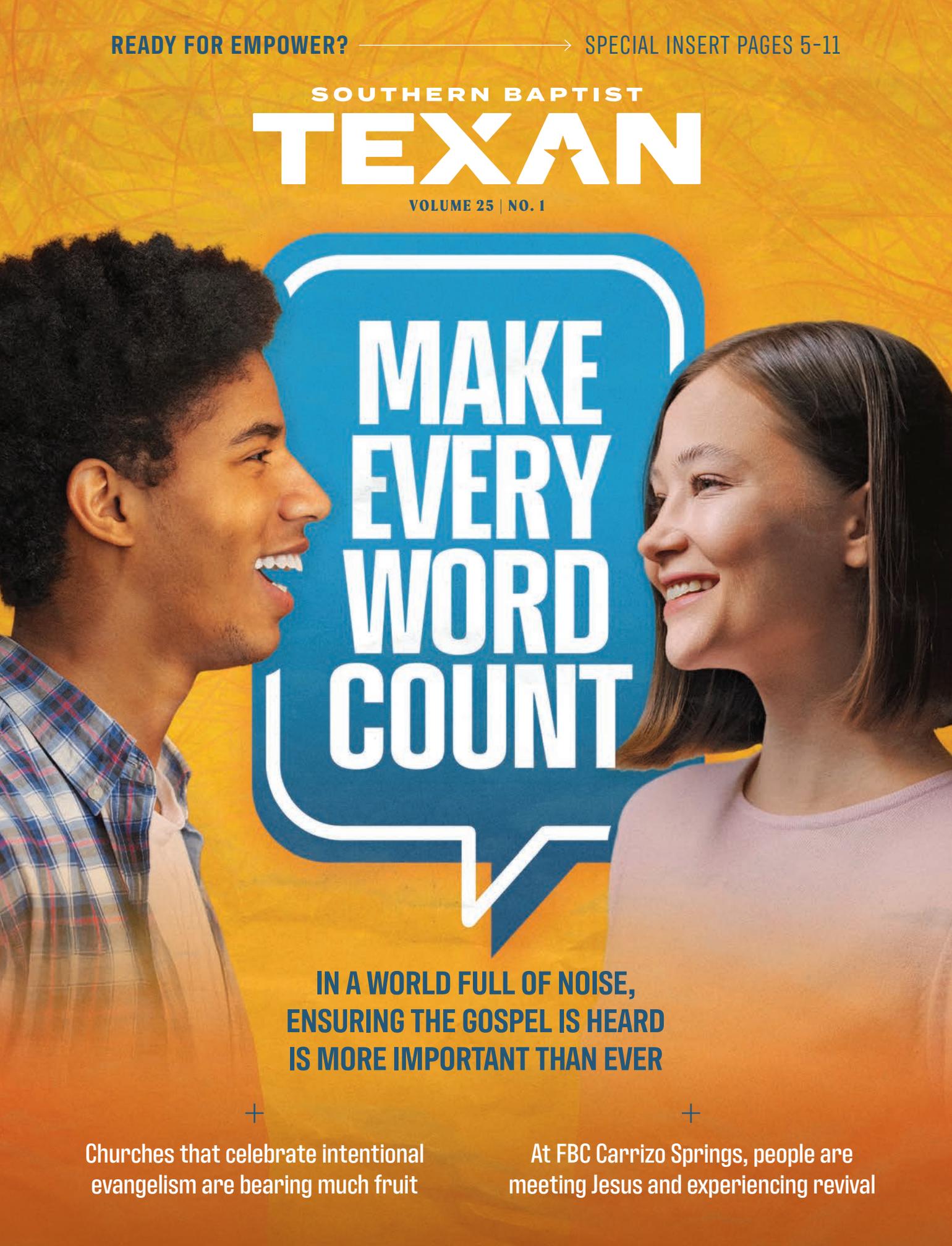


READY FOR EMPOWER?

SPECIAL INSERT PAGES 5-11

SOUTHERN BAPTIST
TEXAN

VOLUME 25 | NO. 1



**MAKE
EVERY
WORD
COUNT**

**IN A WORLD FULL OF NOISE,
ENSURING THE GOSPEL IS HEARD
IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER**



Churches that celebrate intentional evangelism are bearing much fruit



At FBC Carrizo Springs, people are meeting Jesus and experiencing revival

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **NATHAN LORICK**



Taking advantage of every opportunity

ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS TO DO outside of my service to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is volunteering as a fireman and chaplain for a small fire department. Occasionally, I get called out to respond to scenes where a person has died. In these instances, I get to the location as quickly as possible to minister to the family.

