

SOUTHERN BAPTIST
TEXAN

FEBRUARY 2024 | VOL. 23 | NO. 2

COMMUNITIES ACROSS TEXAS ARE TRANSFORMING AS CHURCHES REFLECT THE LIGHT OF JESUS

shine
SO BRIGHT

EMPOWER *Conference*

- + Robby Gallaty on reaching the lost: 'We run to the hurting'
- + NAMB's Mark Clifton on the connection between revitalization, evangelism

ALSO:

- + East Texas couple uses business expertise to bring gospel to their community

A GREAT PLACE TO CONNECT

One of my favorite times of the year is right around the corner. Every February, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention hosts the Empower Conference. It is an incredible event that brings thousands together to worship, network, and learn. There is nothing like having friends from all over Texas join together to lift high the name of Jesus and be reminded of the lostness in our state and the need for our churches to advance the gospel.

This year, we have some amazing speakers and dynamic sessions planned. These two days will be packed with opportunities to connect and be equipped. Here are just a few reasons I love this event:

The opportunity to connect

Ministry is hard and the opportunity to connect with others often serves as a catalyst for encouragement. Whether it's worshipping alongside friends or other co-laborers in the gospel or sitting in the lobby networking with other pastors, the Empower Conference serves as a platform for connection. I believe you will be encouraged by connecting with old friends and enjoying the opportunity to make new friends.

The opportunity to learn

Because ministry is challenging, we need to find unique opportunities to learn from others and sharpen our tools. Empower does just that. Whether in the main sessions or breakouts, there are numerous ways to learn and help the ministry you serve move forward. Check out the schedule to see which opportunities would be most beneficial to your area of ministry.

The opportunity to move forward

As you may have seen or heard at our Annual Meeting last November, the SBTC's new mission focus is, "Mobilizing churches to multiply disciple-making movements in Texas and around the world." The Empower Conference is designed to help mobilize your church in multiplying disciple-making movements. In fact, one of the markers of a disciple-making movement is "evangelism prioritized." This conference has at its foundation the desire to see churches across our state prioritize evangelism. I believe we can see a renewed passion for the gospel's advance across Texas.

I hope you will join us Feb. 26-27 at the Irving Convention Center for this encouraging time. There's something for everyone. I am praying even now that we will experience a move of God as we gather. I love you and am grateful to serve you. See you there!



Dr. Nathan Lorick
SBTC Executive Director



FEB. 26-27
Irving Convention Center

EMPOWER
Conference

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TODAY**



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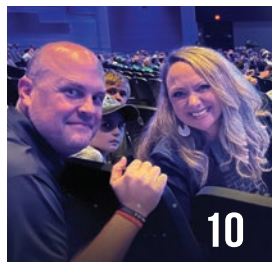
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STEPPING INTO UNCERTAINTY FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS

We live in an age of specialization. You've probably heard that term the most as it pertains to youth sports. Once upon a time, at least in small towns like the one where I grew up, most of my classmates and I played multiple sports. The guys went from football to basketball to baseball to track, while the girls played volleyball, then soccer, then softball. These days, that's not as common, as student-athletes have increasingly made the decision to specialize, or focus on playing one sport.

The thought process is often this: "If I focus on playing the one sport I'm the most talented at, I have a better chance of playing in college or even in the pros." Interestingly enough, sports scientists are now finding that specialization might be harmful for young athletes. Last fall, an official with the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee said specialization limits overall athleticism and can even increase the risk of injury and burnout.



Sports isn't the only place where specialization can occur. It can also show up in the church, where many people avoid leading or serving because they feel they are not gifted or called to a particular area. A few years back, as I prepared to preach a funeral service, I nervously watched the clock as the man who was supposed to lead music failed to show up. With just a few minutes left before the scheduled start time, I came to the realization that if that guy didn't show, I was going to have to lead the music. I was horrified. After all, I thought, "I'm not a trained worship leader ... I'm a preacher!"

Leading the music at that funeral service would certainly not have been comfortable for me, and I'm still thankful to this day that the music leader showed up with one minute to spare. Fact is, many followers of Jesus want to stick to what they know best, dwell in their "sweet spot." It's understandable. Nobody likes to be uncomfortable. Nobody wants to fail. Nobody wants to get out in front of everybody and end up looking like a fool.

Then again ...

"We are fools for Christ" (1 Corinthians 4:10).

Well, there is that. I'm pretty sure we've all learned some version of the following maxim: Jesus doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called. That's why He tells His disciples not to worry about what they'll say when they're brought before the rulers and authorities, because the Holy Spirit will equip them in just the right moment with just the right thing to say. It's why God chose Moses, who may not have found "leadership" to be one of his top three on a spiritual gifts inventory, to guide His people out of bondage. It was never about Moses' ability, but Moses allowing God to show Himself mighty through him.

"What might God be calling you to that's got you scared to death right now?"

What might God be calling you to that's got you scared to death right now? Where are you playing to your specialties instead of jumping into an area that makes you uncomfortable just thinking about it? It just may be that God is not only trying to use you to serve His kingdom, but to grow your faith—if you're willing to step out of your comfort zone as He leads.

And maybe even feel a little foolish along the way ...

FEB. 26-27

Irving Convention Center

EMPOWER *Conference*

MEAL SCHEDULE

Monday **FEB. 26**

CLASSICS LUNCHEON

11:00 AM - 12:45 PM

STUDENT MINISTERS NETWORK LUNCHEON

11:00 AM - 12:45 PM

YOUNG PASTORS NETWORK DINNER

4:30 - 6:00 PM

CHURCH HEALTH & LEADERSHIP DINNER

4:30 - 6:00 PM

WORSHIP LEADERS NETWORK DINNER

4:30 - 6:00 PM

Tuesday **FEB. 27**

CHURCH REVITALIZATION BREAKFAST

7:30 - 8:45 AM

MISSIONAL MINISTRIES BREAKFAST

7:30 - 8:45 AM

TACO TRUCK BREAKFAST

7:30 - 8:45 AM

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM LUNCHEON

11:45 AM - 12:50 PM

SKELDON TO BE FEATURED SPEAKER AT MONDAY LATE NIGHT GATHERING

Grant Skeldon, an author, speaker and Next Gen director for THINQ, will be the featured speaker during the Late Night event held Monday night, Feb. 26, at Empower.

Skeldon has a passion for finding and uniting diverse, dynamic young leaders to reach this generation. In his role with THINQ, he helps people develop cultural discernment, engage any topic with confidence, and create conversations that lead to wisdom.

He has written for The Wall Street Journal, Relevant, The Gospel Coalition, and is the youngest leader to be featured on the cover of Outreach Magazine. His book, *The Passion Generation*, has helped thousands of pastors and leaders reach, raise, and retain the next generation.

Grant and his wife, Cheyanne, live in Nashville, Tenn., where he serves on the preaching team at Way Church.



'NOT ONE SERMON YOU PREACH IS WASTED'

NAMB REVITALIZATION EXPERT CLIFTON OFFERS GLIMPSE OF SPEAKING TOPICS AT EMPOWER

Mark Clifton will be among the speakers at the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Empower Conference in February. He serves as executive director of church replanting and rural strategy for the North American Mission Board and as teaching pastor at Linwood Baptist Church in Linwood, Kan. He recently talked with the Texan about some of the topics he plans on speaking about at Empower.



On the role evangelism plays in church revitalization:

Mark Clifton: [Churches needing revitalization] must spend their time and energy on reaching the lost. If you don't do that, you're not going to exist in the next couple of decades. If you reach two or three families who don't know Jesus, and they're baptized and then their kids are baptized, guess what? Most of their friends don't know Jesus, either. ... That's how we see churches come back to life—not through programs, not through events and attracting church people to come to their place, but through evangelism. If you will focus this year on finding one person you can lead to Christ and disciple, it will change the trajectory of your church.

