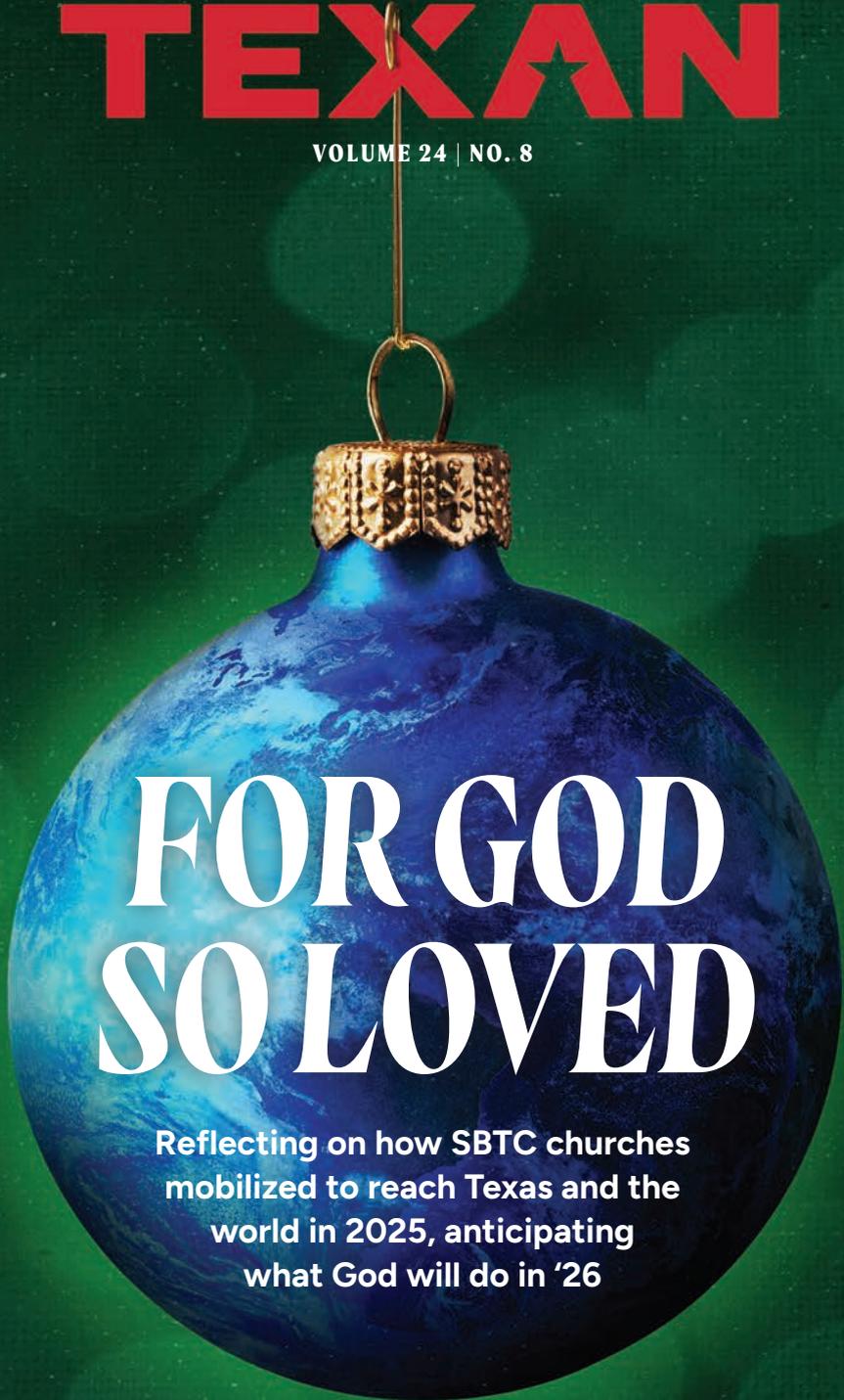


SOUTHERN BAPTIST
TEXAN

VOLUME 24 | NO. 8



**FOR GOD
SO LOVED**

Reflecting on how SBTC churches
mobilized to reach Texas and the
world in 2025, anticipating
what God will do in '26

RESOURCING CHURCHES

REGENESIS IS HELPING
NORTH TEXAS CHURCH
SEE 'HOPE AND A FUTURE'

NETWORKING LEADERS

RETREAT PLUGS PASTOR
INTO SBTC'S MISSION,
MINISTRY CONNECTIONS

ADVANCING MISSION

CHURCH PLANTERS ARE
EMBRACING 'SPECIAL CALL'
IN INCREASING NUMBERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **NATHAN LORICK**



An invitation to a life-changing experience

A FEW YEARS AGO when we announced we would be leading a group of Southern Baptists of Texas Convention pastors on a clergy familiarization trip to Israel, I knew it would be a life-changing experience for our group. I had personally been to Israel before and experienced that incredible journey myself.

On that trip, we saw God do exceedingly and abundantly more than we could have imagined. Not only did pastors and their wives get to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, but they connected with one another. Deep bonds were formed that remain strong today. We even saw one of our pastors lead someone to Jesus on the trip!

Another one of our pastors who went on the trip was interviewed by the *Texan* afterward and said this: "We've been desperate for [ministry] relationships. Spending that much time with people who understand what we're going through—that was so needed. It helped us know we're not alone. We're so thankful for the relationships we made on the trip."

There is no telling what God may do when we take our next group of SBTC pastors on our Experience the Holy Land Clergy Familiarization Trip in Israel next summer. The 10-day trip is scheduled for June 24-July 3, 2026.

It is available to senior pastors of SBTC-affiliated churches at the discounted price of \$1,500 after a generous grant from the SBTC Executive Board has been applied. Senior pastors who wish to register must currently be pastoring an SBTC church. A second pastor from the same church may travel at the price of \$3,095, but only two pastors are allowed per church. Spouses can join the trip for \$3,095.

You can visit sbtexas.com/israel for more information. Space is limited, so get registered today.

I hope you will prayerfully consider joining us as we retrace the footsteps of Jesus and watch the Bible come alive before our very eyes. I also know you will be blessed by being in the company of other servants of the Lord who can relate to the joys and challenges of ministry.

If there is anything I can do to personally encourage you, or if you have other questions, please feel free to reach out to me at nlorick@sbtexas.com.

I love you and I am honored to serve you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Lorick".

nlorick@sbtexas.com



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SOUTHERN BAPTIST
TEXAN

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God is so, so good

I WAS A CRIME REPORTER when I began my journalism career about 25 years ago. Each morning, I would travel to our local police and sheriff’s departments and thumb through the previous day’s call sheets and the jail census. I would walk the hallways, interviewing deputies and detectives. Most of the stories I would unearth were bad news—at least for somebody.

By God’s grace, I have a much different calling today. Each morning when I arrive at my office, I have one main focus: to find and then tell the stories of what God is doing across the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Each year, there are always a few stories we tell that stand out to me. As we put the wraps on 2025 and look ahead to all that we anticipate God will do in 2026, here’s a look back at a few of those stories:

‘Running toward the hopeless’ (Issue 2)

Every follower of Jesus loves a transformation story. Even if we don’t completely connect with a person’s past, we know what it’s like, as Colossians 1:13 says, to be delivered out of the dominion of darkness and transferred into Christ’s kingdom. This story, published in the spring, had lots of that. It opens by introducing readers to a man named David—described by many as “scary,” but who ended up giving his life to Christ through the ministry of Port Arthur City Church. The church’s pastor, Julian Martinez, had his own messy past. But since Jesus redeemed his life, the pastor spends his time trying to point everyone he can to salvation.



‘My life is in His hands’ (Issue 3)

As a parent, this story sent my emotions on a ride. Joshua Nostrand was only 14 years old when he went into cardiac arrest for eight minutes while at youth camp. While moments like that are some parents’ worst nightmare, what happened next was as heart-warming and inspiring as it gets. After surviving the emergency, Joshua recovered, gave all glory to God, and began using his life to tell others about Jesus. “This whole experience,” he said later, “has helped me grow in the gospel.” Amen and amen.



‘Man, we can do something’ (Issue 4)

In May, a group of pastors and church leaders went on a vision trip as part of the SBTC’s Reach Europe initiative, a ministry partnership with the International Mission Board. While they walked in some of the world’s most beautiful and historic places, many on the trip were also surprised to hear how lost Europe is. In fact, the IMB considers it the most lost continent in the world. Meeting pastors on the frontlines of the spiritual battle was special, but hearing reports that several SBTC churches have since returned (or are planning a return) is downright exciting.



‘SBTC churches get creative to deliver the gospel to the Metroplex during Crossover’ (Issue 5)

Each year in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, an event called Crossover is held to saturate the host city’s streets with the gospel. This year, with the meeting being held in Dallas, SBTC churches joined congregations from across the nation to tell people about Jesus. Churches held block parties and did door-to-door evangelism. One church held a pickleball camp. Another hosted a Christian comedy club, weaving the gospel story into an evening of laughs. And the best part? More than 700 people made decisions to follow Jesus during Crossover.



You can find these stories and more at the Texan’s online print archive: texanonline.net/print-archive.



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sbtexas.com/europe



Does your church need help developing a clear
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MOST SPIRITUALLY LOST CONTINENT IN THE WORLD?



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We invite a strategic leader from your church to
join the SBTC on one of the upcoming vision tours!

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NOVEMBER 2-10



Trust that God will see you through

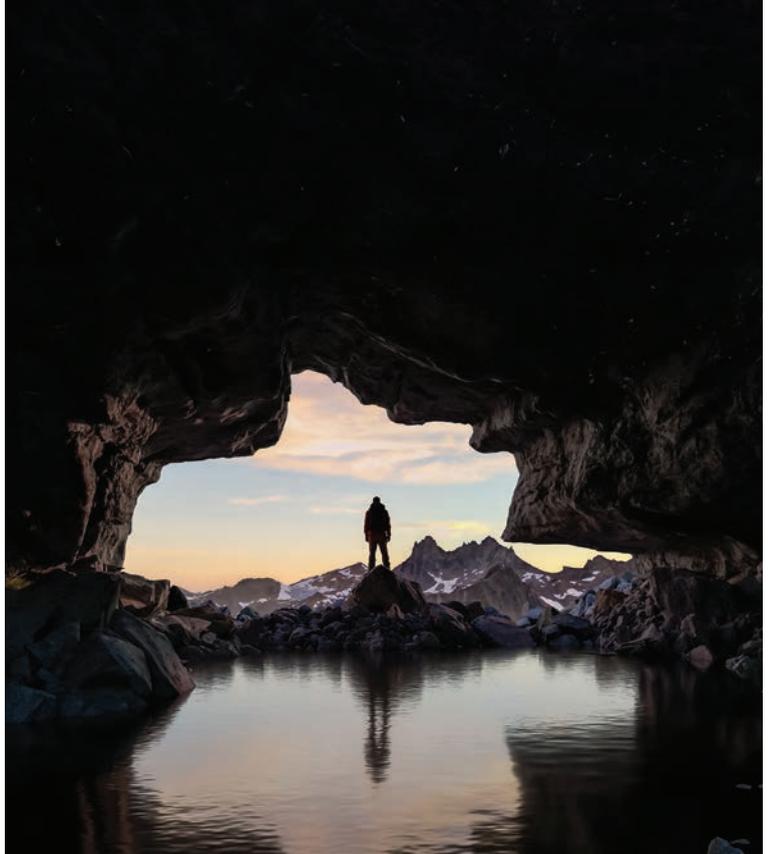
David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. — 1 Samuel 22:1

Life has stressors

Trusting God can be hard. There are times when God's silence, His closed doors, or His redirection can be truly difficult for even the most faithful believers. Many of us find ourselves with full plates and empty tanks. Sunday is tomorrow—when it seems like it was just yesterday.

These problems can be compounded when we are the reason for our struggles. There is no wayward child or contentious ministry leader to blame. It is simply me.

In 1 Samuel 22, David's fear and life's stressors drive him to a cave. Can you imagine the soon-to-be king cowering? A man after God's own heart has relegated himself to hiding in a cave after fleeing from Saul and not finding refuge in the hometown of the defeated giant Goliath. Adullam is not where he thought he would be at that point in his life. This surely could not be what he imagined as the oil from Samuel's horn ran down his head and "the Spirit of the Lord rushed" upon him (1 Samuel 16:13). And when we are not where we thought we would be, we too will feel life's pressures.