Every time I am there, I am reminded how fragile life is and that we are here for only a short time. It also reminds me of the need to be intentional about telling as many people about Jesus as possible.



If you are like me, life is so busy. We have demands from our jobs, family commitments, church activities, and all the other things the days bring us. However, if we are not careful, we can be so caught up in being busy that we forget to be intentional. The pressures and deadlines we face take priority and before we know it, we barely create any time for spiritual matters.

As you kick off this new year, I would like to encourage you to be intentional about sharing the gospel as many times as you can. To do this, we must live with an awareness everywhere we go. Every day, we encounter people who are hurting, lost, discouraged, and empty. We have the answer for all those things and more—the gospel. God has given us a great opportunity to show people they can have hope through Jesus. As you go get coffee or a haircut, shop at the grocery store or go to work, look at those things as a mission opportunity instead of an errand or something that must be checked off your to-do list. See those people through the eyes of Christ, who came to seek and save them.

Life is fragile, but the gospel is powerful. We are only here for a brief time, but eternity is forever. Let this be the year the gospel drives us to live with purpose and intentionality by sharing Jesus with those around us. I believe God will bless our efforts.

I love you and am honored to serve you!

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

nlorick@sbtexas.com

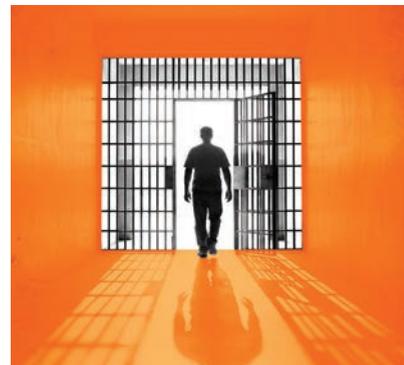
AS YOU GO GET COFFEE OR A HAIRCUT, SHOP AT THE GROCERY STORE OR GO TO WORK, LOOK AT THOSE THINGS AS A MISSION OPPORTUNITY INSTEAD OF AN ERRAND OR SOMETHING THAT MUST BE CHECKED OFF YOUR TO-DO LIST.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST TEXAN

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A higher purpose.*



The things we cherish

CHRISTMAS HAS COME AND GONE, but for me, it's always on my mind. I keep a running list of gift ideas in the notes app on my phone, so when someone in my family mentions something throughout the year they want or need, I surreptitiously make a note to tuck away for later.

I'm harder to buy for—or so I'm told. That's because the older I get, the less "stuff" I want. The things I value most aren't available in stores: quality time with my family (which now includes two adult children and a grandson); time to sit and rock in my chair, soaking up God's beautiful creation outside; quiet moments not to think or strategize or plan for the future, but to just be.

That's the good stuff.

A couple of days after Christmas, I saw a reel on social media about a gift a grandfather gave his grandchildren. He spent the entire year recording the Bible in his own voice. On Christmas day, he gifted each grandchild with a thumb drive containing the audio files so they'd always be able to hear God's Word in his voice, even long after he's gone. He spent nothing more than what it cost to purchase a thumb drive and created a priceless family heirloom.

That's the good stuff.



I remembered that grandfather's gift as I read Jen Wilkin's Q&A included in this issue. Wilkin, the popular women's Bible teacher and author, talks about ways we can own and internalize God's Word so our relationship with Him can deepen and become more personal. Among her suggestions is writing out books of the Bible by hand.

Let's be honest: Most of the things you bought for Christmas this year will be forgotten or out of use by next Christmas. And though Wilkin wasn't talking about Christmas gifts, she was conveying a more profound truth: There is no greater gift—a miracle, she calls it—than God's Word, His revelation to us. Can you imagine how special it would be to have a handwritten copy of the Bible from a long-passed relative who set a standard of godliness in your family?

The point here isn't about giving great gifts. It's about cherishing that which holds the most value—things like God's Word, which only appreciate in value over time. As you launch into 2026, you may have resolutions or goals or whatever you call them—heights you want to reach, ways you want to improve. I pray that at the top of your list and mine is the desire to not only know God's Word on a deeper level, but to know Him more in 2026 than we did in 2025.

May the words of Deuteronomy 6:6-9 be our guide: "These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates."

Yeah, that's the good stuff.

Got a cherished family heirloom that has spiritual value? Email me at jlarsen@sbtexas.com and I may share your story with our readers in an upcoming issue.

APRIL 10, 2026

Preview Day



On Friday, April 10, come to Preview Day at Southwestern Seminary. You'll get to meet the professors, learn about various degree programs, and find out how Southwestern can equip you to live your calling.