On the need—and challenge—for dying churches to reach younger generations:

MC: [Reaching younger generations is] really the bread and butter for a dying church. If you don't

reach the next generation, you're not going to have a future. ... I just think we've gotten way off target sometimes thinking we have to attract young people with young people things. You attract young people by loving them and being authentic with them. If your church will just be who you are authentically and love people with sacrificial love, man, young people will embrace that. You don't need cool music to reach the next generation. You need authentic music to reach the next generation. If the next generation comes in and hears your older people singing at the top of their lungs ... they will love that.

[Churches] always want to reach young people. They just don't want young people changing anything. But young people are going to come in and they're going to change some things. They're going to want to bring coffee in the sanctuary because they bring coffee everywhere they go.

They may not dress the same. Some of them may wear their hats in the worship center. Those are the kinds of things older adults are going to have to get over. They can't give the stink eye to young people for doing that and then expect young people to stay around. They won't stay.

On his message to discouraged pastors leading struggling churches:

MC: Only eternity is going to reveal the results of your labor. God, in His sovereignty, chose to put you not in an easy place, but in a hard place. He chose to put you in that place because He trusts you and values you with this very difficult task. You're probably not going to get your reward this side of heaven. Nobody's going to write a book about you. You're probably not going to get tweeted about. You may not get asked to preach on the platform someplace. But trust me, not one Scripture you read, not one prayer you lead, not one sermon you preach, not one Bible study you lead, not one

**"BUT TRUST ME, NOT ONE SCRIPTURE YOU READ, NOT ONE PRAYER YOU LEAD, NOT ONE SERMON YOU PREACH, NOT ONE BIBLE STUDY YOU LEAD, NOT ONE FUNERAL YOU CONDUCT—
NONE OF THAT'S WASTED, BECAUSE HIS WORD NEVER GOES OUT AND COMES BACK VOID."**

—MARK CLIFTON

funeral you conduct—none of that's wasted, because His Word never goes out and comes back void. You've got to go to bed every night knowing that only eternity is going to reveal the true results of your labor. God will take everything I've done in my ministry for Him, and if I've done it obediently, He's going to knit together a story that, when we get to heaven, the angels are going to be amazed with.



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BRINGING HEAVEN TO EARTH

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SHARE CHRIST IN YOUR COMMUNITY? 'RUN TO THE HURTING,' GALLATY SAYS



ROBBY GALLATY, senior pastor of Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, Tenn., stood before 1,900 people attending the first of a handful of Christmas services in early December 2023 when the lights started to flicker and the large projection screens behind him malfunctioned. Cell phone alerts began to sound, eerily echoing across the worship center where the crowd would soon be sheltering in place. Outside, severe storms were brewing, spawning deadly tornados that swept across the region.

The church was not directly hit, but the storms impacted many members and devastated several communities. Though tragic, the disaster provided Long Hollow an opportunity to put into practice one of its core values: “Run to the hurting.” Gallaty, who also serves as president of Replicate Ministries, will share some of those experiences, the lessons he and his church learned, and pieces of his personal testimony when he speaks at the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention’s Empower Conference in February.

How would you describe the relationship between evangelism and discipleship?

Robby Gallaty: For years, people have thought of them as two different practices or competing disciplines. The word I use is disciple-making. Jesus told us to be about the business of making disciples. Under disciple-making, you have two legs: one leg is evangelism, which is basically leading someone into a relationship with Jesus Christ across the threshold of faith. But after evangelism, the ministry doesn’t stop. The other leg is discipleship, which is helping people grow into the image of Christ

and replicating themselves to start the process over.

Think of it as two oars in the same boat. If you only have the oar of evangelism, you’ll just row in a circle. You’ll have a bunch of people sharing the gospel, but you’ll have no one else partnering in the ministry. If you only have the oar of discipleship ... you’ll have a bunch of people memorizing and studying Scripture, but you’ll never reach any lost people with the gospel. So you have to have both. The thing I often say is, “The gospel came to you because it was heading to someone else.” That means every person as a Christian has been given a baton at the moment of salvation. And if we’re honest and we look at our hands, we’re either fumbling the handoff or we’re running with passion and we’re passing it on to the next generation to leave a legacy.

How did you see the Lord use last year’s tornados in your area to not only reach your community, but help you make disciples in your church?

RG: One of the core values of our church is we run to the hurting. Obviously, when you have a pastor who’s been sober from drugs and alcohol now 20-plus years, you kind of become an epicenter for people who have hurts and hang-ups. I think we were able to come alongside 32 families who had some kind of need [after the tornado], whether it was a tree in the backyard or they needed supplies or lost it all.

The way we minister at Long Hollow is not a bait and switch where we minister so you can come to our church. We really just want to be an example of the hands and feet of Christ in our community and love people, no strings attached. We feel like it's way bigger than our church. It's a kingdom ministry. I've been trying to teach our people for years now that we have an opportunity, as believers, to partner with Christ in the kingdom of heaven today and that we're able to bring the kingdom to earth through obedience as we live for the Lord and love like Jesus loves. The problem with many Christians is we have this preoccupation of trying to get out of the world and into heaven. Jesus has been trying to get heaven into the world through us for 2,000 years, so we just show people that we have an opportunity to partner with Him every day.

What have you learned through your ministry experience at Long Hollow that may benefit pastors, church leaders, and others who will attend Empower?

RG: What I'm going to share at the conference is my own story, my own brokenness that led to breakthrough. I'm going to share that if you want to see people saved and baptized [in your church], see people evangelized ... you need God to set you on fire again to be passionate about the things of God. [Long Hollow] started to burn for the Lord and really seek God, believing there was more of God to be had, and it just created this amazing move of God that we are still in now.

We have a natural propensity to go right to the method or the mission or the manner of evangelism. [But] we've got to go back and ask ourselves, "Has the fire of revival or the flame of evangelism gone out in my own life?" You have to get to the end of yourself, because that's where the beginning of God is. Regardless of your skill set or gifts or preaching ability ... what every person used mightily by God has in common is they came to the end of themselves and realized they couldn't do it without Him. What we all have in common is we all have the ability to present ourselves and surrender to the Lord through brokenness. When we're broken over a sin, it leads to desperation and dependency, and desperation leads to breakthrough. Numbers obviously aren't everything, but it's unbelievable [what God has done at Long Hollow]. I can tell you so many stories of lives changed and attendance growth, but it goes back to God having to change the man before any method was implemented. I realized that was the problem. And when God changed me, everything changed.

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A DAY OF WORK, AN ETERNITY OF IMPACT

*ARLINGTON INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
LEADS THE WAY AT ONE-DAY OUTREACH
RESULTING IN PROFESSION OF FAITH*



ARLINGTON

DEBBIE FIGUEROA FELT UNCERTAIN but ready. So the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student, trained in evangelism methodology that morning, set off with two friends for a nearby park.

Figueroa, a member of the International Baptist Church of Arlington and a native of El Salvador, saw people walking, running, and working out at the park: preoccupied and busy. “We thought they might not be willing to stop to talk to us,” she said.

But some paused to chat, including an Argentinian woman.

“She told us she was Catholic and agreed with everything we were sharing,” Figueroa recalled. When asked if she was 100 percent sure she was going to spend eternity with Jesus, the lady said yes, because she tried to be a “good person.”

“We shared the gospel again and explained that the Bible is clear in saying that we are all sinners and that even our righteous acts are ‘filthy rags,’” Figueroa said. When asked if the gospel made sense to her, the lady replied that it did.

“We invited her to trust only in Jesus for salvation and follow Him as her only Lord and Savior, and she said she wanted to make that decision at that moment. So that day, in the middle of the trail, she repented of her sins and asked Jesus to save her. Then we welcomed her to God’s family, shared some Bible verses, and asked again if she was 100% sure about spending eternity with Jesus,” Figueroa said.

The lady’s answer was a resounding yes. “She said she was sure [of eternity] because she believed in Jesus as her Savior,” Figueroa said.

