on my part.

I grew up in Marion. I was lost—and I mean good and lost. This was the last place in the world I wanted to plant a church. But as my wife, Joan, and I prayed about it, we knew God wanted us to plant a church in Marion. So even though I'm still living down what took place before I was saved 60 years ago in some cases, the Lord is still blessing in spite of me.

Good, long tenures have taught me a couple of things. You have to establish a bond of trust. It takes a while for the people to trust you I think over the years, I've established trust that isn't built overnight. It doesn't matter how great the preacher is, it takes some time to build that up.

Another thing I've noticed is that there's not been a good time to leave my church. When things were difficult, I didn't want to leave the church on that note, and so I weathered through it. When things were good, there's no way in the world I wanted to leave. Either way, up or down, I have stayed.

And look what God has done here over the past 25 years! It's really



The Country Church uses its 42,000-square-foot rodeo arena to host outreach events like its Harvest Festival.
SUBMITTED PHOTO

a small town, a little more than 1,000 people, but He's provided for our church's ministry: 80,000 square feet of buildings, 16 acres, a 42,000-square-foot covered arena, and no debt. [We spent] \$250,000 to build a building to provide food and clothing to the poor ... and our people support it. We buy groceries direct from a wholesaler and buy the bargains, and then we provide food and clothing to between 150 and 250 families in Guadalupe County. We reach a little over 100 people a year through the ministry. We also have counseling through The Attic, our benevolence ministry. It's just a miracle. Maybe it sounds like a cliché, but everything here is a miracle.

So, what's my story? Well, every pastor ought to have a ministry verse or a ministry passage, and mine is 1 Corinthians 1:27: "That He's taken the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." When people look at The Country Church, they can't say it's because of my superior education or this and that. They have to give the Lord the glory that He deserves.

what's
your
story?

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PASTOR

FBC Lovelady is seeking a FT or PT senior pastor. Email resume to FBCLovelady@gmail.com. Office phone: 936-636-7869. Search committee chairman phone: 936-222-3202.

Padre Island Baptist Church in Corpus Christi is seeking a FT senior pastor. Our church is located on North Padre Island. Applicants should submit their resume, including education, experience, and sermon links, to searchcommittee@theislandchurch.com.

College Avenue Baptist Church in Levelland is seeking a FT pastor. Mail resume to College Avenue Baptist Church, 213 N. College Avenue, Levelland, Texas 79336, or email to cabc.resume@gmail.com.

FBC Haskell is seeking a FT pastor. Email resume to haskellpastorsearch@gmail.com.

Bethel Baptist Church in Warren is accepting applications for the position of FT pastor. Please send resumes to our search committee to bethelbaptist1960@yahoo.com or mail to Search Committee, Bethel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 96, Warren, Texas 77664.

FBC Throckmorton is prayerfully seeking the man called by God to serve as our FT pastor. Our congregation is traditional Southern Baptist. Please email resumes (attn: Pastor Search Committee) to throckmortonfbcsearch@gmail.com.

Lone Oak Baptist Church in Lone Oak is seeking a senior pastor. Please send resumes to pastorsearch@loneoakchurch.org. You can also visit loneoakchurch.org to find out more about us.

FBC Marlin is seeking a FT pastor. Send resume to Pastor Search Team, 309 Coleman St., Marlin, Texas 76661, or email to fbcmarlinpsc@gmail.com.

FBC Rio Grande City is seeking a FT pastor to lead our small church in deep South Texas. A bilingual (Spanish) pastor would be a plus but not required. We are a simple/casual church eager for a pastor to lead our biblically conservative congregation. Contact: blgmusicstudio@earthlink.net.

Hillcrest Baptist Church in Big Spring is seeking a FT pastor. Applicants should contact mcjbkh@outlook.com. We are in the process of creating a website, however you can find us at facebook.com/HBCBigSpring.

Tye Baptist Church is seeking resumes for a FT pastor. Parsonage (3/2) next to church. Mail resumes to Tye Baptist Church, P.O. Box 235, Tye, Texas 79563, or email tbchurch207@att.net. We are 6 miles west of Abilene. Attendance is 60-70 on Sunday mornings.

Salt Lake Independent Baptist Church in Rockport is seeking a bivocational pastor. We are a small country church that loves Jesus and wants someone who will preach from the Bible and believes that Jesus is the way to salvation. Please send your resume to bwpepau@yahoo.com.