Sign up for free at
[SWBTS.EDU/PREVIEW](https://www.swbts.edu/preview)



Compelled to be agents of change

“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also ...” – Acts 17:6

C **AN I BE HONEST WITH YOU?** There are times when I am so comfortable being comfortable that I forget the calling on my life requires me to be in places and positions that do not always feel the best. My heart’s desire is that God’s will is not only done, but magnified in and through me. However, my flesh is not always willing to do what it takes to see that accomplished. We often want world-changing results but are unwilling to consistently take part in self-changing routines.

In Acts 16, Paul is beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. After his miraculous prison experience and the conversion of the Philippian jailer, he travels over 100 miles to Thessalonica. Imagine the bruising of Paul’s flesh as well as the swelling of his joints and ligaments. His body would have been in less than perfect condition, but he still moved forward because the gospel needed to be shared.

In Acts 17, Paul and Silas preach the gospel. The results are so staggering, the Jews of the city declare they have “turned the world upside down.” On its surface, the criticism stated by these men could be perceived as negative—but how awesome would it be if those who stand



“
THE GOSPEL DOES
NOT CALL US TO
BE COMFORTABLE
ADHERENTS,
BUT IT SHOULD
COMPEL US TO BE
CHANGE AGENTS.
”

in opposition to God’s movement would say something similar about our lives, churches, and convention. The gospel does not call us to be comfortable adherents, but it should compel us to be change agents.

As a perfectionist, I have a hard time functioning if everything is not the way I designed it in my mind. Even though I spend countless hours planning, preparing, and praying, I still struggle when things aren’t right. The truth is there will be moments in life when perfection is not the goal, but participation is. Regardless of how seasons of life may be, we still need to move forward according to God’s will.

Allow me to encourage you today: Keep moving forward. Let us be lockstep in minimizing what we don’t have and magnifying what we do have: the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when this gospel is shared with the sin-sick and dying, it should cause the enemy to exclaim, “These men are turning our world upside down!”

2.23.26

Irving Convention Center



Schedule

sbtexas.com/empower

EMPOWER CONFERENCE 2026

Ministry demands never stop. Leaders face relentless pressure from packed schedules, limited resources, and the constant need for solutions. Empower is led by experienced ministry leaders who have faced these same challenges and developed practical, effective ways to reach communities across Texas and beyond—where the need for the gospel remains as great as ever. Check out this year’s schedule and make plans to attend as we maximize our kingdom impact together.

SUNDAY, FEB. 22

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 PM | 2:45-4:15 PM

+ 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 PM | 2:45-4:15 PM

+ Afternoon Breakouts

4:00-5:30 PM

+ Closing Session

5:45-7:15 PM

+ Black Church Network Dinner

+ Missions Mobilization Network Dinner



**Refreshed.
Empowered.
Mobilized.**

Made possible by CP giving

TELLING THE STORY OF GOD'S GLORY

Before believers can share God's redemptive plan with others, they must fully grasp it themselves



JT English has served as lead pastor at Storyline Church in Arvada, Colo., since 2020. He will be among the speakers at this year's Empower Conference, scheduled for Feb. 23-24. English recently spoke with the *Texan* about the critical importance of believers fully grasping God's story so they can effectively share that story with others.

In your upcoming book, *Remember and Rehearse*, you discuss the many stories that compete for our attention—the story God intends for us to hear, but also the stories the world tries to tell us. What's at stake in this ongoing battle for our minds?

JT: I want every single person to know they are living in a story. Ever since Genesis 3, there have been these false stories that have invaded our world. They're compelling, but they're also deceitful and they tend to compete for our affections and for our lives. At the core of what God has done for us is He has given us the only true story in Scripture. The reality of the Bible isn't just that it's a bunch of compiled stories—it is one true story about how God is making all things right in the person of Christ. But as disciples of Jesus, we can't live in that story if we don't know that story. We all know by default because of our sin the false stories or the disorienting stories of the world. But at the heart of being a disciple of Jesus is crucifying—dying—to those stories and learning how to live in the true story. The heart of Bible literacy isn't just knowing facts to Bible quizzes. It's knowing the one true story of Scripture.

What are some ways pastors and church leaders can equip believers to articulate the story of the Bible and share that story with non-believers?

JT: One of the ways I've encouraged pastors and church leaders to think about how to equip their congregations with the true story of Scripture is to first realize that many of them think they know it, but they actually don't. Every single study—whether it's Lifeway, Ligonier, or others—suggests Christians are unfamiliar with the story of Scripture. That isn't to say we don't know the stories of the Bible. We know Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We know the walls of Jericho falling. We know Daniel in the lions' den. We know the stories of Jesus. We're familiar with the stories of the Bible, but pastors and church leaders need to recognize their congregations don't know the story from Genesis to Revelation.