Life has seasons

Fall is my favorite season. There is something special about watching football on a Friday night with a slight chill in the air. In all honesty, I wish we could skip winter and go straight to spring. However, I know that is not possible. The reality is that when the leaves start falling from the trees, it is an indicator that winter is coming soon. No season can be hurried, skipped, or wished away.

Although the bad news for David was that he was in a cave, the good news for David was that he would not be there forever. Thanks be to God that the same can be said about each one of us in whatever season of life we find ourselves. How do you respond to the season you are in? David provides the solution: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1).

Life has safeguards

Even though David's fear led him to the cave, God's favor blessed him while he was there. The Bible says David entered into the cave as one man but left as the commander of 400 men. Hear me well: God has you where you are for a purpose that will glorify His name—if you are in His will. The cave intended for cowering turned into a campground for conquering. The very walls that may feel restrictive can be used to reveal God's plan for our lives. It is not for us to always understand why we are where we are, but to trust in Him to safely see us through.



MAKE DISCIPLES LIKE JESUS

WORKSHOP

February 9 Allen
Cottonwood Creek Church

February 10 Iowa Park
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SBTC En Español will feature a track that includes an opening session and breakout sessions.

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'IT'S A SPECIAL CALL'

AS SBTC CELEBRATES A BIG YEAR IN PLANTING, EXCITEMENT BUILDS FOR WHAT GOD WILL DO NEXT

Before 2025 concludes, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention anticipates planting more churches—70—than in any other year in its history. While that's a number worth celebrating, the need to plant churches is as urgent as ever. Jason Crandall, who earlier this year was named director of Send Network SBTC—the church planting partnership between the SBTC and the North American Mission Board—recently spoke to the *Texan* about what excites him about church planting, why Texas has unique needs that can be met by more churches being planted, and how churches of any size can become part of the planting movement.

As you step into this new role as director of Send Network SBTC, what are some of the things that excite you?

Jason Crandall: I'm most excited about what we've already seen happen—more than 200 church plants in the last three years since the partnership began, and I'm excited about those numbers continuing to increase. We continue to see more churches getting involved in church planting and sending guys into our process to go plant churches. Our pipeline is already looking full heading into next year.

I'm also really excited about what's happening through the Missions Mobilization group here at the SBTC. I really love the idea of M-Link [a tool that

matches churches looking to serve one another] helping potential supporting churches come on board with our church plants to develop greater partnerships. A lot of times there's a willingness of churches to help, but they don't necessarily know what to do or who they match up with. That's one of the things I love about M-Link, that it can match a church that can do X, Y, and Z to a church plant that needs X, Y, and Z.

What are some of the unique needs in Texas that can be addressed through more churches being planted?

Crandall: Texas is exploding in population. You can look anywhere in almost any of our major cities—and really, even in our non-major cities—and see they're pushing dirt everywhere. You're seeing subdivisions go up like crazy. Businesses are coming in. Texas is still booming. When we began talking about this Send Network SBTC partnership back in 2021, there were 29 million people in the state. Now there are almost 31 million people, and what that means is there is so much more lostness here.

The world is moving here. International populations from all over are coming to Texas, and they're in need of international church plants that speak their language. We've seen a huge uptick in that in 2025. We need to make sure there are churches here that are going to bring the gospel to them.

Your church, CityView Church in Pearland, is a plant that has been part of starting 14 churches over the past 12 years. Why has that been such an integral part of your church's ministry?

Crandall: It kind of goes back to our founding. We're specifically a Houston-based church, and we saw how fast Houston was growing and asked ourselves, "If we grew a megachurch in Pearland, how is that going to affect the city of Houston?" The answer we landed on was that a megachurch in Pearland does nothing, but a church that multiplies and plants churches can put churches all over that area. Those churches can embed into those local areas and become flourishing gospel congregations. CityView is a church of about 150 on a good Sunday. On Easter, we might hit 200. But the Lord has been gracious to allow us to see through those churches we've planted over 3,000 people worshiping on a regular basis. And some of those churches have also planted churches. By God's grace, we've seen something beyond what we could ever ask, think, or imagine.



How can any church become a sending church?

Crandall: Any church can do this. One of the things I love doing in terms of mobilization is something called a Sending Lab. A Sending Lab is a one-day workshop where a church comes in and we help them figure out how to craft a sending vision. Most churches don't realize it, but they already have 50, 60, 70% of what's needed to plant a church.

I like to say it like this: Every church can be involved in church planting, but not every church can be involved in church planting in exactly the same way. Sometimes that means the best thing you can do is be a cooperating church where you're giving regularly and generously through the Cooperative Program. Sometimes you can become a supporting church. A supporting church is one that's going to come alongside a church plant and help it—whether that's through prayer, giving, going, or in some other way. As you do that, you develop a relationship with a church planter and get to know him and then you may want to see your church get involved in a deeper way.

I firmly believe every church needs to be involved in multiplication, and every step of the way, you're looking for whatever that next step may be for your church.

What would you say to the pastor who thinks he may be called to plant?

Crandall: I'd say do it! I say that jokingly just because we need more. We need to plant churches everywhere for everyone. If we're planting 160 churches a year, we might be able to keep up with the growth rate of Texas over the long haul. But for the pastor considering planting, I would say talk to another church planter. Give me a call—I'm happy to talk to you. Talk to one of our local catalysts. We want to hear from you, and we want to help you figure it out and discern that call because it's a special call.

To connect and find out more about church planting, email jcrandall@namb.net.

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A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF IMPACT THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

In 1925, Southern Baptists gathered for their annual meeting in Memphis, Tenn., and adopted a pair of foundational structures that still define the convention's work today. The Baptist Faith and Message laid a doctrinal foundation for the Southern Baptist Convention's cooperating churches, while the Cooperative Program provided the unified funding method by which their work would be accomplished.

In 2025, Southern Baptists celebrated the 100th anniversary of this historic event and saw the fruit that comes from generous giving. As Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches continued to give faithfully and sacrificially through the CP, churches were planted across the state to help push back against a growing rate of lostness. When disaster relief workers mobilized to minister to survivors of floods and fires, they did so with the help of cooperative giving.

Simply put, the Cooperative Program's impact has been wide-reaching and significant.

As churches give through the Cooperative Program, 45% of undesignated receipts remain in Texas to mobilize SBTC churches and 55% is forwarded to SBC entities for national and international missions and ministry.



A large crowd gathered at a reception celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program on Oct. 27 during the SBTC Annual Meeting at Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock. **SBTC PHOTO**

Those gifts support international missionaries serving in some of the harshest mission fields on the planet, church planters in North America, and students attending one of the SBC's six seminaries.

In February, the *Texan* featured Acts Fellowship Church in Austin, where more than three dozen people have been sent to seminary to prepare for future kingdom service—including 20 who have trained at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

"... It's a great way to take part in equipping the next generation of Christian leaders and to partake in the expansion of God's kingdom," Acts Fellowship Pastor Charles Lee said.

Caroll Marr, senior pastor of Southcliff Church in Fort Worth, said giving through the CP is personal for his congregation, which supports and sends missionaries around the globe.

"It is easy to think a larger church can make a global impact in a way a smaller church cannot," Marr wrote in the *Texan* earlier this year. "Yet because of the Cooperative Program, even churches that do not feel they have a personal connection with missions or are not able to go on a mission trip are just as connected as our church."

Throughout the year, SBTC churches were encouraged to do three things: pray for record CP giving in 2025, plan a CP Sunday to emphasize the importance of CP giving, and post testimonials to social media to spread the word about how God has used CP to bless individuals' lives.

"The Cooperative Program is a way that we can make sure not only [our church] is being effective in reaching our neighbors and the nations right now," said Aaron Kahler, lead pastor of Hays Hills Baptist Church in Buda, "but that we and other Southern Baptist churches will be effective 100 years from now."

—JAYSON LARSON

ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

SBTC DR VOLUNTEERS BROUGHT A VARIETY OF SKILLS TO THE FIELD IN '25— INCLUDING COMPASSION

Tony Durant's career prepared him perfectly to be active in Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Disaster Relief. With a background in mining and the industrial rubber industry, the retired business owner embraces the wisdom of 1 Peter 4:10, using his gifts while serving as an SBTC DR unit director, also known as a "blue hat."

"I'm a fixer. I have a knack to repair," Durant said. During a recent deployment serving Texas Task Force 2 search and rescue personnel responding to July's Hill Country flooding, Durant found himself replacing the motherboard on one of the laundry unit's washing machines.

Leading a new unit on its first deployment, Durant praised his crew of volunteers, saying, "Each of my team members used their gifts to serve people and first responders at Leander. I couldn't use my gifts without team members who make my job easy."

While in Leander, Durant and his fellow volunteers washed just shy of 650 loads of laundry in service of Task Force 2.

From August 2024-2025, SBTC DR volunteers assisted first responders and survivors of hurricanes, storms, fires, and floods in Spring, Porter, Harlingen, Brownsville, and Bonham, in addition to the Central Texas flood response in Leander, Kerrville, San Saba, and San Angelo. They also provided relief during water crises in Marlin and Chester. Outside the Lone



SBTC Disaster Relief volunteers once again had a busy year, responding to crises in Texas and beyond. **SBTC PHOTO**

The next round of trainings to become an SBTC DR volunteer are happening soon. Scan the QR to find out more:



Star State, they ministered in New Mexico, Florida, California, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

"All ministry facets—chainsaw, feeding, chaplaincy, recovery, assessment, administration, shower and laundry—were in the field this year," SBTC DR Director Scottie Stice said. "We had 19 deployments in Texas and 15 out of state, totaling 64,100 volunteer hours. Volunteers prepared 138,095 meals for distribution, including 52,074 meals served directly to the public by SBTC DR folks. They made more than 48,000 spiritual contacts and saw 2,827 professions of faith, including those related to the border ministry of West Brownsville Baptist Church.

"Folks like Tony and his team are what make DR ministry successful," Stice added. "They minister to the physical and spiritual needs of survivors and are bound together themselves by Christian fellowship and friendship."

— JANE RODGERS

IMPACT ON A GROWING SCALE

LIVES ARE BEING CHANGED AS SBTC EN ESPAÑOL CONTINUES TO EXPAND

SBTC En Español's annual Florece retreat is designed to provide women with a place of pause where they can be equipped, encouraged, and renewed.

"We prayed that Florece would not just be another event, but a true turning point in the lives of those who attended—and that is what God did," said Arlene Sanabria, SBTC En Español women's ministry leader. "We have received countless testimonies from women deeply impacted by the Word shared in workshops and general sessions. Many experienced inner healing and freedom from anxiety and depression, while others found comfort and had their faith renewed."

About 900 women representing 75 churches attended the retreat, continuing a trend of growing attendance at SBTC En Español events throughout the year. The events are not just drawing large crowds, but leading to changed lives.

At Florece, 14 women made professions of faith in Jesus Christ, while others answered a call to serve the Lord in various capacities. A similar situation



Luis González answered the call to lead SBTC En Español earlier this year. The ministry has continued to experience God's blessings in 2025. **SBTC PHOTO**

happened at the Hombres de Impacto conference earlier this year, where one of the 750 men in attendance trusted Christ after being invited by a participating church.

Over the summer, Youth Week—SBTC En Español's student camp—saw 675 campers gather to worship, connect, and hear the gospel. One of those campers was a 16-year-old girl who had been taking hormone therapy pills in an attempt to transition her body to having male characteristics. Instead, she heard the gospel, surrendered her life to Christ, and has since stopped taking the medication and started a discipleship process at her local church. She was one of about 50 campers who made a profession of faith.

SBTC En Español trained more than 650 lay leaders and pastors in discipleship, leadership, technology, church planting, and evangelism through the annual Apoderados conference held in conjunction with the SBTC's Empower Conference in February, and through Equip En Español in July. The first Hispanic Women's Ministry Leadership Summit hosted 70 leaders representing 33 churches, and a pastor and wife retreat encouraged 30 couples to strengthen their marriages and remain steadfast in their ministries.

Additionally, more resources became accessible to Spanish-speaking churches this past year through the SBTC's Church Health and Leadership department. Those included *Chosen to Serve*, a newly developed deacon ministry training, and Regenesi, a process designed to help churches experience health and renewal.

The year also saw a new leader called to serve SBTC En Español. Luis González began working as the ministry's full-time director in August.

"I'm so grateful to be a part of this team. We want to mobilize our churches to make disciples and to do it with excellence," González said earlier this year. "[When we do this], we will see more of our churches accomplish the mission of making disciples and see many people come to Christ."