Figueroa and her friends led the woman to Christ just prior to the opening of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention’s Annual Meeting last November, when IBCA, a 55-member church, participated in an outreach event called Crossover SBTC.

Twenty-two IBCA members participated in the event, with two more providing prayer support. Ten other people assisted IBCA, including members from Blueprint Community Church, an African culture church that rents meeting space from IBCA, and from an evangelistic organization called For the Kingdom. The group conducted face-to-face



evangelism in central Arlington neighborhoods, at Vandergriff Park, and on a college campus.

IBCA, an 11-year-old church, focuses on ministry to the community and to international students at nearby colleges and Southwestern Seminary, said Glenn Melvin, IBCA executive director. For the Kingdom has been partnering with IBCA in evangelism efforts this year, he added.

Before setting out in the morning, participants attended a training at IBCA presented by Carl Bradford, SBTC evangelism consultant and a professor at SWBTS. Bradford taught the group how to use the 3 Circles method of sharing the gospel.

Figueroa praised the Crossover evangelism training as “very practical,” noting participants learned to share their testimonies as part of presenting the gospel. By the end of the day, when participants reassembled at the church to report all that God had done, there was much to celebrate.

Throughout the day, participants made 184 contacts and had 67 spiritual conversations with people, Melvin said, adding that such talks were defined as “any discussion on spiritual matters.” Of these, 41 turned into gospel conversations, with full presentations of the plan of salvation.

Melvin, who took part in SBC Crossover 2018 in Dallas, said IBCA has weekly evangelism every Saturday, “but Crossover SBTC was an opportunity to energize the entire church to reach the community. People need to know how to share the gospel

Southwestern’s Carl Bradford (far right) trained the Crossover team in the 3 Circles method of evangelism before they set out to knock on doors and tell people about Jesus.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

because, for someone they know, they may be the only people who can share Jesus with that person,” he said.

“Reaching out to the community allows us to know our neighbors, lets them know us, tells them about Jesus, and lets our people practice sharing the gospel in situations less pressured than those with already established relationships,” he added. “Bottom line, as for SBTC Crossover 2023, someone came to Christ. We have a new sister in the Lord!”

Tony Mathews, SBTC senior strategist for Missional Ministries, said of IBCA and the inaugural Crossover SBTC event: “If one church can have that kind of impact, imagine what 1,000 could do.”

Looking for ways to better equip your church to carry the gospel into your community? The SBTC’s next Who’s Your One? Advancing the Movement training is coming to Houston this spring. Scan the QR code for more information.





**ENTREPRENEURIAL COUPLE'S NEW
BEGINNING IN EAST TEXAS PAVES WAY
FOR MASSIVE EVANGELISTIC EVENT**

NOT JUST

BUSINESS AS USUAL

LONGVIEW

THE PANDEMIC PROPELLED Anthony and Missy McElroy to change states—and focus—as they found ways to use their business skills to win teens to Christ with the help of New Beginnings Baptist Church.

Anthony, formerly an account manager in recruiting, and his wife, Missy, owner of an events company involved in the Nashville music industry, found an unexpected opportunity during COVID. With Anthony working remotely and the performances upon which Missy's business depended shut down, the couple decided to relocate from Tennessee to East Texas, where they would be closer to Missy's family.

The McElroys, with their two young sons, settled in Missy's hometown of Hallsville, near Longview, in July 2020.

"It's good to have roots back home," Missy said. Even so, it wasn't fun "church hopping"

with young children. Eventually they began to hear about a nearby church, New Beginnings.

"We heard about miraculous things the Lord was doing at New Beginnings and visited," Anthony said. "The sermon was fantastic."

People they barely knew invited them to lunch. "If people are reaching out to the community like they are to us, this is the place we want to be," Anthony recalled thinking.

They soon joined New Beginnings. Other changes followed. Anthony accepted a job with a national insurance company, while Missy began exploring ways to resume creating events.

"With my music industry background, I was itching to do something. But we couldn't do a lot. It was the middle of COVID," she said.

After talking to city and county officials in their area, Missy approached the Rhett Walker Band to do an outdoor Christmas concert in Hallsville produced by Stories and Songs, the limited liability corporation the McElroys founded after arriving in East Texas. With some corporate assistance, the event was a success, encouraging the community in a time of uncertainty.

Stories and Songs continued to produce regional concerts and benefits, but the McElroys longed to do more by creating events geared toward helping kids in the community. They wanted to make an impact, and in 2023 the IMPACT event—an evangelistic outreach to teens—was born.

Dreaming big

The McElroys found the featured speaker for the first IMPACT event when ESPN's Dan Orlovsky prayed live on national television, interceding for Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, on Jan. 3, 2023. The previous evening, during a Monday Night Football NFL game, Hamlin suffered a major on-field cardiac event and collapsed.

"He could have lost his job," Anthony said of Orlovsky. "The circumstances gave Orlovsky an opportunity he took. What a lesson to be learned."

Anthony attempted to contact Orlovsky, finally sending a general email to the sportscaster's agency. Within a week, the agent responded and Orlovsky agreed to come to Longview.

"The evidence where God showed Himself through this process is undeniable," Anthony said.

"I dream big. Anthony keeps me realistic," Missy said, "In this instance, the roles felt reversed. I wondered how we were going to get this guy [Orlovsky], but if you feel like the Lord is calling you, who are we not to try?"

Not only did Orlovsky agree immediately to come, but sponsors fell into place as 14 of 15 approached said yes, easing the financial burden Stories and Songs had assumed from the start. New Beginnings offered use of its staff, volunteers, and worship center.

Anthony followed the advice of his dad, who suggested contacting local football coaches to help determine the date of the free event, settling on July 26, 2023. With publicity help from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and coaches, area teams committed to come. Soon, all spots were filled.

"It was yes after yes," Anthony recalled. Thirteen schools agreed to bring football teams—around 750-800 kids and coaches.

Teams from Longview, Lindale, Carthage, Marshall, and other towns arrived in buses and received boxed meals and drinks provided by local restaurants. One coach called the return trip the "best bus ride" his team had ever had, noting that some players became believers that evening.



▲ At IMPACT, New Beginnings Lead Pastor Todd Kaunitz interviewed Dan Orlovsky, the ESPN NFL analyst who prayed live on national television for the recovery of Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin last year.

(Opposite page) Anthony and Missy McElroy relocated to East Texas and wanted to make an impact for youth. With help from New Beginnings Baptist Church, the inaugural IMPACT in July 2023 saw more than 75 students make decisions to follow Christ. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

"HE COULD HAVE LOST HIS JOB. THE CIRCUMSTANCES GAVE ORLOVSKY AN OPPORTUNITY HE TOOK. WHAT A LESSON TO BE LEARNED."

**—ANTHONY MCELROY,
ON ESPN PERSONALITY DAN ORLOVSKY'S
DECISION TO PRAY ON NATIONAL TV**



▲ Regional sportscaster Pigskin Bob emceed “Football Jeopardy,” a fun contest among three Texas coaches who later received IMPACT awards (pictured from left): Alan Metzel, Gilmer High School; Griff Mauldin, Longview Christian Heritage; Scott Surratt, Carthage High School.

◀ Members of the 2023 4A Division 2 state champion Gilmer Buckeyes football team pose with coach Alan Metzel and Orlovsky at IMPACT. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

The main event began with regional sportscasters Harlen the Sports Guy and Pigskin Bob from KKYX’s Friday Night Scoreboard doing a routine and emceeding a game of “Football Jeopardy,” pitting three coaches against one another. These coaches were then honored with an IMPACT award for their contributions.

New Beginnings Lead Pastor Todd Kaunitz conducted an onstage interview with Orlovsky, who gave his testimony.

“Making Jesus the center of my life made me so much less aware of worrying about what other people thought about me and so much more aware of what Jesus thought of me,” the NFL analyst said.

Kaunitz followed with a presentation of the gospel. Ten percent of the athletes stood to indicate they had responded in faith.

“Seats hitting the seatbacks [as the athletes stood] ... sounded like a helicopter over us. It was a sound I will never forget,” Anthony said.