So, beginning with the realization that many of our people who are following us don't know what the story is, I think, the

first key. The second is, in every single opportunity you have—whether it’s preaching on Sunday mornings, home groups, or Sunday school—is finding ways to give Christians the true story of the Bible. For example, at our church, we have key learning outcomes for our Storyline kids ministry. Every single student knows the 40 key hinge points of the story of Scripture before they graduate from fifth grade. In our institute class [for adults], we’re still teaching the story of the Bible. In every single environment, we’re trying to immerse people in the one true story of Scripture.

How does your team at Storyline work to build bridges between your church and the community in which you minister?

JT: Just this past Sunday, we baptized our 167th brand new Christian this year. Almost all of them are over 18; over half of them are college students. We baptized 47 people this past Sunday alone. At our church, we have the baptismal candidates read their stories and testimonies, and almost none of them shared that they came to faith through my preaching ministry. Almost every single one of them shared that they came to faith because it was their roommate who shared the gospel with them, it was a co-worker who shared the gospel with them, or they heard the gospel from someone at their mom’s Bible study.

Once we’ve encouraged people to learn the story of the Bible, we encourage them to share the story of the Bible, and it is as simple as this: We’ll have them say things [to non-believers] like, “Hey, I’m in this church where we’re encouraged to tell the story of the Bible in 15 minutes. Would you mind if I shared the story of the Bible with you? Can I practice with you?” And what they’ll do is over the course of the next several weeks, when people are on their walks or enjoying dinner together, they’ll share the story of Scripture and learn how to get better at it. But

THIS IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT MOMENT IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY, AND WE CAN’T JUST KEEP DOING THE SAME THINGS. THIS IS A TIME FOR FERVENT PRAYER. THIS IS A TIME FOR DEEP BIBLE STUDY, DEEP THEOLOGICAL FORMATION. THIS IS A TIME TO DIG DOWN DEEP AND PLANT CHURCHES.

JT ENGLISH

they do it with an evangelistic bent to it, and people are coming to faith left and right because non-believers don’t know the story of the Bible. When they hear that God loves them so much that He made them, that despite their sin He came for them in the person of Christ, that He died a substitutionary death for them, and that He’s now sent the Holy Spirit to apply all the benefits that Christ has purchased, they want to come to faith.

What are some of the more interesting and encouraging trends or practices you’re seeing in the church as it pertains to disciple-making and evangelism?

JT: At Storyline Church, we have three primary learning environments: a men’s Bible study, a women’s Bible study, and the Storyline Institute Deep Discipleship program. In those spaces, we have over 1,000 people involved. I’m not pastoring in Dallas. I’m not pastoring in Houston. I’m not pastoring in San Antonio. I’m just outside of Denver, Colo. [It’s a] highly progressive, largely secular community here. What we’ve found is, one of the most evangelistic spaces is what you might think of as a Sunday school environment.

Non-Christians here don’t know Exodus, they don’t know Numbers, they don’t know 1 and 2 Chronicles, they don’t know Matthew. So, when we invite them into the life of our church to learn the Bible, they’re very willing to come. They’re not antagonistic toward the faith. They’re largely interested in it. They want to learn. They want to grow. [Of the] 167 people we baptized here this year, over half of them were non-Christians showing up to our Exodus Bible study because their friend invited them.

So if I could maybe say anything, I would say do not think your learning environments in the church like a women’s Bible study, a men’s Bible study, or if you do our Deep Discipleship program, are only for Christians. They’re highly, highly, highly evangelistic. We’ve seen dozens of people come to faith this year by simply being invited to an Exodus Bible study.

As you prepare to speak at the Empower Conference, what has God been putting on your heart to share with those who will hear you speak and teach?

JT: I’m so honored and humbled to come speak there and be a part of that great environment. At the heart of what I want to tell ministry leaders right now is I want them to want more. This is such an important moment in redemptive history, and we can’t just keep doing the same things. This is a time for fervent prayer. This is a time for deep Bible study, deep theological formation. This is a time to dig down deep and plant churches. I know some of the people who will be [at Empower], they’ve been in ministry for 50 years. Others have only been in ministry 10 or 15 years, and some are brand new to ministry. We are living through what I believe is one of the most important missional moments that we’ll ever experience. Let’s not miss it. Let’s get after the Great Commission together.