—JAYSON LARSON



REACHING FAR, REACHING MANY

EVENTS LIKE GO SUMMIT, CROSSOVER BROUGHT THE GOSPEL, TRAINING TO THOUSANDS

Tony Mathews, senior strategist for the SBTC's Missional Ministries department, wasn't sure what to expect when the convention hosted the inaugural GoSummit on the campus of North Garland Baptist Fellowship in September.

He was thrilled when around 140 people representing more than 20 churches showed up to learn how to be more effective in evangelizing their friends and neighbors.

"It just exceeded our wildest expectations," Mathews said. "This event was multicultural and the discussions were just so rich. It was really exciting."

The summit featured diverse speakers who worked together to break down many of the barriers that hinder personal evangelism. Session topics included how to overcome common hesitations people have when they hear the gospel, effectively reaching younger generations for Christ, and understanding the demographics and diverse cultures in your community. A women's session encouraged attendees to point other women to Jesus by looking for ways to engage them.

The GoSummit was one of many efforts designed to equip SBTC churches with resources to advance the gospel. In 2025, leaders received training on how to conduct their own evangelism workshops, organize door-to-door evangelism, and cultivate a culture of evangelism within their churches. Multiple grants were provided to support community outreach events where the gospel was shared. Those grants enabled churches to distribute over 1,200 Bibles and 6,000 gospel tracts.

An increasing number of resources were also made available online to train churches and individuals. The Stand Firm online apologetics course, with more than 20 videos, equips believers to share the gospel while addressing culturally relevant issues such as human sexuality, atheism, and world religions. Evangelism Connections, a series of live virtual trainings presented by experienced evangelism leaders, served participants around the state and will continue in 2026.

SBTC churches also mobilized for the cause of evangelism in June during Crossover Dallas, the weeklong North American Mission Board evangelistic outreach held in conjunction each year with the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting. About 60 churches participated, delivering the gospel to one of the largest metropolitan areas in the nation.

Some churches did door-to-door evangelism and hosted block parties, while others used a pickleball instruction camp and a Christian comedy show as vehicles to tell others about Jesus. Crossover also included a pair of student rallies—one at Cross Church DFW and the other at First Baptist Church in Rockwall—that drew hundreds of students and led to a number of decisions for Christ.

All told, over 17,000 people heard the gospel through one-on-one and group conversations during Crossover. More than 700 made professions of faith in Christ.

—JAYSON LARSON



STRONGER TOGETHER

NETWORK EVENT CONNECTS PASTOR & WIFE TO COMMUNITY, SHARED COOPERATIVE MISSION

Michael Sheets admits he did not know much about the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention until a few years ago.

While attending the SBTC's annual Black Church Network Retreat, Sheets—senior pastor of Abundant Faith Baptist Church in Humble—heard a presentation about the Cooperative Program and how it gives churches of all sizes an opportunity to have greater gospel impact.

“One of the reasons I wanted to join the SBTC was because I understood we all have an obligation to Matthew 28,” he said, referring to Jesus’ Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. “As a church our size ... we don’t have the capacity to do that on our own, but through our connection with the SBTC, we’re able to join cooperatively in that program and fulfill Matthew 28—which is huge for us. It’s been a real blessing to our church. It’s changing the way we see missions. It’s changing the way we see outreach.”

SBTC networks exist to serve, support, and connect pastors and church leaders in a variety of ministry areas. There are networks for student, children’s, and collegiate ministers; for women’s ministry leaders and

Networks have provided a venue not only for equipping, but for mutual ministry, care, and prayer. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

pastor wives; and for those who specialize in disability ministry. More recently, several networks launched including the Executive Pastors & Administrators Network (for those who oversee church operations), the Regenes Network (for those involved with the SBTC’s church health and renewal process), and the Shepherds Collective (for lead and senior pastors of any age).

Networks are designed to meet a wide range of needs. For Sheets, those needs were personal and professional. At the BCN Retreat, speakers were brought in to talk to pastors about their mental, financial, and spiritual health. At a different BCN event, Sheets said he connected with a fellow pastor who turned him on to a system that has helped the church become more visible in the community.

The value of network involvement reached even beyond that, he added. The wives of the pastors attending the BCN Retreat, including his wife, Theresa, began to gather as their husbands met. It provided a much-needed community for women who are often hungry for meaningful relationships.

“She really came away with a connection to some of the other ministers’ wives,” Sheets said. “To be with a group of women—sisters who understand [their calling] and who are figuring out ways to work through that—that bond was just so important for her.”

Sheets, who has ministered for over three decades and now serves on the SBTC’s Committee on Order of Business, said he would encourage other pastors to find a network with which to connect.

“It’s just good to know you’re not by yourself,” he said. “There are other guys who are walking in similar situations. Some of their situations may be different or they have evolved, but just to know you’ve got a network where you can plug in and be connected, that is huge.”

—JAYSON LARSON

PARTNERING WITH A PURPOSE

**SBTC CHURCHES ARE MOBILIZING
TO LOCATIONS WHERE THE GOSPEL
IS DESPERATELY NEEDED**

Holly Springs Baptist Church Lead Pastor Clint Williams was among the pastors and church leaders who traveled overseas in May as part of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Reach Europe vision trip.

When Williams got home and told his congregation what he saw, the missions-minded church in Nacogdoches decided to send a group back. It took less than 24 hours for the trip to fill up.

"Our church was very eager to go," Williams said.

Holly Springs served in Hungary, one of the countries included in the Reach Europe ministry partnership between the SBTC and the International Mission Board. The initiative's goal is to reverse the staggering trend of lostness in Western Europe, which has been described as one of the most lost places in the world. Only 1.1% of Europe's residents are evangelical, and there is no population segment that is 2% reached. By the IMB's standards, that makes all of Europe an unreached continent.

As of November, several SBTC churches were preparing to mobilize to locations across the continent to serve IMB partners in locations including Denmark, England, France, Greece, Romania, and Slovenia.

The SBTC has developed similar ministry partnerships closer to home in Puerto Rico and Nevada—one of the fastest-growing states in America. In those locations, the goal is to strengthen existing Southern Baptist churches, plant new ones, and help raise up a new generation of pastors and leaders to reach the lost.



Europe is filled with some of the most awe-inspiring and beautiful sights in the world. It is also considered one of the most lost continents on the planet. **SBTC PHOTO**

"Through these partnerships that have been curated by the SBTC, we're able to connect our churches to missions opportunities for the purpose of developing long-term relationships that offer maximum gospel impact," said Colin Rayburn, SBTC Missional Ministries associate. "As we continue to learn more about the specific needs, desires, and abilities of our churches, we'll be able to fine-tune these partnerships in ways that maximize every SBTC church's ability to engage missionally."

During their October trip, Holly Springs worked with rural Hungarian churches to do outreach in a unique way—taking family photos and providing framed prints for people in impoverished villages who might not otherwise have such a luxury. Later, the Texas group had a similar opportunity for a group of elementary school children.

Before heading home, the team had one last chance to leave a taste of Texas with their hosts. Holly Springs hosted a barbecue featuring pulled pork, beans, coleslaw, and southern gospel music played against a backdrop of Texas flag décor. As the Holly Springs team sang hymns such as "I'll Fly Away" and "Amazing Grace," Williams would occasionally stop to explain the biblical principles contained in the lyrics.

"Just loving on these folks, it was very good," Williams said. "It connected with a lot of people."

— JAYSON LARSON

HOPE AND A FUTURE

AS REGENESIS FOOTPRINT EXPANDS, CHURCHES CELEBRATE RENEWED HEALTH, REVIVAL

In the fall of 2019, Merit Baptist Church—located in a rural community in North Texas—was experiencing some encouraging victories. A well-attended vacation Bible school had opened the door for the church to start an Awana program, and children were flowing in and out regularly.

But by the summer of 2023, when the church's pastor, Tim Cline, looked around, something felt off. Though the children's program was popular, it wasn't building bridges for the church to reach their parents or other adults.

To Cline, things felt like they were on autopilot.

"The proverb says, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish,'" Cline said. "What we began to realize is, we had no vision. We were living the proverb."

While attending a local Baptist association meeting, Cline saw a presentation about Regenesi s, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's church health and renewal process. Regenesi s helps churches design a unique, intentional process to make disciples while overcoming common barriers to growth and vitality.

Merit Baptist Church joined a Regenesi s cohort in 2024 and completed the process in May 2025. Along the way, Cline said he



Churches across Texas and beyond are experiencing health and renewal through the SBTC's Regenesi s process. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

and other church leaders gained insights that helped them chart a course forward. He began preaching and teaching through a series on the biblical characteristics of a maturing disciple. Leaders evaluated the budget to align it with the church's priorities. Church members were challenged to mobilize outside the church's walls, not just living as informed disciples of Jesus, but as sent ones.

What's happened since can only be attributed to a work of God, Cline said. The church baptized 15 people over the summer, while regular attendance has climbed from the 40s and 50s into the 80s. Church members are taking personal ownership in inviting their friends, neighbors, and co-workers—a great platform on which to build the culture of evangelism that Cline says will be the next step in the process.

These are the kinds of celebration stories Regenesi s churches are reporting from around the state. Since its inception in 2022, 1,659 lay leaders have participated in Regenesi s representing 555 churches. Last year, Regenesi s was deployed to Nevada, where the SBTC has developed a strategic ministry partnership, and in 2025, its footprint expanded with the launch of Regenesi s Español and the Regenesi s Network, a group created to offer ongoing support and encouragement to pastors and church leaders.

"Regenesi s churches are experiencing revival and spiritual renewal," SBTC Pastoral Ministries Associate Anthony Svajda said. "The Regenesi s cohorts are just the beginning and lead to much bigger God things."

Cline sees it that way, too.

"Regenesi s is a clear and concise strategy on how a church is supposed to fulfill its unique mission and take advantage of the gospel footprint the Lord has provided for that church," he said. "What we're seeing is a movement of God."

—JAYSON LARSON

EMPOWERED TO LEAD, READY TO SERVE

AS WOMEN'S MINISTRY LEADER GROWS, SHE'S HELPING OTHERS DO THE SAME

Jocelyn Babilon became the women's ministry director at Lakeland Baptist Church in Lewisville about a year ago. As she settled into the role, she began having conversations with those the ministry would serve.

"When I listened to the women, they were really wanting connection," Babilon said, "but they were also wanting to learn more about what it actually looks like to follow Christ and to have a better understanding about what they believe."

As those conversations were ongoing, Babilon said she was also having discussions with other women's ministry leaders and with Laura Taylor, the women's ministry associate for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. It became a season of training for Babilon, who was looking for solutions to a challenge many churches face—connecting women to build multigenerational relationships, as well as developing leaders to serve as disciple-makers.

A pair of SBTC events helped Babilon along the way: the She Stands Women's Conference hosted by Lakeland in the spring, and later, the Women's Ministry Leadership Summit. Babilon said she was excited to learn that many of the ideas and points of emphasis God had already put on her heart were part of the training at each event.



Equipping and connecting are hallmarks of the SBTC Women's Ministry Leadership Summit. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

"I walked away with so many great ideas," she said. "The way God just lined those things up was amazing."

Connections are a key part of the strategy of the SBTC Women's Ministry, which empowers women in their faith journeys and in the areas to which God has called them through fostering collaboration and growth. In addition to She Stands and the leadership summit, the SBTC offers Women's Roundtable Conversations to share ideas between women's ministry leaders and promote available resources. Roundtable Conversations will happen in multiple locations in 2026.

There is also a more specialized focus for the wives of pastors through events such as the Come Away Pastor Wives Retreat and Pastor Wives Connection Nights. Those events, designed to offer encouragement and fellowship, connected more than 50 women from 48 churches this past year.

"My goal for our SBTC's women's events is to encourage and equip women to grow in Christ and to be better equipped to minister to women in their churches and communities," Taylor said. "We seek to provide opportunities for networking with other women to advance the gospel."

That is what's happening at Lakeland, where Babilon is seeing fruit as the women who serve on her team are doing the work of ministry in the areas of prayer, fellowship, discipleship, and more.

"Now that we've established all our roles, [our goal is] to equip our women to do these things well," she said. "It's been really great to watch. I'm just excited to see the way the women are growing in our church."