Encouragers from the church were available to counsel kids and a 50-person team prayed throughout the evening in a separate area. Follow-up has occurred with the coaches and local churches, including New Beginnings.

“Without New Beginnings, this doesn’t happen,” Anthony said. “The sponsors, the volunteers, the Lord.

“IT WAS AMAZING TO SEE THIS FAMILY LEVERAGE THEIR INFLUENCE, GIFTS, AND RESOURCES TO BRING STUDENTS TO JESUS.”

—TODD KAUNITZ

The infrastructure of the event is relatively simple. I felt even in January that it was already going to happen, and we just needed to be part of it. I felt like God asked for my attendance.”

The McElroys hope to expand the outreach, with Orlovsky speaking at future IMPACT events across the state and even nationwide.

“The McElroys’ vision for IMPACT was a huge blessing to New Beginnings and Northeast Texas,” Kaunitz said. “It was amazing to see this family leverage their influence, gifts, and resources to bring students to Jesus. ... I am convinced that the next big movement of God in our country is going to be through people like the McElroys, who recognize their calling and use their skill sets in practical ways for evangelism.”

For more information, email the McElroys at Storie-sandSongsEvents@gmail.com.



YOUR CALLING FOR HIS KINGDOM

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SOWING GOSPEL SEEDS

EL PASO

IT'S COMMON to hear about English-speaking churches planting Spanish-speaking churches. But what Jezreel Dios Siembra Church is doing in this burgeoning West Texas border city is not so common.

Daniel Moreno, Jezreel's pastor, believes his Hispanic church is the first in El Paso—and possibly in the surrounding area—to plant an English-speaking church. Though it is estimated that nearly 82% of the city's 550,000 residents are Hispanic, Jezreel began to discover what other Hispanic churches are finding: households with family members who speak predominantly English or predominantly Spanish living under the same roof.

EL PASO CHURCH HAS A HEART TO PLANT, REACH CITY'S EXPLODING POPULATION WITH THE GOSPEL

So after 17 years of sharing the gospel in their city, Jezreel reached out to Send Network SBTC—the church planting partnership between the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and the North American Mission Board—for counsel and to help train a pastor to lead the English-speaking campus.

Moreno said Jezreel was motivated by a strong desire to unite mixed-language families that want to worship together.

"There were people who preferred English as their primary language but who were married to [Spanish-speaking] people from our congregation," Moreno said. "To fill that need for [those families] to come together, we decided to start an English work."

Moreno has led Jezreel to plant six churches so far, with plans to begin training more planters soon. He recently began serving as a planting catalyst for the SBTC, sharing the planting and evangelism knowledge God has given him during 30 years of ministry with other planters. Planting is hard-wired into this heart.

Starting young

Moreno grew up in a Christian home that was very active in missions and evangelism. He was born in El Paso but grew up in Chihuahua, Mexico, where his family returned to minister. His father, Fernando, was one of the planting leaders of a church in Chihuahua, also called Jezreel, which he led for 12 years as an ordained deacon while it searched for a pastor. From this church, nine missions were born between 1978 to 1980, some of them under Fernando's leadership.

Moreno said his father encouraged giving the church's children and youth opportunities to serve. That included

providing Moreno—beginning at age 11—with opportunities to preach in the church and teach Bible classes to children. By age 16, he was helping lead missions initiatives and becoming more familiar with church planting.

However, Moreno's life took an unexpected turn when he turned 17. Fernando—mistakenly believing anyone born in the U.S. was required to serve in the military—sent his son back to El Paso to enlist. Moreno arrived in the U.S. to learn he was not required to enlist, leaving him without a place to live. He sought refuge from a local church—not yet knowing how God would use the experience to open a door back into ministry.

The church not only sheltered Moreno, but offered him a chance to serve after leaders there learned about his extensive ministry background. It was a good fit, allowing Moreno to assist the church's pastor—a new believer with no ministry experience. Moreno began working with the church's youth and, while there, met his wife, Margarita.

He later accepted an offer to be the full-time youth pastor at another church in El Paso, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in social work at New Mexico State University during that time. When he finished his studies, the church ordained him as a pastor and immediately invited him to start a Hispanic church in El Paso. Accepting the challenge, Moreno began this work in a family's home. Eventually, the church outgrew the house, and members were able to move into an abandoned building that was donated to them.

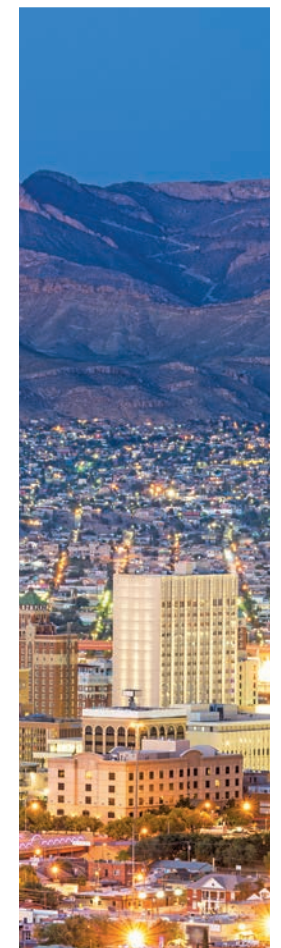
'God takes care of His church'

Jezreel—named in honor of his father's church in Mexico—is a healthy and growing congregation that, despite challenges, continues to believe God is the one sustaining its work.

One of those challenges is El Paso's transient population. According to



◀ Jezreel Dios Siembra Church
Pastor Daniel Moreno (pictured with his family) is leading the growing church to minister to the needs of people in El Paso, which is opening doors to share the gospel. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**



Moreno, his church—along with many others in the city—loses about 20% of its membership each year as families come and go looking for work or opportunities to better their lives.

“The churches in this city have to grow constantly to survive,” Moreno said, “because if they do not, [they] will be empty in a few years.”

Sharing the gospel, then, becomes that much more urgent. Once a month, Jezreel members visit an alley where many homeless people and addicts live. The most beautiful thing, Moreno said, is that some of the church members making the visits once lived in that alley themselves before Christ transformed them. On other occasions, church members bring food and clothing to the more than 200 migrants who have settled in the downtown area.

Like his father, Moreno has a passion for evangelism and believes in providing opportunities for children and youth to grow. The church has two worship groups made up mostly of young adults, and every Sunday the service includes a brief time when children share a biblical message with the church. It's part of the reason, Moreno said, the church is thriving.

Which brings another challenge: space. With a Sunday attendance around 220, Jezreel sometimes has to hold services in its parking lot so nobody is left out. Church leaders are now looking for ways to fund construction for a new building.

“In all these years, we have seen that God does not abandon us,” Moreno said, “but fights our battles and takes care of His church.”

SEMBRANDO SEMILLAS DEL EVANGELIO

EL PASO

E S COMÚN oír hablar de iglesias de habla inglesa que plantan iglesias de habla hispana. Pero lo que la Iglesia Jezreel Dios Siembra está haciendo en esta floreciente ciudad fronteriza en los confines del oeste de Texas no es tan común.

Daniel Moreno, pastor de Jezreel, cree que su iglesia hispana es la primera de El Paso, y posiblemente de los alrededores, que planta una iglesia de habla inglesa. Aunque se calcula que casi el 82% de los 550,000 residentes de la ciudad son hispanos, Jezreel comenzó a descubrir lo que otras iglesias hispanas están encontrando: hogares con miembros de la familia que hablan predominantemente inglés o español viviendo bajo el mismo techo.

Así que, después de 17 años compartiendo el evangelio en su ciudad, Jezreel se puso en contacto con Send Network SBTC, la asociación para la plantación de iglesias entre la Convención de los Bautistas del Sur de Texas y la Junta de Misiones Norteamericanas, para pedir consejo y ayuda en la formación de un pastor que dirigiera el campus en inglés.