EMBRACING THE MIRACLE, LITERALLY

Jen Wilkin has great news:
The more intimate relationship
with God you've been hungry
for is closer than you think



Jen Wilkin has spent decades advocating for biblical literacy. Through her books, podcasts, and numerous speaking and teaching engagements each year, she aims to guide women not just to a deeper understanding of who God is, but into a more intimate relationship with Him. Wilkin will be the featured speaker at the Empower Conference women's session, and she recently spoke to the *Texan* about how the closer walk with God many are seeking is closer than they may think.

You wrote a book with JT English titled, *You Are a Theologian*. How do you define theologian, and what's the connection between theology and knowing and loving God well?

JW: The word theologian means "one who has words about God." Everyone has words about God—Christians, Hindus, Muslims, even atheists and agnostics. The question is whether we have words about God that are true. For the believer in Christ the question is, "Are our words about God distinctly Christian? Are they accurate to how He has revealed Himself?"

All the data is showing us many Christians cannot articulate even basic Christian beliefs. If our words about God are not accurate, our love of God is revealed as shallow or false. ... We make a habit of learning about those we love. When we don't display an interest in knowing about God, our love for Him must come into question.

And here's the best part: to know Him is to love Him. The more we learn about Him, the more our love for Him is fanned into flame and the better we are able to imitate Him as we were created to do.

Many Christians can remember a time when God's Word came to life for them. When did that moment happen for you?

JW: I have a degree in English. I grew up around the Bible, but no one had ever told me that all the skills I had learned to understand English literature were useful for understanding the Bible. It wasn't until I wandered into a Precept class looking for more depth in my late 20s that I realized we were allowed to read the Bible as we would any other book. ... It was common to attend a Bible study and have very little contact with the Bible, much less learn tools to understand it. That Precept study gave me permission to utilize tools I already knew how to use and to help other women to do the same.

Your ministry, in a sense, is based on taking people on an ever-deeper dive into God's Word. How does that journey feed into the biblical call to evangelize?

JW: Many women come to faith after being invited to Bible study. ... Unbelievers think the Bible is boring and outdated, and a well-conceived Bible study shows them this is profoundly false. Candidly, it does the same thing for believers who carry this misconception.

Perhaps the most important tie between Bible study and evangelism is the Great Commission. Jesus seamlessly connects the work of evangelism to discipleship. Make disciples, baptize them, teach them to observe all that I have commanded. Too often we reduce evangelism to making converts instead of making disciples. But if we are to fulfill the Great Commission, we need more than a gospel presentation. We need to be able to teach all that Jesus commanded. In a full-blown Bible literacy crisis, the church is currently limping in this regard. That's why I do what I do. We can't teach others what we ourselves barely know.

What are some practical steps anyone can take to more consistently and effectively study God's Word?

JW: Many of us think any form of engagement with the Bible is good engagement, but this is demonstrably false. The most common report I hear when women are exposed to literacy-building tools is, "I've been in church my whole life, and no one has taught me this." Instead, they were taught to have a 15-minute quiet time each morning, using devotional or topical material that does all the work for them. ... Devotional and topical content is not foundational like a Bible reading plan or a line-by-line study.

In my book *Women of the Word*, and in my studies, I introduce a comprehensive method for growing in Bible literacy. Here's the simplest first step toward achieving it: Read entire books of the Bible from start to finish repetitively. ... Read through in your favorite translation and then start reading in different translations. Listen to the book read aloud on an app. Even better, read it aloud yourself. Copy it out by hand. As you do this, the shape of the book begins to come into focus. Before you start reading

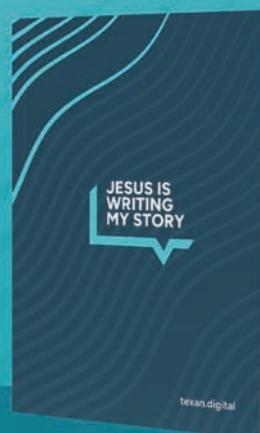
repetitively, do a little digging to find out who wrote the book, to whom it was written, when it was written, and in what style. Any study Bible will have this information for you. Then, put away the study Bible and read repetitively without study notes.

What's one thing you've learned to this point in your ministry you know you'll never forget?

JW: The Bible is a miracle. I know that may sound crashingly obvious, but I can say at this point in my life and ministry that I have witnessed that miracle firsthand. Think about it: 66 books by over 40 authors, written across 1,500 years in three languages. One consistent message. The odds of this are astronomical. But that only scratches the surface of the perfect interconnectedness of the words, symbols, and images. When Christians say they need a miracle to build their faith, I want to shout, "You're holding it in your hand! You have access to it on your laptop and your phone! You own multiple copies!" It lies scattered around us like so much manna in the wilderness. We have only to take it up and receive the miracle of our daily bread.