Harmony Baptist Church near Weatherford is seeking PT or bivocational lead pastor for a small but growing church. Hours would grow to full time with growth. Seminary degree and pastoral experience preferred. Email resume to harmonybaptistchurch50@gmail.com, or mail to Pastor Search Committee, 242 Harmony Rd., Weatherford, Texas 76087. Website: harmonybc.org.

Woods New Hope Church in Tenaha is seeking a PT lead pastor to lead our church family to continue to be a growing ministry. Contact: Ted White, interim pastor, ted3990@gmail.com, or 903-720-7207.

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.

North Oaks Baptist Church in Spring is seeking FT or bivocational Spanish ministry pastor who is Spanish speaking. Two years experience, two years theological education or pursuing theological degree. Email resume to flores0605@icloud.com.

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 submit resume to SecondBaptistJC@outlook.com.

Calvary Baptist Church in Hughes Springs is seeking a bivocational senior pastor who is searching for a church home to shepherd. The church grounds offer plenty of space for growth and a parsonage. Check out our page on Facebook. Contact 903-720-8772 or send application to brandoncalcote21@gmail.com.

MUSIC

Bethel Baptist Church in Tyler (Chapel Hill) is seeking a FT worship pastor. Our warm, encouraging congregation desires a music ministry with youthful energy, spiritual integrity, and respect for the musical history of its mature congregants through balanced, blended music. Email resume to Associate Pastor Stephen Sixtos at spsixtos@gmail.com.

FBC Odessa is seeking a FT worship pastor. Must be a visionary who is passionately creative in leading. College degree required; graduate study preferred. Email resume to sbeard@fbcodessa.com.

FBC Atlanta is seeking FT minister of music. Resumes should be sent to the attention of Julie Duits, jduits@atlantafbc.org, or P.O. Box 1089, Atlanta, Texas 75551.

FBC Crystal Beach is seeking a PT worship minister. Call 409-684-4413 or send resume to fbcystalbeach@gmail.com.

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

FBC Schertz is seeking a PT worship minister. Please apply at fbcschertz.org/job-worship. Phone: 210-658-3251.

STUDENTS

FBC Huntington is seeking a FT youth pastor to oversee our youth ministry. To apply, visit huntingtonfbc.org/youthpastor.

FBC Liberty City is seeking a FT youth minister to lead in developing, coordinating, and facilitating a comprehensive ministry program to reach students with the gospel, disciple them, and engage their parents. All aspects of the youth ministry will be under his leadership and supervision. Email resume to youthsearch@fbclibertycity.com.

Cibolo Valley Baptist Church (5500 FM 1103, Schertz, Texas 78108) is seeking a FT director of youth and outreach. Pay is dependent on experience from \$43K-\$53K annually. Please apply at cibolovalleychurch.org/job-opportunities.

FBC Fredericksburg, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is seeking an experienced, FT youth minister. The youth minister is responsible for evangelism, discipleship,

ministry, missions, fellowship, and worship opportunities for middle school and high school youth. Send resume to youthsearch@fbcfbg.com.

Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth is taking resumes for a FT minister to students. If interested, please send your resume to jeff@wedgwoodbc.org.

New Faith Baptist Church in Aledo is seeking a PT youth ministry intern to assist with youth ministry functions and activities. Will work closely with senior pastor and volunteers to create an effective program for youth ministry. Email resume to Donna Boone at boonedonna1820@gmail.com.

CHILDREN

East Paris Baptist Church in Paris is looking for a FT children's pastor or director. Please send your resume or questions to kidspastorsearch@eastparis.org. Website: eastparis.org.

Friendly Baptist in Tyler is seeking a FT children's minister. We believe our church is in a community ready to be transformed by the gospel and we are investing significant resources and effort in our neighborhood schools and children's ministry. Website: friendlybaptist.org. Email PDF of your resume to dan@friendlybaptist.org.

New Faith Baptist in Aledo is seeking a PT children's ministry intern to assist in overseeing the function and activities for the children's ministry. Works closely with senior pastor and volunteers to create a welcoming, effective program for school-age children, K-6th grade. Email Donna Boone at boonedonna1820@gmail.com to apply.

COMBINATION

FBC Maypearl is seeking a FT minister of music/media and recreation. We are looking for someone who can lead all ages to worship. We have a gym, walking track, racquetball courts, game room, and 19 acres available to reach our community and strengthen our fellowship. Email resumes to tony@fbcmaypearl.com.