Moreno dijo que Jezreel fue motivado por un fuerte deseo de unir a las familias de habla mixta que querían adorar juntos.

“Había personas que preferían el inglés como lengua materna, pero que estaban casadas con personas [hispanohablantes] de

**IGLESIA DE EL PASO
COMPROMETIDA A PLANTAR Y
ALCANZAR CON EL EVANGELIO A LA
CRECIENTE POBLACIÓN EN SU CIUDAD**

nuestra congregación”, dijo Moreno. “Para llenar la necesidad de [esas familias] reunirse, decidimos comenzar una obra en inglés”.

Moreno ha llevado a Jezreel a plantar seis iglesias hasta ahora, con planes de comenzar pronto a preparar a más plantadores. Recientemente comenzó a servir como catalizador de plantación para la SBTC, compartiendo con otros plantadores el conocimiento sobre plantación y evangelización que Dios le ha dado durante 30 años de ministerio. No hace falta decir que la plantación está arraigada en su corazón.

Comenzando desde joven

Moreno creció en un hogar cristiano muy activo en las misiones y evangelismo. Nació en El Paso pero creció en Chihuahua, México, en donde su familia regresó para continuar su ministerio. Su padre, Fernando, fue uno de los líderes fundadores de una iglesia en Chihuahua, también llamada Jezreel, la cual dirigió por 12 años como diácono ordenado, mientras encontraban un pastor. De esta iglesia nacieron 9 misiones entre el 1978 – 1980, algunas de ellas bajo el liderazgo de Fernando.

Moreno dice que su padre siempre animó a dar oportunidades a los niños y jóvenes de la iglesia. Eso incluía dar a Moreno –desde los 11 años– la oportunidad de predicar en la iglesia y dar clases de Biblia a los niños. A

los 16 años, ya ayudaba a dirigir iniciativas misioneras y se familiarizaba con la plantación de iglesias.

Sin embargo, la vida de Moreno dio un giro inesperado cuando cumplió 17 años. Fernando—creyendo erróneamente que cualquiera nacido en Estados Unidos estaba obligado a servir en el ejército—envió a su hijo de vuelta a El Paso para que se enlistara. Moreno regresó a Estados Unidos y se enteró de que no estaba obligado a enlistarse, lo que le dejó sin un lugar donde vivir. Buscó refugio en una iglesia local, sin saber aún cómo Dios utilizaría la experiencia para abrirle una puerta de regreso al ministerio.

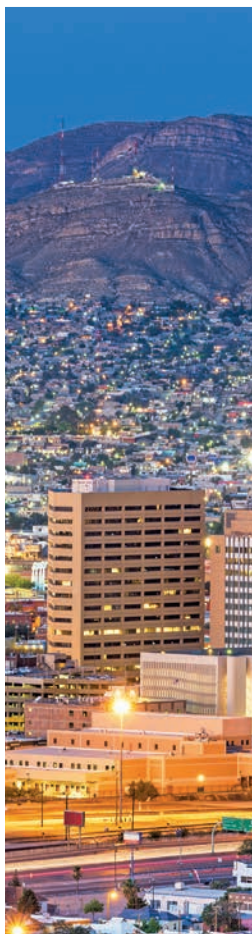
La iglesia no sólo acogió a Moreno, sino que le ofreció la oportunidad de servir después de que los líderes conocieran su amplia experiencia en el ministerio. Fue una buena combinación que permitió a Moreno ayudar al pastor de la iglesia, quien era un nuevo creyente sin experiencia en el ministerio. Moreno empezó a trabajar con los jóvenes de la iglesia y allí conoció a su esposa, Margarita.

Más tarde aceptó una oferta para ser pastor de jóvenes a tiempo completo en otra iglesia de El Paso, y durante ese tiempo obtuvo una licenciatura y una maestría en trabajo social en la Universidad Estatal de Nuevo México. Cuando terminó sus estudios, la iglesia lo ordenó como pastor e inmediatamente lo invitó a plantar una iglesia hispana en El Paso. Aceptando el reto, Moreno comenzó esta labor en casa de una familia. Con el tiempo, la iglesia en casa se quedó pequeña y los miembros consiguieron recaudar fondos suficientes para trasladarse a un edificio abandonado que les donaron.

‘Dios cuida de su iglesia’

Jezreel—llamada así en honor a la iglesia de su padre en México—sigue siendo una congregación sana y en crecimiento que, a pesar de los desafíos, continúa creyendo que Dios es quien sostiene la obra.

Uno de esos retos: La población transeúnte de El Paso. Según Moreno, su



iglesia—al igual que muchas otras de la ciudad—pierde alrededor del 20% de sus miembros cada año, ya que las familias van y vienen en busca de trabajo o de oportunidades para mejorar sus vidas.

“Las iglesias de esta ciudad tienen que crecer constantemente para sobrevivir”, dice Moreno, “porque si no, [se] quedarán vacías en unos años”.

Por eso, compartir el Evangelio es mucho más urgente. Una vez al mes, los miembros de Jezreel visitan un callejón donde viven muchos sin techo y adictos. Lo más hermoso, dice Moreno, es que algunos de los miembros de la iglesia que hacen las visitas vivieron ellos mismos en ese callejón antes de que Cristo los transformara. En otras ocasiones, también los miembros de la iglesia llevan comida y ropa a los más de 200 inmigrantes que se han instalado en el centro de la ciudad.

Al igual que su padre, Moreno siente pasión por la evangelización y cree que hay que dar oportunidades de crecimiento a niños y jóvenes. La iglesia tiene dos grupos de alabanza formados en su mayoría por adultos jóvenes y, cada domingo, el servicio incluye un breve tiempo en el que los niños comparten un mensaje bíblico con la iglesia. Es parte de la razón, dijo Moreno, de que la iglesia prospere.

Lo que plantea otro reto: el espacio. Con una asistencia dominical de unas 220 personas, en ocasiones Jezreel tiene que celebrar los servicios en su estacionamiento para que nadie se quede fuera. Los líderes de la iglesia buscan ahora la forma de recaudar los fondos para construir un nuevo edificio.

“En todos estos años, hemos visto que Dios no nos abandona”, dijo Moreno, “sino que pelea nuestras batallas y cuida de su iglesia”.

Iglesia Jezreel Dios Siembra y su pastor Daniel Moreno (arriba junto a su familia) está liderando la creciente iglesia para ministrar a la necesidad en El Paso, algo que les está abriendo las puertas para compartir el evangelio.

FOTOS COMPARTIDAS



A MESSAGE OF HOPE

Mental health and wholeness are important topics to me. God has helped me so much and used people in my life to lift me from anxiety and depression, and I love to help others come out of their doldrums. So many in our world are depressed and in desperate need of hope.

Some of the hopelessness in our world has its origins in macro issues like the wars in Ukraine and Israel and in other tragic stories we read about in places like Haiti and Sudan. There is a more existential, personal hopelessness that pervades the lives of so many even in our great state of Texas. Many have turned away from the God of the Bible and His foundational teachings regarding how to live as people of faith.

But I have good news: there is hope! One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Romans 15:13. God has used this verse powerfully in my life and I believe He will bless you as you meditate on it as well: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The Greek word translated “hope” is “elpis,” and interestingly, the Lexham Bible Dictionary says, “The word appears in the New Testament only as a verb or noun, never as an adverb or adjective. That is likely because the emphasis is not

**“Here is my definition of hope:
the confident assurance that all
will be well because God is with us.”**

on the subjective states of mind we have when we say ‘hopefully’ or ‘hopeful.’ Rather, hope in the New Testament has an objective focus.”

Here is my definition of hope: the confident assurance that all will be well because God is with us. The key to living in hope is we must believe. Ephesians 1:19 states, “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” When we believe, God causes us to abound in hope. It is the match that ignites the fire of the Holy Spirit. Belief or trust is the key that unlocks the treasures of God’s multitude of blessings upon our lives.

I want to encourage you to live out the Christian life the way you began, and that is by faith. Three times the Bible says those who know the Lord will live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, and Galatians 3:11.)