—JAYSON LARSON

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6:30-8:30 PM
+ Student Rally

MONDAY, FEB. 23

11:00 AM-12:45 PM
+ Classics Lunch
+ Send Network SBTC Lunch
+ XPAN - Executive Pastors & Administrators Network Lunch

1:00-4:00 PM
+ Classics Session
+ Women’s Session

1:00-2:30 | 2:45-4:15
+ Afternoon Breakouts

4:30-6:00 PM
+ Resourcing Churches Dinner
+ Shepherds Collective Dinner
+ Student Ministers Network Dinner
+ Worship Leaders Network Dinner

6:00-8:30 PM
+ Evening Session

TUESDAY, FEB. 24

7:30-8:45 AM
+ Advancing Mission Breakfast
+ DR Breakfast Taco Truck

8:30-11:35 AM
+ Morning Session

11:45 AM-12:50 PM
+ Cooperative Program Lunch

1:00-2:30 | 2:45-4:15
+ Afternoon Breakouts

4:00-5:30 PM
+ Closing Session

5:45-7:15 PM
+ Black Church Network Dinner
+ Missions Mobilization Network Dinner

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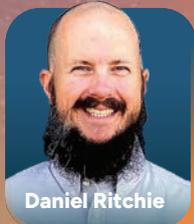


STUDENT RALLY

SUNDAY, FEB. 22 • 6:30 PM



Jared Hall



Daniel Ritchie

Join students from across the region for an unforgettable night that changes students' lives each year. **Portraits Music** will lead powerful worship, **Daniel Ritchie** will share an encouraging message, and illusionist **Jared Hall** will deliver a jaw-dropping performance you won't forget. Come to this free event ready to grow in your faith, build lasting friendships, and be inspired to live boldly for Jesus.



women's session

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 1:00-4:00 PM



Jen Wilkin
Speaker



Anna & Cody Kujawa
Music

Greater Works in Jesus' Name

The Upper Room Legacy
of John 14:12-14

classics

lunch

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 11:30 PM | Cost: \$20



Mark
Lowry

Mark Lowry is a storyteller at heart—whether he's singing a beloved hymn, cracking a perfectly timed joke, or delivering a message that pierces the soul.

sessions

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 1:00-4:00 PM



Chris
Osborne



Alan
Arthur



Frank
Harber



Greater Vision
Music



TWO LANGUAGES, ONE HOPE

Throughout its existence, Hope Church has seen the Lord ‘provide at every step’

BY ARLENE SANABRIA

KYLE

O N THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH, worship at Hope Church looks like a family reunion.

The congregation—normally gathered in separate English and Spanish services—comes together for a single “One Hope” service. Pastor David Mathis preaches in English while a translator conveys the same message in Spanish.

“The gospel is for everyone,” Mathis said. “When we worship together, it shows that language isn’t a barrier for the family of God.”

From engineering to church planting

Hope Church launched in January 2019, but its roots stretch back to 2017, when its founding church began exploring how to expand its ministry. At the time, Mathis was a career software engineer and serving as a lay elder.

“God was shaping my heart,” he recalled. “With the encouragement of leaders around me, it became clear that He was calling me into full-time ministry.”

That call intersected with the conviction to plant on the east side of Kyle—an area more diverse economically, culturally, and linguistically. In the process, the launch team connected with a Spanish-speaking congregation that had been meeting separately in a different building. The two groups began exploring ministry together, and the vision took shape: two languages, one hope.

Launching a bilingual congregation brought opportunities and challenges. Hope Church began with English and Spanish services and occasional joint gatherings, embodying the vision of one church family. During its first year, however, the young church experienced challenges that tested its unity. “It was a difficult season,” Mathis admitted. “But even through



“It’s been important to know we’re not alone. We’re one church among many, united in the same mission.”

—DAVID MATHIS

Hope Church, led by Pastor David Mathis (seen above), maintains English and Spanish services each week, with the monthly combined One Hope service serving as a visible sign of unity. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

that, God refined our vision and confirmed His call for us to be one church with two languages.”

Soon after, the disruption of COVID-19 added another layer of difficulty. Meeting in a school meant Hope Church had to close early during the pandemic. The church moved its services online and implemented creative solutions such as outdoor drive-in gatherings with live translation.

“That was the first time I preached through a translator,” Mathis said. “We saw God bringing Spanish-speaking families back, and we knew He was at work.”

‘Something special’

By summer 2020, God opened another unexpected door: A local family who owned a wedding barn opened their doors for the congregation to use their property.

“At first we met outside on the grass—even from the back of a pickup truck,” Mathis said. “Eventually, they let us use the barn itself and they told us we could meet there for free on Sundays.”

The barn, once rustic with no air conditioning or heat, has gradually been upgraded by its owners. Today, it continues to serve as Hope’s weekly worship space.

“It’s not traditional, but it’s been God’s provision,” Mathis said. “People walk in and sense something special. It reminds us the church isn’t a building—it’s God’s people.”

Around the same time, God provided in another remarkable way. A local landowner donated a parcel next to the barn where

Hope Church now meets—across from a middle school and beside new apartments, which has become a hub for youth ministry and community outreach. Later, additional gifts and partnerships allowed the church to prepare the site for ministry.

“It’s exactly where we need to be,” Mathis said. “From the very beginning, we’ve seen the Lord provide at every step.”

As Hope Church was preparing to launch, Mathis and his wife went through the church planter assessment process with Send Network SBTC, receiving encouragement, oversight, and resources for the new congregation.

“We are grateful for the partnership of the SBTC and local Baptist associations,” Mathis said. “They walked with us from the very beginning and helped provide accountability and encouragement.”

That connection has continued, with Southern Baptists of Texas Convention leaders offering training, networking, and financial support at key moments. For Mathis, it has been a reminder that Hope Church is part of something larger.

“It’s been important to know we’re not alone,” he said. “We’re one church among many, united in the same mission.”

‘We belong to one another’

Today, Hope Church maintains English and Spanish services each week, with the monthly combined One Hope service serving as a visible sign of unity. In every

format, translation is intentional and in person. “It takes more effort,” Mathis noted, “but worshipping together reinforces that we belong to one another.”

Though modest in size—about 65 people—Hope’s congregation represents a wide range of countries: Mexico, El Salvador, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spain, and more. That diversity shapes discipleship. During the pandemic, for example, an English-speaking member mentored a younger Spanish-speaking mom using a simple online translator and persistence. “It’s a lot of work,” Mathis said, “but it glorifies God—and it bears fruit.”

Hope Church’s donated land has become a launching pad for ministry, including soccer camps, Easter sunrise services, family carnivals, and neighborhood outreach events. The church has also partnered with nearby congregations, including another bilingual fellowship, to extend its reach.

A site plan for future development is nearly complete, but Mathis says the church remains focused on one step at a time. “We’ve learned that we can trust the Lord to provide. He’s already given us more than we could have imagined.”

For Mathis, Hope Church’s story is not only about one church, but also one of encouragement for other churches. “Ask God to open your eyes to the people around you,” he said. “You don’t need a perfect plan—just take the next step to love your neighbors. The Lord will provide what you need.”



**“You don’t need a perfect plan—
just take the next step to love
your neighbors.”**

—DAVID MATHIS

As Kyle continues to grow, Hope Church’s vision stays clear: one gospel, two languages, one family.

“When we sing and hear the Word in two languages as one church,” Mathis said, “you can sense the Spirit at work. That’s our one hope.”

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DOS IDIOMAS, UNA ESPERANZA

POR ARLENE SANABRIA

A lo largo de su existencia, la Iglesia Esperanza ha visto cómo el Señor ‘provee en cada paso’

KYLE

E L PRIMER DOMINGO DE CADA MES, el culto en la Iglesia Esperanza parece una reunión familiar.

La congregación, que normalmente se reúne en servicios separados en inglés y español, se une para un solo servicio llamado “Una esperanza”. El pastor David Mathis predica en inglés, mientras que alguien traduce al español.

“El evangelio es para todos”, dijo Mathis. “Cuando adoramos juntos, demostramos que el idioma no es una barrera para la familia de Dios”.

De la ingeniería a la fundación de iglesias

La Iglesia Hope se inauguró en enero de 2019, pero sus raíces se remontan al 2017, cuando su iglesia fundadora comenzó a explorar cómo expandir su ministerio. En ese momento, Mathis era ingeniero de software de carrera y servía como anciano laico.

“Dios estaba moldeando mi corazón”, recuerda. “Con el ánimo de los líderes que me rodeaban, quedó claro que Él me estaba llamando al ministerio a tiempo completo”.

Esa llamada se cruzó con la convicción de fundar una iglesia en la zona este de Kyle, un área más diversa desde el punto de vista económico, cultural y lingüístico. En el proceso, el equipo fundador se puso en contacto con una congregación de habla hispana que se reunía por separado en otro edificio. Los dos grupos comenzaron a explorar juntos el ministerio y la visión tomó forma: dos idiomas, una esperanza.



La Iglesia Hope ofrece servicios en inglés y español cada semana, y el servicio mensual combinado Una Esperanza es una señal visible de unidad. FOTO COMPARTIDA



El lanzamiento de una congregación bilingüe trajo consigo oportunidades y desafíos. Hope Church comenzó con servicios en inglés y español y reuniones conjuntas ocasionales, encarnando la visión de una familia eclesial.

Sin embargo, durante su primer año, la joven iglesia experimentó desafíos que pusieron a prueba su unidad. “Fue una temporada difícil”, admitió Mathis. “Pero incluso a través de eso, Dios refinó nuestra visión y confirmó su llamado para que fuéramos una iglesia con dos idiomas”.

Poco después, la irrupción de la COVID-19 añadió otra capa de dificultad. Reunirse en una escuela significaba que la Iglesia Esperanza tenía que cerrar temprano durante la pandemia. Los servicios se trasladaron a Internet y surgen soluciones creativas, como reuniones al aire libre con traducción en vivo.

“Esa fue la primera vez que prediqué con un traductor”, dijo Mathis. “Vimos cómo Dios traía de vuelta a las familias de habla hispana y supimos que Él estaba obrando”.

“Algo especial”

En el verano de 2020, Dios abrió otra puerta inesperada: una familia local que era propietaria de un granero para bodas abrió sus puertas a la congregación para que utilizara su propiedad.

“Al principio nos reuníamos afuera, en el césped, incluso en la parte trasera de una camioneta”, dijo Mathis. “Finalmente, nos dejaron usar el granero y nos dijeron que podíamos reunirnos allí los domingos de forma gratuita”.

El granero, que antes era rústico y no tenía aire acondicionado ni calefacción, ha sido renovado gradualmente por sus propietarios. Hoy en día, sigue sirviendo como espacio de culto semanal para la iglesia.

“No es lo tradicional, pero ha sido una provisión de Dios”, dijo Mathis. “La gente entra y siente algo especial. Nos recuerda que la iglesia no es un edificio, sino el pueblo de Dios”.

El pastor David Mathis, en la foto de arriba con su familia, ha sido testigo de la increíble obra de Dios en la iglesia Hope. Una de las actividades de alcance más populares de la iglesia es un campamento de fútbol. **FOTOS COMPARTIDAS**

Por esa misma época, Dios provió de otra manera extraordinaria. Un terrateniente local donó un terreno junto al granero donde ahora se reúne la Iglesia Esperanza, frente a una escuela secundaria y junto a nuevos apartamentos, que se ha convertido en un centro para el ministerio de jóvenes y el alcance de la comunidad. Más tarde, otras donaciones y colaboraciones permitieron a la iglesia preparar el lugar para el ministerio.

“Es exactamente donde necesitamos estar”, dijo Mathis. “Desde el principio, hemos visto cómo el Señor nos ha provisto en cada paso”.

Mientras la iglesia se preparaba para su lanzamiento, Mathis y su esposa pasaron por el proceso de evaluación de plantadores de iglesias con Send Network SBTC, donde recibieron ánimo, supervisión y recursos para la nueva congregación.

“Estamos agradecidos por la colaboración de la SBTC y las asociaciones bautistas locales”, dijo Mathis. “Nos acompañaron desde el principio y nos ayudaron a rendir cuentas y nos dieron ánimo”.

Esa conexión ha continuado, y los líderes de la Convención de los Bautistas del Sur de Texas han ofrecido

“No necesitas un plan perfecto, sólo da el siguiente paso para amar a tus vecinos.”

—DAVID MATHIS

capacitación, contactos y apoyo financiero en momentos clave. Para Mathis, ha sido un recordatorio de que la Iglesia Esperanza es parte de algo más grande.

“Ha sido importante saber que no estamos solos”, dijo. “Somos una iglesia entre muchas, unidas en la misma misión”.