FBC Centerville is in search of a FT youth/worship pastor. This includes all aspects of 7th-12th grade ministry, along with our Sunday morning worship programming. We are also willing to split the positions into FT youth and PT worship pastor. If interested, please send resumes to Tony at decree777@yahoo.com.

OTHER

College Heights Baptist Church in Plainview is seeking a pastoral resident. This flexible position is suited for a recent graduate or minister in a transitional stage. Compensation is a three-bedroom parsonage w/utilities. The role can be combined with a PT office assistant position. To apply or inquire, email pastor@collegeheightsbc.org.

Friendly Baptist Church in Tyler is seeking a FT executive pastor with primary responsibilities in discipleship, education, and leadership development. Secondary responsibilities in church administration. We believe God has placed our church in a neighborhood that is ready to be transformed by the gospel. Email resume in PDF format to dan@friendlybaptist.org.

Oak View Baptist Church in Irving is seeking a FT associate pastor of discipleship and connections to provide leadership for discipleship, ministry, and connection

through adult on-campus lifegroups and executing a plan for training and developing new leaders. Email resume to Jim Gerlach, pastor, at jim@ovbc.net.

FBC Dalhart is seeking a FT family pastor to partner with parents to build and maintain a discipleship culture that trains and equips them to disciple their children and to create peer-driven environments where children and students can build Christ-centered community. Email resume to michael@fbcDalhart.org.

Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood is seeking a FT pastor of leadership & missions. Provides leadership in missions, church goals, staff, and operations. College degree required. Graduate degree

and at least 5 years ministerial experience preferred. Email resumes to kathyp@cogginchurch.org.

Redeemer Church in Lubbock is seeking a FT onsite family ministry associate to support the implementation of Redeemer's family ministry vision and strategies, encompassing tasks ranging from Sunday morning services to event planning and execution. Additionally, associate will partner with parents to facilitate the discipleship of children. Contact us at marci@redeemerlubbock.org.

Cowboy Fellowship in Atascosa County is seeking a FT director of media and technology. Visit cowboyfellowship.org/jobs for online job description and application.

Kentuckytown Baptist in Whitewright is seeking a

FT family pastor. Salary, housing allowance, and other benefits included. Please send resumes to kbctravis@gmail.com.

FBC Huntsville is seeking a PT pianist. Email resume to linda.webb@fbchuntsville.org or mail resume to Linda Webb, First Baptist Church, 1229 Avenue J, Huntsville, Texas 77340, or call 936-291-3441.

New Faith Baptist Church in Aledo is seeking a PT associate pastor of family ministry. Candidate will be an engaged and passionate leader to oversee family ministry and direct children and youth programs. Some flexible hours with Sundays and Wednesdays required. Contact Donna Boone at boonedonna1820@gmail.com.

Paid Classifieds

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

PASTOR

First Baptist Church in Roswell, N.M., is seeking a FT lead pastor. Candidate should be 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 worshippers, is elder-led, also has deacons/deaconesses. Church was founded in 1872, is debt free, and in good financial condition with 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.

First Baptist Church in Erick, Okla., is seeking a bivocational pastor. Parsonage provided. Seeking compassionate, outgoing person able to relate to all ages and willing to visit community members. Email resume to

mdurham@dobsonteleco.com or mail to Pastor Search Committee, Box 664, Erick, Okla. 73645.

YOUTH

FBC Hollis in Oklahoma is prayerfully seeking a FT Youth Minister. Church is located in small town close to Amarillo, Lubbock, and OKC. Parsonage is provided. Please send resume to FBC, P.O. Box 589, Hollis, Okla. 73550, or fbchollis@pdi.net.

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.

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

DO YOU NEED A PIANIST? Try piano accompaniment CDs and hymn DVDs from Worship Service Resources. Each song has an introduction and is easy to follow. Hymns, choruses, lyrics, gospel—hundreds of songs! Get a FREE DEMO and try before you buy! Call 877-977-6800 or visit wsrpianocds.com.

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 at 817-473-1161



Do you receive the
SOUTHERN BAPTIST
TEXAN
DIGEST
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News and resources you care
about delivered once a week.