RECORDING GOD'S STORY AS PART OF YOURS

Drop by the *Southern Baptist Texan* booth at this year's Empower Conference to receive a free copy of the *Jesus is Writing My Story* dotted journal. This durable, 76-page booklet can be used for sermon notes, daily Bible study, or even to keep a daily record of how Jesus is writing your story!



GO, TELL & CELEBRATE!

Want to inspire and ignite a culture of evangelism in your church? Try this ...

Scripture commands followers of Jesus to give an account for the hope that is within them. As such, pastors and church leaders are ever-mindful of the task of mobilizing believers to share their faith. In addition to ongoing evangelistic prayer and training, JJ Washington—the North American Mission Board’s national director of personal evangelism—says there are four practices any church can implement to help build evangelistic momentum among its members. These principles undergird NAMB’s Who’s Your One? evangelism initiative.

1. Identify a goal

The first step, Washington says, is to decide on the evangelistic activity you want to measure. That could include praying for the lost, gospel conversations, professions of faith, or baptisms. “Some churches do all of these. Some measure praying ... as well as those they’ve led to faith,” Washington said in a Who’s Your One? campaign video.

2. Track the numbers

Next, Washington encourages churches to create a simple system to collect the information they want to measure. Some churches choose to have members text metrics to their small group leader, who then reports them to the church office. Others create a designated email where numbers can be reported. Regardless of how you do it, this step will allow you to have a realistic understanding of where you are, which will in turn help you clarify a vision for where you want to go.



3. Post the data

“Display the results in a high-traffic area within the church so everyone can see what God is doing,” Washington said. This is one of the most recognizable steps of NAMB’s Who’s Your One? initiative. Many churches use color-coded ping pong balls displayed in a case somewhere in the church to represent lost people the church has prayed for, shared the gospel with, or led to faith in Christ. In one instance, Washington said a church posted two crosses—one that included white sticky notes on which the names of lost people were written, and the other adorned with red sticky notes that included the names of those who had made a profession of faith.

4. Celebrate the results

Report the results you’re experiencing on a regular basis when you gather corporately, including on Sunday mornings. “Celebration builds momentum,” Washington said, “and encourages others within the church to join God in what He is doing. ... Churches that are intentional about celebrating evangelistic activity are bearing much fruit.”



JJ Washington will be among the speakers at this year’s SBTC Empower Conference. For more information, visit sbtexas.com/empower.

classics

lunch

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 11:30 AM | 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.

session

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 1:00-4:00 PM



Chris
Osborne



Alan
Arthur



Frank
Harber



Greater Vision
Music

Shepherds COLLECTIVE DINNER

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 4:30-6:00 PM | Cost: \$20

Come hear panelists Jason Thacker of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Trevin Wax of the North American Mission Board as they explore the topic of cultural engagement—AI, deconstruction, and preaching in a rapidly changing world. Every guest will receive a complimentary book.



Jason
Thacker



Trevin
Wax

Resourcing Churches DINNER

MONDAY, FEB. 23 • 4:30-6:00 PM | Cost: \$20

Join us for an evening of insight and encouragement as the Church Health and Leadership team presents the wide range of resources available to strengthen and support our churches. This interactive and creative presentation will highlight practical tools designed to equip pastors and leaders for effective ministry. Don't miss this opportunity to connect, learn, and be inspired.

sbtexas.com/empower

 Made possible by CP giving



MAKING ROOM FOR THE BOOM

Kingdom-minded church planters branch out as once-tiny farming communities in North Texas begin to blossom

BY ERIN ROACH

MELISSA

THE CORRIDOR OF U.S. 75 coming out of Dallas and running north to Sherman has seen so much population growth, particularly since 2020, that church planters have their hands full.

City Church Melissa started 11 years ago when the population of that town, located a little more than 20 miles north of Plano, was just 5,000. Now it's more than 30,000.

"It really didn't make a lot of earthly sense to plant a church, honestly, but we were sure the Lord had called us to it," City Church Teaching Pastor Ryan Ross said.

Believing the local church is God's primary agency for reaching the lost, City Church now plants churches. It supports five global church planters and two church plants along the Dallas-Sherman corridor.

Two years ago, City Church planted a church in Anna, and this past fall helped launch Family Church in Van Alstyne. City Church leaders have their eyes on reaching Howe or another area near Sherman next.

Much of the growth has been powered by corporate relocations, including Toyota and State Farm Insurance, with new subdivisions and infrastructure following.