“Pertenece los unos a los otros”

Hoy en día, la Iglesia Esperanza mantiene servicios en inglés y español cada semana, y el servicio mensual combinado Una Esperanza sirve como una señal visible de unidad. En todos los formatos, la traducción es intencio-

nal y en persona. “Requiere más esfuerzo”, señaló Mathis, “pero adorar juntos refuerza que pertenecemos los unos a los otros”.

Aunque modesta en tamaño —unas 65 personas—, la congregación de Esperanza representa una amplia gama de nacionalidades: México, El Salvador, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Cuba, España y más. Esa diversidad da forma al discipulado. Durante la pandemia, por ejemplo, una mujer, miembro de habla inglesa, fue mentor de una madre más joven de habla hispana utilizando un sencillo traductor en línea y mucha perseverancia. “Es mucho trabajo”, dijo Mathis, “pero glorifica a Dios y da frutos”.

El terreno donado a la iglesia Esperanza se ha convertido en una plataforma de lanzamiento para el ministerio, incluyendo campamentos de fútbol, servicios de adoración al amanecer el domingo de resurrección, ferias familiares y eventos de alcance en el vecindario. La iglesia también se ha asociado con congregaciones cercanas, incluida otra comunidad bilingüe, para ampliar su alcance.

El plan para el desarrollo futuro está casi terminado, pero Mathis dice que la iglesia sigue enfocada en dar un paso a la vez. “Hemos aprendido que podemos confiar en que el Señor proveerá. Él ya nos ha dado más de lo que podríamos haber imaginado”.

Para Mathis, la historia de la Iglesia Esperanza no es sólo la historia de una iglesia, sino también una historia de aliento para otras iglesias. “Pídele a Dios que abra tus ojos a las personas que le rodean”, dijo. “No necesitas un plan perfecto, sólo da el siguiente paso para amar a tus vecinos. El Señor te proveerá lo que necesites”.

A medida que Kyle sigue creciendo, la visión de la Iglesia Esperanza sigue siendo clara: un evangelio, dos idiomas, una familia.

“Cuando cantamos y escuchamos la Palabra en dos idiomas como una sola iglesia”, dice Mathis, “se puede sentir el Espíritu obrando. Esa es nuestra única esperanza”.




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JUST THE RIGHT SIZE

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Tomball's
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maximizes
space,
emphasizes
personal
connection

BY JANE RODGERS

THE COMMUNITY OF TOMBALL, with a population just over 15,000 located about 30 miles northwest of Houston, has changed markedly since First Baptist's lead pastor, James Clark, moved there 16 years ago.

These days, the church has a lot to celebrate. The congregation spent September 2025 doing just that following a recent move to their new campus, accomplished with the assistance of the Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation.

"An hour away is a lifetime away," said Clark of his arrival at FBC Tomball years ago from a Houston church. "It's not anything like it was ... There've been dramatic changes, highly accelerated population growth. It's almost a tie among Katy, Atascocita, Tomball, and Conroe to see which grows the fastest."

Thousands of people mean thousands of homes and almost unlimited opportunity to spread the gospel of Jesus, but in evangelism and real estate, location matters. Before the move, the church occupied aging World War II-era buildings on a campus split by four public streets in Tomball's historic Old Town, with its parks, museum, shopping, restaurants, and Railroad Depot Plaza. Old Town may be trendy and fun, but conducive to day-to-day church life, it is not.

Neither was the aging, landlocked church. The old facility wasn't working, Clark said.

"It was hazardous. No matter what, you had to cross roads on Sundays," Clark said of logistics equally problematic for 37-year-old moms pushing strollers or 87-year-old women navigating with walkers.

“THERE’VE BEEN DRAMATIC CHANGES, HIGHLY ACCELERATED POPULATION GROWTH. IT’S ALMOST A TIE AMONG KATY, ATASCOCITA, TOMBALL, AND CONROE TO SEE WHICH GROWS THE FASTEST.”

—JAMES CLARK



The area lacked another element crucial to healthy church growth: young families. They were moving to the suburbs where more affordable living greeted them, packing thousands of homes in subdivisions.

Although he dislikes the term, Clark said suburban Tomball had the “vibe” young people seek, with walking trails, ample housing, and a population with an average age in the early 30s.

Old Town Tomball just couldn’t compete. Neither could First Baptist, built without the lobbies or open spaces that foster community and connection. Millennials and younger generations, Clark noted, want to come do Bible study and to see one another. He sees a retro trend evocative of farm days: “When you came to church on Sundays, you hung out, ate meals, had community.” It couldn’t happen in the outdated facility.

Building the future better, not bigger

Clark said when he came to FBC Tomball in 2009, the church was in a season of struggle. Part of his challenge was to cast a new vision for the future.

That future would involve 32 acres off State Highway 249, now Tomball Parkway, on the city’s west side purchased eight years earlier by the church with a view to eventually relocating.

Many churches seek to expand in new facilities, but FBC Tomball downsized from 84,000

Vibrant ministry is occurring in the church’s new yet smaller facility that emphasizes spaces for people to connect. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

largely unusable square feet to 22,000 highly functional ones in its new space, which officially opened in August.

The new facility focuses on children and young families. “It is state of the art,” Clark said. “Anything we need to do digitally, we can do. Power needs are met. There’s lots of space for laptops. We can present video teaching from Lifeway.” The old facility could never allow for that.

Convincing the congregation of the wisdom of the move was not difficult, he added. The nature of the sale of the old facility confirmed the choice to move, as well.

Sometimes when churches sell outdated facilities, Clark noted, the properties are bulldozed and replaced by shopping centers. Not so with FBC Tomball. The city purchased the old church with economic development funds. Intentions are to restore the old chapel and turn the worship center into a performing arts venue.

“The city’s intent to repurpose the property ... to honor the legacy of the church that way ... made the sale [easier] to swallow,” Clark said, adding that the church leased back its former property from the city during construction. Offices still remain in Old Town.

As for the construction, the FBC Tomball congregation remained actively engaged throughout the process. Church members wrote Scriptures and prayers on wall studs and concrete foundations. They placed Bibles under key areas of the building when the foundation was laid.

The Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation played an integral role in FBC Tomball’s move, helping with investments, financing, construction advice, and guidance.



**"THE CITY WAS FOUNDED IN 1907
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WE EMPHASIZED THE LONG-TERM
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WE SHOP LOCAL. WE PATRONIZE
BUSINESSES. WE ARE PART OF
THE FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY."**

—JAMES CLARK

"We vetted four other companies," Clark said, "but the foundation was our first choice because of our relationship through the convention. There was already a trust level, but beyond that was the quality and excellence of the investment and loan program."

For a church with modest means, this partnership made all the difference, Clark said, noting that the foundation's Mike Rhine came down several times during construction.

"Our relationship with the foundation is a permanent one," Clark said. "They manage our investments and we have our loan with them. We like being a part of helping other churches get to do what we have done."

A month of celebration

The church's new facility opened in August, but the church waited until September to celebrate in grand style with three consecutive Sundays of events. Clark, sidelined by shoulder surgery, missed the first two but preached at the third.

Perhaps the most moving part of the multi-day cel-

The church's worship team leads during a recent service. FBC Tomball has experienced encouraging growth since moving into its new facility.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

bration for Clark was two video messages sent by like-minded local pastors blessing and encouraging the congregation.

"That was a career highlight for me," said Clark, referencing the brotherhood of local pastors who choose not to compete but to cooperate to further the gospel in Tomball.

Clark preached the final celebration sermon on Sept. 28, drawing from Jeremiah 29:1-14 concerning how the exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon were to engage their communities—a timely reminder to the elected officials in attendance

"The city was founded in 1907 and the church in 1909," Clark said. "We emphasized the long-term relationship between the church and the community. ... We are an integral part of Tomball. We shop local. We patronize businesses. We are part of the fabric of the community."

What's next?

"Half our church is over 80 and half is under 35. A lot of us are right in the middle of that," Clark, 65, said. "We have a couple of old guys like me on staff but everyone else is young. There's a lot of energy."

The church, which draws from Tomball and seven surrounding communities, is already seeing growth. Attendance was around 320 before the move and in recent weeks has neared 400. People are enjoying the large central lobby, a gathering area connecting the worship center, the children's wing, and student and adult classrooms.

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BEST OF SBTC R

The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention continues to provide tools and training to bring clarity, support, and momentum to every area of church life—from student ministry to evangelism to financial stewardship. Some of the resources listed here are new, while others are tried and true. Check out this list of tools designed to help your church charge into 2026 resourced and ready.

M-Link

Identifying missions partners can be tricky. Pastors and missions leaders know opportunities abound, but locating those partners can be difficult.

That's why SBTC leaders developed M-Link.

M-Link connects “going” churches looking for partners to serve with “hosting” churches looking to receive mission teams. Going and hosting churches each fill out an online form, providing information such as abilities, needs, group size, and budget, and M-Link assesses the data to provide the best matches for each one. Those opportunities could be in Texas or in areas where the SBTC has developed partnerships through initiatives such as Reach Nevada, Reach Puerto Rico, and Reach Europe.

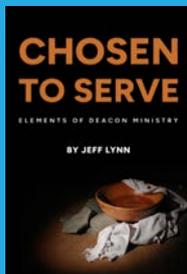
“I’m excited about this because it helps churches participate in the Great Commission in a way that uniquely assesses who they are and it’s based on their capacities and abilities as opposed to a one-size-fits-all missiology,” SBTC Missions Mobilization Associate Colin Rayburn said.

Chosen to Serve

Being a deacon is more than a title. It’s a calling to serve with humility, wisdom, and dedication. *Chosen to Serve* is a dynamic training meant to equip deacons with the biblical foundation, practical skills, and spiritual insight needed to serve effectively.

The curriculum is designed for those who are new to the role or for those seeking to deepen the effectiveness of their service. *Chosen to Serve* will soon be available through the SBTC Resource Webstore, and churches can also request on-site training.

“Healthy churches are served by healthy deacons,” said Jeff Lynn, the SBTC’s Church Health and Leadership senior strategist who wrote the curriculum. “Having served as a pastor for 25 years, I deeply value the difference it makes when men truly understand their role. I believe the principles in this training will not only encourage deacons but also empower pastors to serve more effectively.”



ReZoom

This weekly online gathering is meant to provide student ministers from all over the state with a little bit of everything. It’s intentionally held on Thursday mornings, giving participants who have midweek meetings a place to talk about what worked the night before, what didn’t, and everything in between. Even for those who don’t have a Wednesday night gathering, ReZoom provides opportunities for student ministers to network and support one another through the sharing of ideas, prayer, and more.

“Student ministers and leaders are just giving, giving, giving all the time,” SBTC Student Associate Grant Byrd said. “Sometimes they just want someone to listen to them, but sometimes they don’t want to talk at all—they just want to listen. We absolutely welcome that. I believe that as long as you’re willing to laugh at yourself and you’re willing to learn, you’re gonna love it.”



Online Disaster Relief Training

Americans woke up July 4 ready to celebrate Independence Day. Residents of Central Texas woke up that same day to what turned out to be one of the worst natural disasters in Texas history when flooding across the Hill Country and in the surrounding areas claimed the lives of at least 135 people.

SBTC Disaster Relief volunteers began mobilizing almost immediately. Around the same time, a significant spike in users was recorded on the SBTC DR online training site. The online modules include an introductory course that’s required for new volunteers and those seeking to renew their credentials, as well as specific training in areas such as Cleanup & Recovery and Feeding.

“Our ministry seeks to meet real needs and share the hope of Jesus Christ with those impacted by disasters,” SBTC DR Director Scottie Stice said. “These training modules will give you an orientation into disaster relief ministry and help users learn to safely work in disasters such as floods, fires, and tornadoes.”



Barriers & Bridges

Texas is one of the most ethnically diverse states in the U.S. That makes it one of the most religiously diverse places in the world, as well. In some cases, a Christian’s attempt to evangelize those around them requires them to have a basic understanding of what someone else believes.

Barriers & Bridges, a North American Mission Board resource available on the SBTC website, aims to educate Christians about the beliefs and practices of those who call North America home. The resource provides information on a range of belief systems ranging from Sikhism to Roman Catholicism to Wicca, as well as recommendations for how to strategically engage such groups. Each section of the guide includes a list of barriers to the gospel for each group, as well as ways to build bridges for them to have true faith in Jesus Christ.



RESOURCES 2025

1Cross Evangelism App

A couple of years ago, a Korean student attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary wanted to share the gospel with a Spanish-speaking Mexican man. Knowing the challenges presented by the language barrier between them, the student pulled out his phone and opened the SBTC's 1Cross app—a tool churches and individuals can use to share the gospel in nearly 70 languages. After hearing the gospel in his native language, the Mexican man gave his life to Christ and was connected to a church in Fort Worth.