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Pastors, let's lead by example when it comes to discipleship

Pastors, if we don't personally practice discipleship outside our pulpits, we're working against our call to be disciple-makers. Truthfully—many people pay more attention to our example than our sermons or mission statements.

Although many pastors are not in a discipleship group of any kind for various reasons, you can and should change that in 2024. Here are four ways to jump in:

Join an existing small group.

Whether your church calls it a Sunday school class, a small group, a D-group, or whatever, you and your staff need to literally live out the disciple-making strategy of your church.

Are you and your spouse currently connected to a group of any kind? It's important to involve your wife in the selection of a group because these are the people who will help both of you through life's greatest challenges. They will also be among the first to celebrate life's greatest milestones and help you grow spiritually. Joining a small group is much more than having your name on a roll; it's living life together.

Will there be an initial awkwardness when a group you join sees you as the expert instead of the teacher? Perhaps at first, but it won't be a problem for long as you become a regular within the group.

Kickstart a new group.

Since the lead pastor is often the most influential person in the church, you can leverage that influence by helping kickstart a new group. Make sure you have a succession plan or a completion date for the group so it will not depend on you as a teacher long term. Our calling as pastors is to equip others for the work of the ministry.

One pastor friend of mine led a class focused on reaching church members who did not attend any class. The average church has approximately a third of its worship attendees not participating in a Bible study group, which makes them the greatest prospects for a new class.

Teach a hot topic group.

Start a group that would attract those who gravitate toward a particular topic such as finances, parenting, marriage, prophecy, or apologetics. Prepare these classes for high attendance times of the year and offer them for 8-10 weeks for people who prefer making short-term commitments. Have a co-teacher prepared to continue the class after you finish your study.

Co-lead a life stage group.

Are there certain people in your church for whom there is no group? Consider starting a group for single adults, single moms, empty nesters, parents of teenagers, newlyweds, or new parents. In my last church, my wife, Janet, and I started a new small group for non-college singles under 30. They were a blast! We trained four of the young adult members to be the teaching team and transitioned to become a mentor couple. Again, have someone ready to take over the class before you start for the purpose of equipping other leaders.

Since our discipleship influence flows more out of what we practice than what we preach, consider starting or joining a small group in 2024. You might surprise yourself with how you and your wife will be blessed, as well as become a blessing to others.



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

WHAT'S UP NEXT?

2024 CALENDAR

college discipleship CONFERENCE

JAN. 4-6

College Discipleship Conference, Houston

EMPOWER Conference

FEB. 26-27

Empower Conference
Irving Convention Center

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

MARCH 3-10

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Week of Prayer

JANUARY

8

Evangelism Connections (online)

12-13

M3 WKND, Euless

22

Regenes One-Day, Abilene

23

Virtual Tax Seminars

25

Virtual Tax Seminar

26-27

M3 WKND, Marshall

27

Women's Ministry Roundtable
Conversations (multisite)

29

Bivo Pastors Network Regional
Gathering, DFW

29

Regenes One-Day, Diboll

FEBRUARY

2-3

M3 WKND, Austin

5

Bivo Pastors Network
Remote Gathering (online)

9-10

M3 WKND, Amarillo

12

Regenes One-Day, San Angelo

12

Evangelism Connections (online)

19

Regenes One-Day, College Station

23-24

Empower Spanish Session (Apoderados),
Irving

25

Empower Student Rally, Irving

26

Interim Pastor Equipping, Irving

MARCH

2

VBS Training, Longview & Spring

2

Intro to DR & Phase 1 Training,
Pflugerville

4

Bivo Pastors Network
Remote Gathering (online)

9

VBS Training, Lubbock

11

Regenes One-Day, San Antonio

14

55+ Adults Ministry Training,
New Braunfels

15-16

Send Relief Serve Tour, Dallas

21-23

Bivo Pastor/Wife Retreat

21

55+ Adults Ministry Training, Grapevine

23

VBS State Training, Austin

25

Regenes One-Day, Baytown

26

Evangelism Connections (online)

28

55+ Adults Ministry Training, Lubbock

For more information about SBTC events, visit sbtexas.com/events or scan the QR code





EMPOWER

Conference

FEB. 26-27, 2024



DAVID
Jeremiah



HB
Charles



GAITHER
Vocal Band



JARRETT
Stephens



JIMMY
McNeal



JJ
Washington



REBEKAH
Lyons



ROBBY
Gallaty



SEAN
McDowell



Irving Convention Center

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