"In Howe, there is a new 3,000-home development just announced," Ross said. "That's a huge development, one of the largest in the area. Sherman has the largest



technology investment in the history of the United States made by Texas Instruments. They built four massive plants, and the first one just opened."

Melissa, Anna, Van Alstyne, and Howe are old farming communities with strong public school systems and strong familial cultures, Ross said.

A middle school teacher Monday through Friday, Jonathan Yates also pastors Family Church to reach the thousands of people moving to Van Alstyne. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**



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

“It really didn’t make a lot of earthly sense to plant a church, honestly, but we were sure the Lord had called us to it.”

RYAN ROSS

“That creates somewhat of a unique opportunity for us as church planters and believers because everybody shows up to the Friday night football games, and there’s pride in being a part of Van Alstyne or being a part of these communities, and there’s a connection,” he said.

Others have moved to the corridor from California in search

of conservative Texas values, and such people are looking for churches.

“We also have a huge, growing population of internationals that are really from all over the world and ethnic populations that don’t know Jesus and don’t necessarily come here looking for a church,” Ross said.

Those demographics tend to search for community and relationships, so when believers open up their homes and explain that their motivation is Jesus, it opens doors for gospel ministry.

“Christians inviting others into their homes is a really great opportunity, and we see it producing a lot of fruit,” Ross said. “One of the things we say at our church is the front door of the church is the front door of your home.”

‘Kingdom-focused people’

As a church planting coach with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Ross got connected with Jonathan Yates, who knew a

couple of years ago that God was leading him to plant a church in Van Alstyne.

Yates and his family joined City Church and became faithful members, learning firsthand how a church plant in that area could work. At the same time, the Yates family dove into getting to know their neighbors in Van Alstyne about 15 minutes away.

“My wife did a lot of walking. She met a lot of different ladies walking, and we just started having conversations with our neighbors,” Yates said. “We first just invited them over to get to know them, and it led to a Bible study.”

Yates had been a public school teacher in the past, and he knew one way to meet people in the community would be to substitute in the local school. That led to a more long-term position teaching sixth grade math.

Last September, City Church sent out the Yates family and another family to start Family Church. That plant in Van Alstyne has about 75

SENDING CHURCHES

people on Sundays now. They meet in a building on the campus of First Baptist Church Van Alstyne. That SBTC church had built a new building and wasn't using the old one on Sundays.

"There's an established church that is a part of this great win for their city by supporting another church meeting in their old building," Ross said. "They are kingdom-focused people."

Family Church has three small groups meeting in homes, as well as a Friday morning men's Bible study in a coffee shop, a Wednesday night student group, and a women's Bible study.

"It was such a step of faith," Yates said, "and then to see God answer all those prayers was an incredible thing."

New churches can often be very effective in reaching people, Ross noted, in part because of the tenacity of a church planting team.

"There's a hunger, so the reaching out that's required to get something off the ground just causes us to be that much more evangelistic," he said. "New churches are very, very effective in reaching the lost and unchurched."

Jonathan Yates, his wife, Melissa, and their children, Autumn and Lincoln, are investing in Family Church along a booming corridor north of Dallas.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



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‘PRAYER IS THE WHOLE THING’

South Texas church is asking God to move in the hearts of people and watching Him answer

BY JANE RODGERS

CARRIZO SPRINGS

THE COUNTY SEAT and oldest city in Dimmit County in South Texas, Carrizo Springs sits 45 miles north of the Mexican border, 82 miles northwest of Laredo, and 10 miles from Crystal City, its nearest neighbor.

The city is home to around 5,000 residents and boasts the state’s only olive orchard and oil press. Of the community’s few churches, the two largest are First Baptist Carrizo Springs and the local Catholic church.

Carrizo Springs is known for its pure artesian wells. These days, many are discovering water of a different sort through the ministry of First Baptist Church: living water and salvation in Christ Jesus.

And all this has come about, Pastor Jonathan Hewett insists, because of concerted prayer.

“We’d been seeing a slow increase [in attendance] for a long time, but over the last six months, it has exploded,” said Hewett, the church’s pastor the past 13 years. Average attendance was 160 in 2024 and today is 270. More than 300 may show up on any given Sunday.

To handle the increase, the church has added temporary seating in the foyer where attendees peer through windows into the fan-shaped worship center. Hewett said he has challenged members to fill those seats first, allowing visitors to access the sanctuary.

The growth has come locally, Hewett added. Neither are people flocking to the church from other congregations. Most of the church’s growth has come through baptisms—68 in 2025 alone.