Twelve years after its launch, 1Cross continues to be used by thousands of people around the world to engage in cross-cultural evangelism. The app has nearly 24,000 downloads, and 800 videos have been downloaded for use this year alone. In addition to video and audio gospel presentations, the app also provides links to other evangelism resources including trainings to evangelize Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Mormons.



Online Tax Seminars

Most people aren't itching to talk about unrelated business taxable income. They don't envision stimulating conversations about seeking formal recognition of exempt status or accountable expense reimbursement plans.

But churches don't have a choice. Each year, church staff—and often volunteers—carry the burden of stewarding God's resources well while facing complicated questions. For many, it can feel overwhelming.

Each January, the SBTC hosts a series of Online Tax Seminars to resource churches with the training they need to navigate the often cumbersome and confusing world of tax and finance. The seminars are led by professionals with decades of experience and offered at no cost to participants.

"In the changing world of administration, staying up to speed is important," SBTC Chief Financial Officer Joe Davis said. "These tax seminars bring churches up-to-date information as well as instruction on more traditional issues."



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'LET'S LEAN IN TOGETHER LIKE NEVER BEFORE'

Messengers challenged, inspired as new missionaries are sent, planters commissioned

Editor's note: The following recaps some of the highlights from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Annual Meeting held Oct. 22-23 at Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock.

LUBBOCK

They came from California, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. Some are newlyweds, others are new parents, and some are retired.

All will soon be headed to points across the globe—to South and Central Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

As missionaries were recognized

during an International Mission Board Sending Celebration on Oct. 27 at the SBTC Annual Meeting, SBTC Executive Director Nathan Lorick called the 31 new missionaries—many of whom concealed their faces because they will be serving in countries where proclaiming the gospel could be dangerous—"heroes."

SBTC President Danny Forshee, lead pastor of Great Hills Baptist Church in Austin, was visibly moved as the ceremony began. "We are sending our best," he said.

Earlier in the evening, dozens of church planters and spouses were recognized during a Send Network SBTC planter commissioning service.

"God is writing quite a story across Texas," said Send Network SBTC Director Jason Crandall, noting the organization is on track to plant 70 churches by the end of 2025, including 12 international language congregations. That would be the most churches planted in the convention's history in any single year.

"The nations aren't just coming to Texas—they are meeting Jesus here," Crandall said. Over the last four quarters, Send Network SBTC church plants have seen nearly 2,700 professions of faith with 952 baptized, he added.

—JANE RODGERS

Lorick: Let's 'lead the way as the gospel advances'

Churches across the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention are mobilizing.

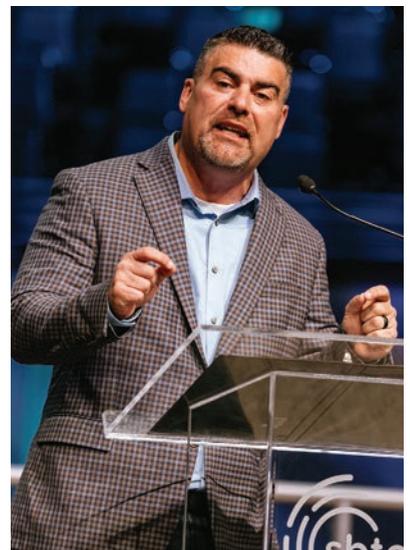
They are focused on prayer and continuing to generously support their shared mission by giving through the Cooperative Program. They are planting more churches than ever and joining forces with church leaders across state and national lines through strategic partnerships.

And they are seeing—and celebrating—God's blessing in those areas and many more.

In his Oct. 28 report to messengers, SBTC Executive Director Nathan Lorick shared some of the victories the Lord has provided in 2025. Thousands came to faith in Christ through events such as Crossover Dallas, which included 59 SBTC churches; disaster relief deployments that included a response to historic flooding in the Texas Hill Country; and evangelistic events such as M3 student camps and Youth Week.

"Let's lean in together like never before," Lorick said. "Let us lead the way as the gospel advances in America and the world, starting right here in Texas through the churches of the SBTC."

—JAYSON LARSON



MESQUITE'S TURNER ELECTED TO SERVE AS SBTC PRESIDENT

Caleb Turner, senior pastor of Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church, was elected SBTC president on Oct. 28. Turner formerly served as chairman of the SBTC Executive Board—the youngest ever to hold that responsibility.

Ed Johnson III was re-elected vice president. He is lead pastor of Harvest Fellowship Baptist Church in DeSoto and was nominated by Averri LeMalle, senior pastor of The Church at Jersey Village. Kason Branch, senior pastor of Creekstone Church in North Richland Hills, nominated Amy Hinote to serve a second term as convention secretary. She is a pastor's wife from First Baptist Church in Justin. All three officers were elected by acclamation.

The convention's operating budget for 2026 will be \$27.83 million, a .18% increase over the 2025 budget. The budget is essentially flat, with a \$50,000 increase funded from designated funds. The SBTC budget continues to call for 55% of undesignated receipts to be sent to the Southern Baptist Convention, while 45% of undesignated receipts remain in Texas to mobilize SBTC churches.

— GARY LEDBETTER

HAMLIN'S PONDER IS RECIPIENT OF LEADERS LEGACY AWARD

Russ Ponder, who has served West Texas churches for more than 25 years, received the Leaders Legacy Award during the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Executive Board report on Oct. 28.

Ponder pastors First Baptist Church in Hamlin.

"I am humbled and surprised to receive the Leaders Legacy Award," Ponder said. "[I'm] deeply grateful for the SBTC's 25-year impact on my life and the churches God has allowed me to serve."

The Leaders Legacy Award was established in 2021 by the Southern Baptists of Texas Foundation to annually recognize an individual who has "distinguished himself or herself by service to Christ through the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention or the Southern Baptist Convention."

— GARY LEDBETTER

PANEL OUTLINES NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHURCHES TO WORK WITH IMB

Before Paul Chitwood ever became president of the International Mission Board, testimonies from its missionaries changed his life and ministry.

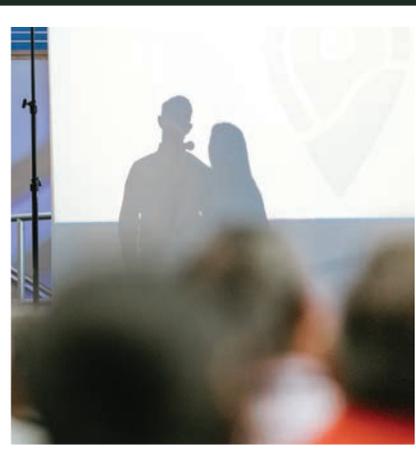
Although he never served as a career missionary, Chitwood said he and his wife, Michelle, "feel called to do everything we can do to ensure that our missionaries have everything they need to do what God has called them to do."

During the President's Luncheon panel on Oct. 28, Chitwood—along with SBTC Missional Ministries Associate Colin Rayburn and moderator Danny Forshee—talked about ways churches can engage with the IMB.

Rayburn mentioned M-Link, a new online tool available through the SBTC that matches churches that have needs with sister churches that can meet those needs. Those churches may not only include SBTC churches, but those that are part of the convention's ministry partnerships in Nevada, Puerto Rico, and Europe.

Chitwood also referenced the latter of those, known as Reach Europe—the partnership between the SBTC and IMB to bring the gospel to what has been described as one of the most lost continents on the planet. In addition to churches mobilizing toward those opportunities, he urged continued giving through the Cooperative Program, which marked its 100th anniversary this year.

— JANE RODGERS



Scan the QR code for more on this year's annual meeting.



A LEGACY OF GIVING & WATCHING GOD WORK

Sacrificial giving has been Calvary
Beaumont's story for 125 years



BEAUMONT

The sacrificial giving that happens at Calvary Baptist Church today has a direct link to the church's beginning.

At the turn of the 20th century, First Baptist Church in Beaumont sponsored gospel worker Sue Cochran's efforts to establish a Sunday school in an area known as the Cartwright Addition, growing from an oil boom.

That Sunday school, after a couple of name changes, is now Calvary Beaumont. After 125 years, the church is still going strong.

"From its very beginning, Calvary has been a church that exists because of the giving of another Baptist church that had a gospel heart and a mission mindset," said Justin Buchanan, Calvary's lead pastor since 2023. "We are indebted to First Baptist Beaumont for the work

that they did and their willingness to see the work of God happening and the gospel advancing so that the kingdom would increase here and around the world."

About 700 people attend Calvary on Sundays. The church has two campuses and a Hispanic congregation and is among the top givers through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' funding plan for national and international missions and ministries.

"We owe our whole existence to the generosity of God's people who were willing to give to the mission, sacrificially providing resources to start a work that has become Calvary for the last 125 years," Buchanan said. "I think that has just always been part of the DNA of who the people are here at Calvary."

The church has been involved in disaster relief, sending teams to Florida and Georgia during the past year to address the aftermath of hurricanes. Calvary has sent mis-



▲ An international ministry at Calvary is among the many ways the congregation is reaching the world for Christ.

◀ Church members have traveled to various countries, including Tanzania, on mission trips to share the gospel.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

missionaries through the International Mission Board and other mission organizations and has sent some who are fully funded by the congregation.

“[We have] watched God work in the midst of our people,” Buchanan said, noting CP has enabled them to be called out to serve across the globe.

After faithfully supporting CP throughout its century-long existence, Calvary continues to find ways to keep support of the mission relevant. New member classes explain CP and what it funds. Sometimes new members are coming from an unchurched background or from a different denomination and have no concept of something as unique as the Cooperative Program, the pastor said.

“I think they’re trying to get their heads around it and understand what it is, why it’s there, and why it’s important,” he said.

The work goes beyond sending missionaries and training pastors, Buchanan said. When he was a pastor in North Carolina, he saw CP dollars fund children’s homes, foster care, and adoption processes. Such a picture of believers’ adoption as daughters and sons into the family of God is motivation for CP giving, he said.

“We owe our whole existence to the generosity of God’s people who were willing to give to the mission, sacrificially providing resources to start a work that has become Calvary for the last 125 years.”

—JUSTIN BUCHANAN

“In 2025, it’s as important as ever to give to the Cooperative Program because the work of Southern Baptists has not diminished and the need has not reduced,” Buchanan said. “The mission is still ever so critical and must remain central to who we are and what we do.”

Earlier this year, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention Executive Director Nathan Lorick spoke at Calvary, and “there was just a move of God among hearts as he served that morning,” particularly as he asked people to think of specific people they could ask God to save.

The church has benefited from SBTC personnel advising them on discipleship and other ministry areas.



What began as a Sunday school in 1900 is now called Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont, a strong congregation committed to giving through the Cooperative Program. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

“We had a special needs training weekend for the community, and the SBTC staff helped us with that to know what we needed to address ... to best be a church for all people and everyone made in the image of God,” Buchanan said.

Looking back, God used the Cooperative Program in various ways to shape Buchanan for ministry. He didn’t know of anyone in his family who had been a pastor, and until ninth grade he attended a small Bible church in his hometown in East Tennessee. Then his family moved to a Southern Baptist congregation.

“It was there in that Southern Baptist church that not only did God bring me to salvation, but also then called me to vocational ministry,” he said. “I went out from that church after college to attend Southeastern Seminary to be trained for this calling of God upon my life.”

Buchanan has served on staffs at Southern Baptist churches, planted a church in North Carolina, and served for a time as a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

“I am indebted to those who have already fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith, but who in their lifetimes and their generations gave to see the work of God and the gospel message advance,” he said.

“Because of that, they have left a legacy that has impacted my life, enriched who I am, and brought me to where I am today in following God.”



3 ways to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 2025:



Pray for record CP giving

CP100 is an opportunity for record giving, acknowledging God’s favor upon our cooperative work. Many churches will mark this anniversary with increased giving. Consider how God is leading your church to give during CP’s anniversary year.



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Post a CP100 Story

Post your story to share how God has used CP to bless your life. Use #cp100story when you post to your social channels.



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One voice to glorify God



Editor's note: In celebration of the Cooperative Program's 100th anniversary, each issue of the Texan this year will include a testimony from a pastor explaining why his church gives through and believes in CP.

I began attending Southern Baptist churches before I was even born—my earliest memories shaped by pews, hymnals, and the steady encouragement of my father, who was a Southern Baptist pastor.