Believe God for great days. He has a wonderful plan for your life filled with hope, peace, and joy. Trust God and enjoy a life of wonderful hope, the assurance that God is in control and all will be well.

Hope has a name: Jesus!

PASTOR, DON'T TRY TO DO THIS ALONE

Pastoring is not easy. It can be a lonely endeavor. People, at times, are inauthentic. Many pastors keep their issues to themselves. I met one pastor who said he shared some of his struggles with someone who, to his dismay, gave that information to others. He was devastated and said he would never communicate his struggles again.

Have you been there, just needing an ear to hear and a shoulder to lean on?

I am the bivocational pastor of a small church in Dallas. I am also a judge in the City of Dallas. I'm a husband and a father. Life gets busy, and many days, I feel overwhelmed. I have often felt lonely, wondering, "Who knows what I am going through?"

That pastor I spoke of did not have a group of pastors to help him, and he suffered in isolation. And yet, one of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's most powerful tools is its networks. These networks create groups to serve, support, and connect pastors so they don't have to live in isolation. Networks can do so much for pastors:

Networks can bring peace.

I have been a pastor for 11 years. We were a portable church for 10 years, and I struggled to find balance as a husband and father working a full-time job while serving as a full-time pastor. I constantly worked and served in isolation. Then, Tony Mathews [SBTC's senior strategist over Missional Ministries] contacted me and shared ways to engage with the SBTC through its networks, including the Black Church Network.

I was in a place of burnout and frustration, but this network gave me a sense of peace knowing I was not alone. Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." I found a place that was safe, that supported me in overcoming self-doubt, and encouraged me to take better care of myself.

Networks can inspire.

As pastors, we often need someone who has been in our struggle to speak and inspire our hearts. We can feel defeated as we look at others and compare ourselves, yet these brothers who have been in the same battles you are experiencing can tell you that you will make it out of this season. Networks can help us renew and strengthen our relationship with the Lord by reminding us God is with us and will not forsake us. God also has made us to be in community. Allow the work and words of other ministers in that community encourage you.

Networks can impact your work.

Many of us unknowingly work in silos. There may be four churches on the same block, but we don't often talk to one another or work together. This can hinder our kingdom work. The network I'm involved in has allowed our church to work with others to conduct an afterschool program. We have also worshipped together, crossing economic and ethnic divides.

Do not walk this journey alone. I implore you to move from isolation and join a band of brothers who will encourage and walk with you. To have a network of men praying together is powerful. As you push forward in your ministries, I encourage you to take advantage of the networks available. You are not alone.



NETWORKING LEADERS

Looking to get connected?

Scan the QR code to check out the variety of networks offered by the SBTC.



Mark Murrell is senior pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Dallas and a member of the SBTC's Black Church Network.

‘WE DON’T KNOW WHERE THEY CAME FROM’

Northeast Texas church’s emphasis on prayer, evangelism leads to ‘phenomenal turnaround’

MOUNT PLEASANT

WHEN TONY LAWSON was called to pastor Highland Park Baptist Church four years ago, his three kids essentially doubled the children’s ministry attendance on any given Sunday.

“I did everything I knew to do—every event I had ever done and had seen work before—and none of it worked,” Lawson recalled. “We had rooms in our children’s ministry area that were being used for storage.

“It broke my heart, maybe because I had more skin in the game at this stage in my life,” he said. “I literally got in some of those rooms and cried and told God, ‘I don’t know what to do. I’ve done everything that I know. You’ve got to do something.’”

In 2021, Lawson reached out to a friend in Oklahoma who sent a mission team to drum up attendance for vacation Bible school. The previous year, 12 children enrolled in VBS at Highland Park, but the mission team’s efforts led to 36 children enrolling.

“We hadn’t seen that many kids in our building in who knows how long,” Lawson said.



(Top) The student ministry at Highland Park Baptist Church in Mount Pleasant is growing, four years after some wondered how long the church would last. (Bottom) After much prayer and an emphasis on evangelism, God started bringing people “out of the blue” to Highland Park Baptist Church. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

The pastor asked the children’s director to pray specifically with him about the future.

“I said, ‘We keep ending up in this Catch-22 where we can’t reach young families because we don’t have them. Would you pray with me that God would help us to reach one family that will stick as a result of our vacation Bible school?’”

God answered the prayer by sending one family, and Lawson committed to discipling that family “with every ounce of love” he had. The following year, 10 children professed faith in Christ at VBS.

About that time, Lawson saw something related to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention’s Young Pastors Network that led him to reach out to the convention for advice. Part of that advice included recommending the church visit the homes of the newly saved children personally for the purposes of sharing the gospel with their parents.

Meanwhile, the pastor led the church to pray for salvations. He noticed their Wednesday prayer times had become mostly about health concerns, and they shifted the focus to mentioning people by name and praying for God to save them.

As Highland Park began praying for salvations and as the pastor urged church members simply to share their salvation stories with friends and family, God gave the church 17 baptisms last year, up from an average of five.

"We have seen a phenomenal turnaround," Lawson said.

In one case, a young man had been attending church with a man named Cody. After church one Sunday, they were standing in line at a fast food restaurant and the young man said, "Cody, I want to be saved." He had been listening in Sunday school and to the sermons, but he was intimidated to walk to the front during the invitation, Lawson said.

Cody led the young man to Christ in line at the restaurant, and later his brother and two other young men followed his example. Highland Park had an outdoor baptism service to celebrate their decisions.

"Four years ago, the conversation was, 'How much longer are we going to be around?'" Lawson said. But now there is momentum as God sends more and more people who need Jesus. The church went from averaging 80 people on Sundays to 115. They have a pool of about 30 children now and average about 20 most Sundays.

"People started showing up as we started praying, and we don't know where they came from," he said. "They stayed and we got to know them. One lady was having a crisis in her family and she said, 'I passed by the church

and I knew that I needed to go.' She and her family just showed up one Sunday."

Pastors tend to get discouraged when their efforts don't lead to noticeable results.

"We have to remember that revitalization happens in God's time," Lawson said. "He expects us to be faithful to continue doing the things He's commanded us to do, but as we pray and as we're doing those things, it's Him that puts it all together to make it happen."

Lawson thinks of pastors particularly in his area who are faithful to shepherd their flocks while wondering if God will ever bring an increase.

"You never know what He is doing behind the scenes and how He might culminate things if we'll just continue to be faithful," he said.

Highland Park didn't try to change programs or music styles, Lawson said. It just tried to be itself and kept praying and sharing Christ.

"The rest of it was just God working ahead of us and answering prayer," he said, adding, "Perhaps some other pastor, some other deacon that's struggling can be encouraged to know God can do this in his church, too."



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MOISES GOMEZ



Moises Gomez has pastored First Irving en Español since its founding in August 2019. The church, a ministry of First Baptist Irving (where Gomez serves on staff), has grown from a core group of 14 to 225. Gomez, 46, was born and raised in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He and his wife, Betsey, have four children ranging from in age from 2 to 14.

What is something you've been able to celebrate at First Irving en Español recently?

We are celebrating how the church has embraced God's Word and the gospel. Also, we rejoice in seeing how our church members are living in community as one body. There is something special happening in many organic ways: people serving each other, taking care of the body's needs, praying, and reading the Bible in community. They are loving and living the truths of the gospel, internally within the church and externally in the community.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced in your ministry lately?

The cultural differences we face can be challenging. As a Hispanic pastor on staff at an American/English-speaking congregation, I am always learning and serving as a bridge with the Spanish-speaking members. There is more to translate and interpret than just language. Even within Hispanic cultures, there is a lot of diversity and we want all to understand that our identity is not primarily in our national background or social status but in Christ.

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

That God is the one who builds His church. He is the one. We have so many testimonies of God's mighty hand growing us as we stand under the authority of His Word. We don't want to take the credit. God is the one who promised to build His church. We must never forget it.