As a preacher's kid, I remember sitting in the sanctuary as missionaries on furlough visited from all over the globe, always expressing heartfelt thanks to our congregation for supporting something called the Cooperative Program.

The Cooperative Program is a unified funding system through which Southern Baptist churches pool resources to support missions, seminaries, and ministries around the world. At the time, I didn't fully grasp what those missionaries were referring to. It wasn't until I prepared to enter seminary myself that I began to understand the profound impact of the Cooperative Program—in my personal life and beyond.

Not only did the Cooperative Program shape my personal journey, but its reach extends far beyond individual stories. For example, when the time came for seminary, there was only one SBC seminary in Texas able to offset tuition costs: my beloved Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Thanks to Cooperative Program support, I was able to pursue two degrees—one from SWBTS and another from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary—without the overwhelming financial burden so many students face.

While attending seminary, I came to see how Southern Baptists, through the Cooperative Program, work together to reach the nations with the gospel. The program enables full-time missionaries to serve without having to pause their ministry for fundraising trips home. I'll never forget hearing the stories of the missionaries who visited our church. I remember the couple sent out by First Baptist Church of George West through the International Mission Board to an East Asian nation and how they were able to go because you gave.

What's your Cooperative Program story?

Post your story to your social channels and use #cp100story.

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As my horizons broadened, I also learned about the churches planted across North America because of ongoing Cooperative Program support. This initiative is only possible by the cooperative spirit among Southern Baptists, who choose daily to work together as one voice so the nations may hear the gospel.

In 2017, when Hurricane Harvey devastated the Rockport-Fulton community, Coastal Oaks Church benefited from Cooperative Program giving through disaster relief ministries from SBTC and the North American Mission Board. Their presence was a living testament to the power of partnership and generosity, answering the call to go and serve as one voice so the nations will hear the gospel.

Every church I have pastored over the last 25 years—from a rural community in Central Texas to the vibrant city of Honolulu and back to the Texas coast—has supported the Cooperative Program. In each context, I witnessed firsthand how those gifts made a global impact. Romans 15:5-6 says, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As we strive to reach the nations as Jesus commanded, I urge you to continue giving through the Cooperative Program so we may continue in "one voice to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When you give, you equip and mobilize young men and women—like I once was, growing up in the brush country of South Texas—to fulfill the Great Commission so that all may hear, and by hearing the Word of Christ, believe.



Chris Irving is senior pastor of Coastal Oaks Church in Rockport.



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Q&A **FIVE MINUTES**

with **Michael Cooper**

Lead pastor of Mabank's Grace Community Church since 2013, Michael Cooper trusted Christ at age 17 and was called to the ministry at 18. Following college, he earned a doctorate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and in addition to pastoring, serves as an adjunct college and seminary professor and lecturer. He is active in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, this year serving on the credentials committee. Cooper has authored numerous articles and the book *Cruciform Identity: Union with Christ and Christian Formation*. Cooper and his wife, Kailie, are the proud parents of two little girls, Sophia Grace and Lydia Joy. He is passionate about the history of preaching, severe storm spotting, music, and the Dallas Cowboys.

What have you been celebrating at the church lately?

We've been in a state of transition. We moved into our new worship space in 2023. While we've had some ups and downs, God has been faithful to provide an abundance of grace. There is a renewed focus on discipleship.

What are some ways the church is ministering to the Mabank community?

We are prioritizing outreach in various ways. In the spring we had 30 members go knocking on doors. We have a presence in the community. Recently, we had specific conferences dedicated to reaching students, women, and men.

What is one thing you are praying will happen over the next year at Grace?

A renewed focus on missions. This past summer, a group from the church went on a domestic mission trip to North Carolina. This was a first for our church. I pray that this will continue.

What's one thing you have learned to this point of your life and ministry you know you will never forget?

How difficult it is to maintain healthy boundaries in life and ministry. I have to own my "stuff." Be quick to repent, forgive, and love.

How can other SBTC churches be praying for you and your ministry?

Continued faithfulness to keep plodding well. My revised dissertation, based on the theology of preaching of 17th century pastor Benjamin Keach, is being published by Wipf and Stock in 2026. I am beginning the slow work of revision. Pray for sustained personal growth and intimacy with Christ.

church tax
SEMINAR

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Informing and educating church leaders and administrators about church and pastoral tax laws. These online tax seminars include new and revised laws and procedures for the upcoming year.

JANUARY 20 1-4:30PM

JANUARY 22 9AM-12:30PM





‘I’ve learned that God is faithful’

I’VE BEEN THE PASTOR of Smyrna Baptist Church [in Atlanta, Texas] for more than 38 years. This is the first church, and the only church, I’ve pastored.

I wasn’t raised in church. In fact, I can probably count on one hand how many times I was in church prior to junior high. But when I was a freshman in high school, I used to walk the streets of Algerita, Texas [near San Saba]. I knew my parents loved me. I loved my brothers and my sister, but there was such a gnawing inside of me and I would just walk. I started running around with some kids who just loved each other, and they laughed all the time. They saw delight and joy in so many things. In order to be with them, I started going to church. And over a period of months, I gained knowledge of God’s love for me, of my problem—which was sin—and God’s solution, which was Jesus.

One Sunday morning, I was sitting by one of these young ladies and when the invitation started, I had such a pull within me that I started shuffling my feet and fidgeting. The young lady stepped out into the middle aisle to let me out and I went up and talked to Brother Powers and told him I needed to be saved. He sent me back with the deacon. He didn’t share any Scripture, but he said, “Gene, if you will ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin and take control of your life and be your Lord and Savior, He will save you just like that.” And as much as I understood, I did.

▲ Gene Parker has pastored Smyrna Baptist Church in Atlanta for more than 38 years.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

“God was faithful to always call to me and say, ‘Come and join me on what I’m doing and trust me even though you don’t understand what I’m doing.’ That is the one thing that really, really stands out.”

—GENE PARKER

You know, I share with folks that when you trust Christ, it doesn’t mean everything is going to be OK. That very next year, my dad died of cancer. Our family just kind of fell apart. I lived with my older brother, I lived with my older sister, I lived with an aunt. Through all this I’d gotten out of church. I was miserable. But still, God reminded me, “You are not your own. You’ve been bought at a price.”

My senior year, I had a family that just loved me back into the church and a pastor who started meeting with me to talk about spiritual growth, about discipleship, prayer, and studying God’s Word. And I started growing.

My second year of junior college, I felt God calling me into the ministry. I thought I would be the oldest youth minister in Texas. I’d served full-time at First Baptist Liberty City for four years when my pastor, Bruce Wells, asked me one day, “Gene, what is God saying to you? What’s God doing in your life?” I answered that I loved serving the church, but I felt like something was missing. He asked if God might be changing my calling.

I asked, “Can He do that?” And he said, “You knucklehead! You know He can.” He counseled me to pray about it. I did and God confirmed a call to the preaching ministry that summer.

I stayed there another year and a half. When Bruce went on a visit, I went with him. When he visited someone who was lost, I was with him. He tried to teach me every-

thing that a pastor should do, and the things a pastor should never do. I really believe that's why I've been here at Smyrna [so long], because there was a foundation laid.

My wife, Celeta, and I have raised our family here at Smyrna. We have four children and 11 grandchildren. And for our time in Atlanta, we've lived in a parsonage. Currently, we are building a home of our own.

This church has had problems like any other church. Because there's a trust and a compassion from the congregation to the pastor and the pastor to the congregation, we've weathered some crazy things together. But God has always been the focus, and He has walked us right through.

I've learned that God is faithful, that regardless of the circumstances, regardless of whether I understood or not, God was faithful to always call to me and say, "Come and join me on what I'm doing and trust me even though you don't understand what I'm doing." That is the one thing that really, really stands out.

One advantage of staying in one church for a long time is you truly come to know the heart of your people, and they come to know your heart. I tell our folks all the time, "Y'all, if you're coming because of the pastor, then you're here for the wrong reason." It's never for any person except the Lord Jesus Christ. If we keep our focus on Him, then we're going to find harmony in the church and will know the purpose for which God has called us—and that is to make Christ known.

▶ Parker is pictured with his wife, Celeta.

▲ The Parkers are seen with their kids and grandkids at a recent gathering.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Want to share a story of what God is doing in your life or your church?

Scan the QR code or email jlarrison@sbtexas.com to tell us your story.



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Visit sbtexas.com/oneday

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bell**

Children's Minister
Belle Aire Baptist Church
Murfreesboro, TN



**TODD
fisher**

Executive Director
Treasurer for Oklahoma Baptists



**JESSICA
peck**

Pediatric Nurse Practitioner &
Professor at Baylor University

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Empowering Women

TO LEAD + SERVE

sbtexas.com/women

The SBTC is dedicated to empowering women in their faith journey and ministry roles by fostering growth, collaboration, and support.



WOMEN'S *Roundtable* CONVERSATIONS

Jan. 24, 2026

MULTISITE

Come network and share ministry ideas and solutions with women's ministry leaders from smaller churches across Texas.

Register

sbtexas.com/roundtable

PASTOR WIVES

Connection Night

Feb. 5, 2026

Lamar Baptist Church, Arlington

A time to engage with and be encouraged by other pastor wives.

Register

sbtexas.com/pastorwives

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Leadership SUMMIT

Evangelism • Discipleship

Feb. 6-7 | Lamar Baptist Church, Arlington | sbtexas.com/wmsummit

This month's training and networking event will focus on the topics of evangelism and discipleship. Come learn the essentials and importance of these two core components and how to implement them in your church setting.

Reach Texas



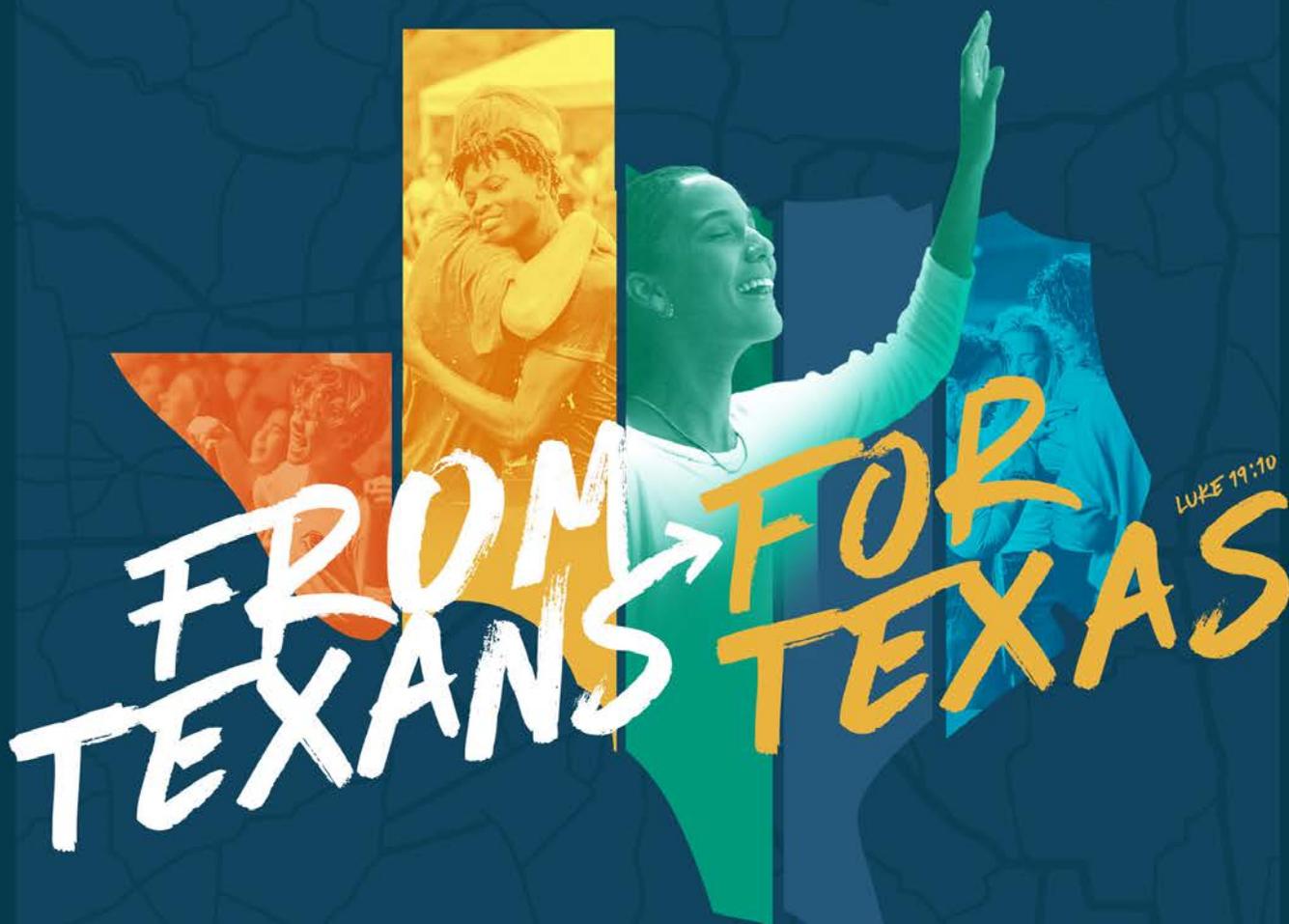
SBTC STATE
MISSIONS OFFERING



Though the Week of Prayer is over, the impact never stops.

You can give through the Reach Texas State Missions Offering throughout the year, as well as access resources to help you plan a Sunday of emphasis, via the SBTC website.

[SBTEXAS.COM/REACHTEXAS](https://sbtcexas.com/reachtexas)



Church Positions

Church positions are updated weekly at texanonline.net/church-positions.

PASTOR

Kingston Avenue Baptist Church in Odessa is seeking a FT senior pastor for a small congregation to lead in spiritual growth while upholding the church's values and mission. Please send resume to heather@turntotheone.net.

Oaklawn Baptist Church in Texarkana is seeking a bivocational pastor. Interested pastors should please submit your resumes to jhdaniels58@yahoo.com.

College Avenue Baptist Church in McGregor is seeking a FT pastor to join us in prayer and worship. We are a small congregation between 30-40 members each Sunday. We have a beautiful church with lots of room for growth. Send resume to collegeavenue1929@gmail.com.

Wheelock Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor for our small rural congregation in Robertson County. Send resume to David Smith at wheelockchurch@gmail.com or to P.O. Box 156, Wheelock, Texas 77882.

Parkhills Baptist Church in San Antonio is seeking a FT teaching pastor with a clear calling and a gift for expository preaching and leadership. Send cover letter and resume to teachingpastorsearch@parkhillsc.org.

Pollock Baptist Church is seeking a FT pastor. Please email Diana Perkins at dllperkalot@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church in Mobeetie is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resume to fbcmobeetiepastorsearch@yahoo.com.

First Baptist Church in Winnsboro is seeking a FT lead pastor. search@fbcwinnsboro.org. 903-342-3538.

Calvary Baptist Church of Pampa is seeking a FT senior pastor. search.team@calvarypampa.com. Calvary Baptist Church, 900 E. 23rd, Pampa, Texas 79065. 806-665-0842. calvarypampa.com.

Calvary Baptist Church in Hughes Springs is seeking a bivocational senior pastor searching for a church home to shepherd. Visit calvarybchs.com or search our Facebook page (Calvary Baptist Church of Hughes Springs) for more information. Contact 903-720-8772 (Brandon) or 903-563-2288 (Byron), or send application to brandoncalcote21@gmail.com.

FBC Springlake in Earth is seeking a FT pastor. Contact Kent Parish, P.O. Box 717, Earth, Texas 79031, or email kentparish422@gmail.com.

Clearfork Baptist Church in Hawley is seeking a FT pastor. cbcpastorsc@gmail.com.

FBC Ben Wheeler is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. Send resume and sermon samples to apply.fbcbw@gmail.com.

Southmayd Baptist Church is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. Rural community, less than 100 member SBC church (SBTC member). Prefer SBC seminary trained with a minimum 3 years lead pastor experience. Send resume attention to Pastor Search Committee to smaydbaptist@gmail.com or P.O. Box 8, Southmayd, Texas 76268.

FBC Moody is seeking a FT pastor who is a loving family man, loves God, and has a shepherd's heart. We are a small but generous congregation with excellent facilities and a recently refurbished parsonage. Realizing the importance of education, we are open to a man continuing his education. Contact tomvirginia013@gmail.com.

MUSIC

Shady Oaks Baptist Church in Hurst is seeking a PT (10-12 hours) worship leader. Contact Jay Fannin (lead pastor) at jayfannin@shadyoaks.org. 817-874-5741.

FBC Hamshire is seeking a PT (with potential for

FT) minister of music. Will report to senior pastor. PT salary range is \$40,000-\$45,000 (FT salary range approximately \$60,000-\$65,000). Send resume to jeastepp253@gmail.com.

Western Hills Baptist Church in Wichita Falls is seeking a bivocational worship leader to provide spiritual leadership for worship services through a blended worship on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Please send your resume to whbcwfresume@gmail.com or call 940-782-2936 for more information.

FBC Heath is seeking a PT worship leader to plan and lead weekly worship and have other duties as needed. mfarish@fbcheath.com

Glen Meadows Baptist Church in San Angelo is seeking a FT worship minister. scotty@lifecatalystconsulting.com.

FBC Winona is seeking a PT minister of music. music@winonafbc.org.

Nolan River Road Baptist Church in Cleburne seeks a PT music minister. Experience leading a blended but contemporary leaning service preferred. To apply, send cover letter and resume to office@nrrbc.org.

Emmanuel Baptist Church in New Caney is seeking a FT or PT worship leader to join our team. We are looking for a passionate individual who has experience leading worship, strong musical abilities, and discipleship skills to build a team. info@ebc.life.

STUDENTS

First Baptist Church in Post is currently seeking a FT (or PT depending on the situation) youth minister. Email pastorkeithgarner@gmail.com or call 806-495-3554.

Madisonville Christian Fellowship is seeking a FT youth pastor. youthsearch@mcfcchurch.org

Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler is seeking a FT middle school minister who works in collaboration with the student ministry staff. This includes activities, outreach, education, and leadership training. This is a salaried position and requires a 40+ hour work week. Apply at gabc.org/jobs.

FBC Alvarado is seeking a PT associate pastor of students (20+hrs per week) to supervise, coordinate, and provide for student discipleship, ministry, activities, and to enlist workers. Contact Brad Ransom at 817-975-6675 or email personnel@fbcalvarado.org.

Glen Meadows Baptist Church in San Angelo is seeking a FT associate pastor of youth discipleship. scotty@lifecatalystconsulting.com.

Hope Church in Montgomery is a growing six-year-old church plant looking for a FT youth pastor. If you are looking for a healthy culture in an established and multiplying church plant, this opportunity might be for you. Forward-thinking, Jesus-loving, hard-working applicants only, please. Send resume to justin@hopemontgomery.com.

Lamar Baptist Church in Wichita Falls is looking to grow the discipleship of the church across the generations through a director/minister of NexGen & youth. Position will start bivocational with a goal to be FT. Apply online with the SBTC or mail resume to 1100 Harrison St., Wichita Falls, Texas 76309.

Audubon Park Baptist Church in Garland is searching for a PT youth pastor. We have young people ready for leadership. Please email resume to apbcstaff@att.net or mail to APBC, P.O. Box 495277, Garland, Texas 75049-5277.

FBC Sudan is searching for a PT bivocational youth

director to develop and build a ministry focused on our mission of reaching the youth in our community and the surrounding area. To apply, send resume and cover letter to mike@fbcudan.org.

New Hebron Baptist Church in Waskom is seeking a PT student pastor. Please call the church office at 903-633-2645 for more information.

Midway Baptist Church in Big Spring is seeking a FT associate pastor of students & family to lead a growing student ministry by providing Christ-centered biblical teaching to students and their families. Position includes administrative and outreach duties. Competitive salary and parsonage with some utilities included. Email resume to midwaybaptist@gmail.com.

FBC Odessa is seeking a FT youth pastor. Send resume to bmcwilliams@fbcodessa.com.

CHILDREN

First Baptist Church in Wake Village is seeking a PT children's minister. 820 Wake Ave., Wake Village, Texas 75501. 903-832-4588.

Haltom Road Baptist Church in Haltom City (3313 Haltom Road) is seeking a PT children's minister (15 hours/week). If interested, please email Pastor Andrew at andrew@haltomroadbaptist.org.

Hope Church in Montgomery is a six-year-old church plant looking for a PT children's minister. We have 50-100 kids on Sundays. The candidate should be fun, mature, experienced, and love discipling kids and families. Contact Justin Dancer, 936-777-0009, justin@hopemontgomery.com.

Rock Hill Baptist Church in Brownsboro is seeking a FT or PT early childhood ministry associate. If interested, please contact Kevin King at kevin@rockhillbc.com.

COMBINATION

West End Baptist Church in Industry is seeking a FT associate pastor of worship and family ministry. Send resume attention to pastor@westendchurch.net. See full description and apply on the SBTC Job Board.

His Place Fellowship in Paris is seeking a FT childrens/youth families pastor. Please call Mike Fortenberry at 903-782-6759 or send resume to mikefortenberry@hotmail.com.

OTHER

Rock Hill Baptist Church in Brownsboro is seeking a FT director of its New Life Recovery ministry. Will be responsible for the oversight, development, expansion, and stability of the ministry. Applicants can contact Kevin King, executive pastor, at kevin@rockhillbc.com.

Lake Tomahawk Christian Retreat Center near Livingston is seeking a FT camp manager with a heart and passion to lead and develop a growing camp ministry. This person will cast vision for the future growth and development of Lake Tomahawk. Must live onsite per state regulations. Send resume to careers@sanjacintobaptist.com.

Bayou City Fellowship seeks a FT community groups pastor at its Tomball location. We exist to be radically focused on Jesus, serve our city and world, and start new churches. We are committed to living in authentic community, growing in God's Word, and making disciples who make disciples. Send resume to barb.vanderhey@bayoucityfellowship.com.

FBC Alvarado is seeking a PT (25-30 hours per week) church secretary. Resume can be sent to personnel@fbcalvarado.org.

Annual Church Profile



One of the tools that allows the SBTC to mobilize churches more effectively is the Annual Church Profile (ACP).

Why ACP Matters

- ACP is used to share and celebrate how God is moving in SBTC churches.
- ACP determines each church's SBC messenger eligibility.
- ACP determines the representation for SBC boards.

How to Participate

Submit your church's ACP for the 2025 reporting year (Oct. 1, 2024 through Sept. 30, 2025).
ACP's are due Feb. 9, 2026.

Learn how to submit your ACP at sbtexas.com/acp



Event Calendar



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



NOV. 30 – DEC. 7

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

4-6 Student Minister Getaway, Austin



JAN. 6–8

Highland Baptist Church, Waco

- 6** Regenesis One-Day, Corpus Christi
- 16-17** Charge WKND, Arlington
- 20** Regenesis One-Day, Rockdale
- 20** Regenesis One-Day, Pittsburg
- 20** Online Tax Seminar
- 22** Online Tax Seminar
- 24** Women's Roundtable Conversations (multisite)
- 27** Regenesis One-Day, Abilene
- 27** Regenesis One-Day, Woodville
- 30** Interim Pastor Equipping, San Antonio
- 30-31** Charge WKND, Lubbock
- 31** Equip South Texas, San Antonio



FEB. 23–24

Irving Convention Center

- 5** Pastor Wives Connection Night, Arlington
- 5-10** Reach Puerto Rico: Vision Tour
- 6-7** Women's Ministry Leadership Summit, Arlington
- 9** Make Disciples Like Jesus Workshop, Allen
- 10** Make Disciples Like Jesus Workshop, Iowa Park
- 10** Regenesis One-Day, College Station
- 13-14** Charge WKND, Georgetown
- 19** Regenesis One-Day, Mexia
- 20-21** Apoderados, Fort Worth
- 22** Asian Evangelism Conference, DFW
- 22** Empower Student Rally, Irving
- 22-23** Shepherds Collective Preaching Summit, Irving
- 23** Interim Pastor Equipping, Irving
- 27-28** Charge WKND, Katy
- 28** VBS State Training, Canton
- 28** Intro to DR & Phase 1 Training, San Angelo

SBTC Resource Webstore

Check out the SBTC Resource Webstore, where you will find tools to help your church share Jesus, grow multiplying disciples, and much more.

2.23-2.24

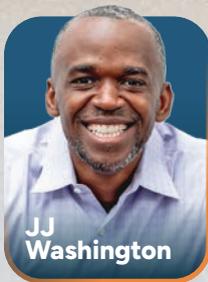
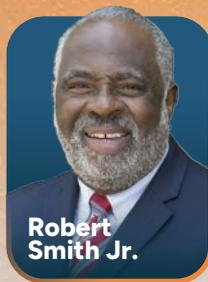
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