What's one thing you'd like to see God do specifically at First Irving en Español this year?

I would like to see the Lord move in our people so that they may continue to grow in their understanding of the gospel, so that they may display its beauty and power in their homes and communities.

How can the other SBTC churches be praying for you?

Please pray for laborers within the church, for servants who understand the sacrificial call of ministry, and that God will continue to give us love for one another and the community.

BOWMAN CONTINUES TO LEAD PASTORS NATIONWIDE TO CRY OUT TO GOD IN PRAYER

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. First Baptist Church of Clarksville Visitation Pastor Bill Graham has desired continuous citywide prayer for the city ever since reading about the Unceasing Prayer Movement in Austin, Texas. There, Kie Bowman helps lead pastors in making sure someone is praying every minute of the year.

First Clarksville hosted Bowman, who heads the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee's prayer ministry, in a City of Prayer Conference Jan. 12-14 aimed at creating an unceasing prayer movement in Clarksville and Montgomery County.

More than 100 individuals attended the event at First Clarksville, representing 12 churches and including 10 pastors, Graham said. Two area pastors, Will Binkley of Lone Oak Baptist Church and Anthony L. Alfred Sr. of Family of Faith Church, have joined Graham as the core team launching the local movement.

"That we would be epicenter for a prayer movement in our region," is Graham's hope for the movement. "I'm impressed with what's happened in Austin. They've been working on this for 15 years. They now have over 100 churches taking one day a month and each month, they pray for 24 hours. So Austin, Texas, is one of the most prayed for cities in America."

Bowman, pastor emeritus of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, leads the prayer movement there with Trey Kent, senior pastor at Northwest Fellowship. Kent launched the movement in 2009, with Bowman joining in 2014. About 10 churches have contacted the two about launching movements in their cities, Bowman said.

— BAPTIST PRESS

KINGSVILLE TEEN AMONG THOSE NAMED TO SERVE ON ACTEENS NATIONAL PANEL

KINGSVILLE

Faith Howard of Retama Park Baptist Church in Kingsville was among three teens recently selected to serve on the 2024 National Acteens Panel.

The young women will be part of the Women's Missionary Union Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting in Indianapolis in June prior to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting. The panelists also will blog for wmu.com/students and be given leadership and speaking opportunities throughout the year. Each will receive a grant from the WMU Foundation through the Jessica Powell Loftis Endowment for Acteens.

As a pastor's child, Howard, 16, has been exposed to numerous missions opportunities: Wyoming Rodeo Ministry; working with church planters in Ohio doing canvassing, prayer walking, and park/soccer evangelism; Youth on Mission trips to Nashville, Anaheim, and New Orleans; migrant ministry in Brownsville, Texas; volunteering with the local pregnancy resource center; participating in live nativity and Christmas light display; and helping children bake to raise money for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Marisol Sandoval, age-level consultant for WMU of Texas, said, "Faith is very active in missions with her family and her church family. She wants the opportunity to be able to grow in sharing the gospel with others, and she wants to influence younger students to do the same."

—THE BAPTIST PAPER



PRUITT'S 'REVIVAL GENERATION' HELPS LEADERS WALK STUDENTS TOWARD FAITH RENEWAL

DALLAS

Shane Pruitt, national director of next gen evangelism at the North American Mission Board (NAMB), has been praying for the next generation to awaken to the goodness and glory of Jesus, and he wanted church leaders to have a resource that could spur students to deeper faith that extends beyond platitudes.

Through Lifeway Christian Resources, Pruitt released a Bible study called "Revival Generation" on Jan 2. The study walks students through eight words—such as repentance, holiness, surrender, and obedience—and explores what it means for students to experience personal revival in their walk with God.

"Others before me have pointed this out, but the nation will never see revival until the churches see revival," Pruitt said. "The churches will never see revival until the individuals who make up those churches see revival. As Anne Graham Lotz once said, 'Revival begins when you draw a circle around yourself and make sure everything in that circle is right with God.'"

To learn more about the resource, "Revival Generation," visit lifeway.com/revivalgeneration.

— NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD





By Lucy Marroquin
(as told to Gary Ledbetter)

I'M NOT A MYSTERY, I'M A MIRACLE!



In the fall of 2022, I went to the hospital for something I thought was minor. I had no major symptoms or anything like that, but my husband, Rafael, insisted I go to the emergency room. They told me that I'd had two heart attacks and needed open heart surgery.

Apparently, I was born with a defect in my heart. Like I said, I never thought it was anything major, but they told me that I was not able to go home until I could have surgery. It was a miracle that a very experienced heart surgeon ordered a series of tests until he understood what was going on with my heart.

I was in the heart hospital a week after having open heart surgery—that was on Nov. 21. After that, everything went wrong. Everything. According to the

**Just the joy to have the Lord,
and for the Lord to bless me
and to use me, that's more
than enough for me.**

doctors, my heart and all my organs, everything, stopped for over an hour.

All the organs—kidneys, lungs, liver—just stopped. They declared me dead. They told Rafael there was nothing else they could do and that he needed to be prepared. He went to the funeral home and made arrangements because once they disconnected the machines, it was over.

But the Lord said no and my heart started working. When my heart started working, they gave me this medication to help my brain and all my organs get oxygen. That medication burned my hands and my feet. I ended up getting my right hand amputated. Some of my left-hand fingers, the tips of my fingers, were amputated, and a third of my right foot. I also lost all the toes on my left foot, but I'm alive.

Then they told my husband that if he did not disconnect me from the machines, I was going to be brain dead or brain damaged for the rest of my life because I was without oxygen for so long. I was in a coma for over three weeks. When I woke up the middle of December, I thought it was the next day after the surgery. I was alert and they started asking me questions.

The doctor who did my heart surgery has been a doctor for over 50 years. When I asked him, "Doctor, how long was my heart and everything stopped?" He just looked at me and said, "For over an hour." He said, "You are a mystery to us."

I told him, "No, I'm not a mystery—I'm a miracle." They don't understand. Medically speaking, it is almost impossible. My family doctor told me that I should be grateful that I'm not hooked to an oxygen machine in a nursing home for the rest of my life.

But my brain is perfectly fine, and I am OK except where my hands and feet were burned. Other than

that, I'm fine. My brain is better than ever because now I have to be more creative. I crochet, I cook, I clean, I do laundry. I still serve in my church, working on the computer. I mean, it is a little more difficult than before. It takes me a little more time, but I am walking without a cane, without a walker, and I'm doing OK.

I'm enjoying life and I'm serving the Lord. I'm telling other people what happened to me, whether they believe it or not. That's my story.

Since I became a Christian 35 years ago, it's been my desire and my passion to serve God. I have served in missions, I was one of the assistants in the office [at our previous church]. I mean, you name it, I've done it all. Right now, I'm serving in the benevolence ministry

distributing food. I make the bulletin in my church [First Sunnyvale Español]. I'm also currently working with our missions committee. I'm working with the cell group leaders. I'm working with the greeters committee. I'm involved in everything I can be.

There's not one day that I have asked the Lord, "Why?" Now, I'm looking for other ways to encourage people who have gone through something similar, through amputations, people who are giving up. This is just physical. That's what I always tell them. From the spiritual point of view, your body is just physical—it's going to pass. Just the joy to have the Lord, and for the Lord to bless me and to use me, that's more than enough for me.

**what's
your
story?**

**Want to share
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is doing in your life
or your church?**
Scan the QR code
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Church Positions

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

PASTOR

FBC Borger is seeking God's man to pastor our church. Anyone wishing to be considered a candidate may submit his profile/resume to First Baptist Church (Attn: Nikki Griffin), 100 S. Hedgecoke St., Borger, Texas 79007, or email nikki@firstborger.com.

Hillcrest Baptist Church in Center is seeking FT or bivocational pastor. Resumes may be sent to hillcrestcenter@sbcglobal.net.

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 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 submit application/resume 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 to our Pastor Search Committee at 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.

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 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. Web: harmonybc.org.

Woods New Hope Church (a historic East Texas 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, at 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 a 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.

Lakeview Baptist Church in Vidor is seeking a Southern Baptist bivocational pastor. We offer an onsite parsonage, salary, and the support of a dedicated congregation. Contact James Frasier at 409-656-3739 or send resumes to brett.gray82@yahoo.com.

Lake Limestone Baptist Church in Thornton is seeking a FT pastor for a rural, faithful congregation with a parsonage and potential for growth. We are an SBTC church. The Baptist Faith & Message 2000 is our foundational belief system. If the Holy Spirit is leading you, please send your resume to llbcpastorsearch@gmail.com. Accepting resumes through March 1, 2024.

MUSIC

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

FBC Merkel is looking for a PT worship pastor to lead a blended/contemporary worship service each Sunday and 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 or call 210-658-3251.

Bethel Baptist Church in Tyler (Chapel Hill) is seeking a PT 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.

Trinity Hills Baptist Church in Benbrook is seeking a PT worship minister. Salary is negotiable. Mail resume to Trinity Hills Baptist Church, 6970 FM 2871, Benbrook, Texas 76126, or email Tracy Bose at musicsearch@trinityhills.org.

STUDENTS

Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy is seeking a FT student pastor for the 6th-12th grade ministry at the North Campus. Responsibilities include building a team of lay leaders, supervising two PT student ministry residents, and equipping parents as primary faith trainers in the home. Email resume to bflurry@kingsland.org.

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 and click "Job Opportunities."

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

CHILDREN

FBC Queen City is seeking a FT director of children's ministry. Email resume to resume@fbcqc.org.

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. Check out our website at 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. Check our website at 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.

OTHER

Denman Avenue Baptist Church in Lufkin is seeking a FT associate pastor of discipleship and missions. Denman Avenue's mission is "Loving God, Serving People, Together." If interested in serving in a growing, dynamic church that lives by our mission statement, please respond to dabcassociatesearch@gmail.com.

Southmont Baptist Church in Denton is seeking a FT minister to college students. Prefer experience in a church or ministry setting working with college students and/or young adults. Prefer seminary degree or in the process of obtaining. Send resume and cover letter to jeff.dooley@southmont.org.

Woodridge Baptist Church in Kingwood has an opening for a FT HR manager. Resumes and a statement of faith should be sent to Ed Hancock at ehancock@woodridge.org.

Chinese Baptist Church of Houston is seeking a temporary FT office secretary from the end of January

2024-Summer 2024. Contact personnel@cbchouston.org to apply.

City Church Del Rio is seeking a FT associate pastor with a discipleship focus. Apply at citychurchdelrio.com/about-us/associate-pastor-application or send resume to ccdrpastor@gmail.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 Facebook page. Contact 903-720-8772 or send application to brandoncalcote21@gmail.com.

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@collegeheightsbcc.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 life groups and executing a plan for training and developing new leaders. Email resume to Dr. 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 parents 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.

New Faith Baptist Church in Aledo is seeking a PT associate pastor of family ministry. Candidate will be an engaged and passionate leader who oversees family ministry and directs 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 Indian Baptist Church of Taos, N.M., is seeking a bivocational pastor to serve, lead, and teach God's Word. The primary areas for spiritual outreach are on the Taos and Picuris pueblos in New Mexico. Email Church Pastor Committee at gibsonrg@outlook.com.

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.

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 is prayerfully seeking a FT youth minister. Church located in small town close to Amarillo, OKC, and Lubbock. 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.

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FOUR SOLUTIONS FOR BATTLING AN ANGRY HEART

Dear pastor,

You might have an anger problem that, very often, can lead you to becoming a problem. Finishing the following sentence will help you know whether this post addresses you:

You might be an angry pastor if ...

- You always shake your fist when you preach.
- You blame everything on actors and politicians.
- You rant on social media about, well, everything.
- You assume I'm writing this to someone else.

Your anger is not unique, but it is annoying and distracting. I'm sure you're tired of it, too, so my motive is to help you destroy anger before it destroys you, your family, and your ministry.

Although anger is a normal emotion, there's an invisible line we cross when our healthy anger becomes harmful to others. Here are four solutions I've found helpful.

1. Guard your heart.

Jesus is the only cardiologist who can solve this heart issue. Since patience is a fruit of the Spirit, God can extinguish the anger we can't manage.

So, when my blood begins to boil, I release control of the situation—and myself—by simply praying for patience.

“Be angry and do not sin; on your bed, reflect in your heart and be still ... and trust in the Lord” (Psalm 4:4).

2. Control your tongue.

Even as I write this in an airport terminal, I'm waiting on my second

delayed flight of the day. My last trip included so many delays and cancellations that I arrived home a day and a half late! The temptation to transfer my frustration onto innocent airline workers is real, but it's never helpful.

“The intelligent person restrains his words, and one who keeps a cool head is a man of understanding” (Proverbs 17:27).

3. Protect your pulpit.

All Christians need to guard our hearts, tongues, and posts carefully—but pastors even more so. What we say on stage is heavily measured not only on earth, but in heaven (James 3:1).

A pastor once told me his church was having “multiple dumpster fires.” As a noun, Webster defines dumpster fire as “an utterly calamitous or mismanaged situation or occurrence: disaster.”

All churches have dumpster fires ... just make sure you're not the arsonist.

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person” (Colossians 4:6).

4. Dress for success.

More than a decade ago, I was well on my way to becoming the angry preacher I'm warning about here. I committed the following passage to memory by meditating on it every day for almost a year.

“Put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth ... since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self ... Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:8-10,12-14).

I'm embarrassed to admit it took so long to get my heart right. If you're an angry pastor, I strongly encourage you to get serious about asking God to root out that anger before bitterness takes root in your heart, home, and ministry.



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

WHAT'S UP NEXT?

2024 CALENDAR

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



EMPOWER Conference

FEB. 26-27

Empower Conference
Irving Convention Center



MARCH 3-10

Annie Armstrong Easter
Offering Week of Prayer



APRIL 5-6

Heart of the
Child Conference

FEBRUARY

2-3

M3 WKND, Austin

5

Bivo Pastors Network
Remote Gathering (online)

9-10

M3 WKND, Amarillo

12

Regenesi One-Day, San Angelo

12

Evangelism Connections (online)

19

Regenesi 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

Regenesi One-Day, San Antonio

14

55+ Adults Ministry Training,
New Braunfels

15-16

Send Relief Serve Tour, Dallas

21-23

Bivo Pastor/Wife Retreat, San Antonio

21

55+ Adults Ministry Training, Grapevine

23

VBS Training, Austin

25

Regenesi One-Day, Baytown

26

Evangelism Connections (online)

28

55+ Adults Ministry Training, Lubbock

APRIL

1

Regenesi One-Day, Fort Worth

1

Bivo Pastors Network
Remote Gathering (online)

2

Regenesi One-Day, Weatherford

4-6

Ven Y Reposo, Retiro Para la Esposa del
Pastor (Español Pastor Wives Retreat)

6

Intro to DR & Phase 1 Training, Pampa

8

Evangelism Connections (online)

11-13

Come Away Pastor Wives Retreat

11

Kingdom-Building Roundtable, Beaumont

13

Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament
Regional, Houston

15

Regenesi One-Day, Pittsburg

20

Who's Your One?
Advancing the Movement, Houston

20

Bible Drill and Speakers
Tournament Regional, Euless

22

Disciple-Making Forum, Abilene

25

Disciple-Making Forum, El Paso

26

Women's Ministry Leadership Summit,
Beaumont

27

Bible Drill Regional, Flint

29

Regenesi One-Day, McKinney

29

Bivo Pastors Network Regional Gathering,
Paris



EMPOWER

Conference

FEB. 26-27, 2024



DAVID
Jeremiah



HB
Charles



GAITHER
Vocal Band



JARRETT
Stephens



JIMMY
McNeal



JJ
Washington



REBEKAH
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Gallaty



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