“This is not transfer growth,” he said. “There’s really nowhere to transfer from in Carrizo Springs.”

A vibrant community presence

FBC Carrizo Springs maintains an active, generous presence in the community with outreaches such as God's Garage, where church members team with a local auto repair business to handle oil changes and minor maintenance tasks for widows and the less fortunate.

"We do one in the fall and two in the spring," Hewett said. "This is oil field country. Everyone knows engines." There is never a lack of volunteers for the outreach, he noted.

The church's 20-person School Connect team partners with Carrizo Springs ISD to offer assistance without overt evangelism.

"The purpose is to engage the campus in service only," Hewett said. The goal is to build trust. Volunteers prepare faculty dinners and special meals such as a pancake supper to attract parents to a meeting with third grade teachers about upcoming testing.

During football season, worship and youth pastor Santiago Lopez Jr, who grew up in Carrizo Springs, leads fifth quarter activities in the school gym. The church supplies pizza or hot dogs and keeps 75-100 kids occupied until midnight, with the school's blessing.

"We give the kids something to do after the game, rather than going to someone's house and drinking," Hewett said. "This also makes students aware of what our youth are doing."

"Ministering to these students gives me the chance to show them that a relationship with Christ makes them heirs to the throne," Lopez said. "I'm so blessed to be serving in the town that shaped me and molded me to care for others like they're my family."

Additionally, the church conducts two revivals each year, hosts a women's conference, puts on a live nativity at Christmas, and is active in missions.

"We've gone to Zambia, Cuba, Panama, Peru, Nicaragua, Macedonia," Hewett said. A new partnership with International Mission Board missionaries in Sevilla, Spain, is just beginning, he added.

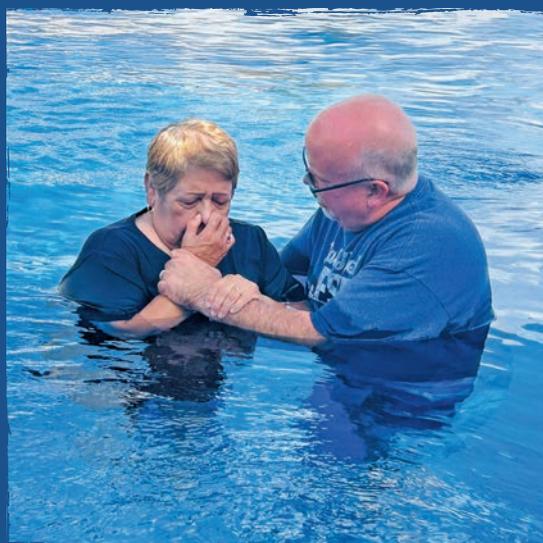
Lifestyle changes often accompany decisions to follow Christ. Aware that finances often prevent couples from marrying, FBC Carrizo Springs offers simple weddings.

"We are specialists at quick weddings," Hewett said. For almost a dozen couples, volunteers have adorned the worship center with candles and wedding décor

(Top) Jonathan Hewett has seen exponential growth at FBC Carrizo Springs since the church committed to focusing on prayer.

(Bottom) Hewett baptizes Rebecca Ruiz, one of 68 baptisms in 2025.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



for a ceremony held just after the Sunday morning service.

"When you are not paying for the preacher or the venue, you can do it," Hewett said. One recent bride, baptized that very morning, fixed her hair, changed her dress, and walked down the aisle.

Powered by prayer

All this would not be possible apart from prayer, Hewett said.

Nearly three years ago, Hewett began to read exhaustively on prayer and attended a prayer conference for pastors led by Jim Cymbala of the Brooklyn Tab-

ernacle. As a result, Hewett felt called to change his church's traditional prayer service, which he said had grown stale and was not well attended.

"We didn't see any power going on," he said. That's no longer the case. "We don't do things at the church that aren't prayed over. Prayer is the whole thing."

Change has accompanied that prayer, with Wednesday nights devoted to it. Hewett said he began the shift by slowly, methodically teaching on prayer.

"I don't do anything on Wednesday nights that's not prayer-related," he said. "We have a time of full-on worship with songs, then I spend 20 minutes speaking on prayer."

Directed prayer follows as members confess their issues before God, then pray for others. "We ask God to move in the hearts of people and bring responses. We pray for people at work [and church]," he said. "We pass out index cards with names or prayer requests."

"Everybody prays over their card," he added. Sometimes the congregation forms groups to pray. "We mix it up. But specific praying for what we do as a church is the whole idea."

Nothing gets left behind. Remodeling the building? They pray. Fifth quarter coming up? They pray. A couple getting married? They pray.

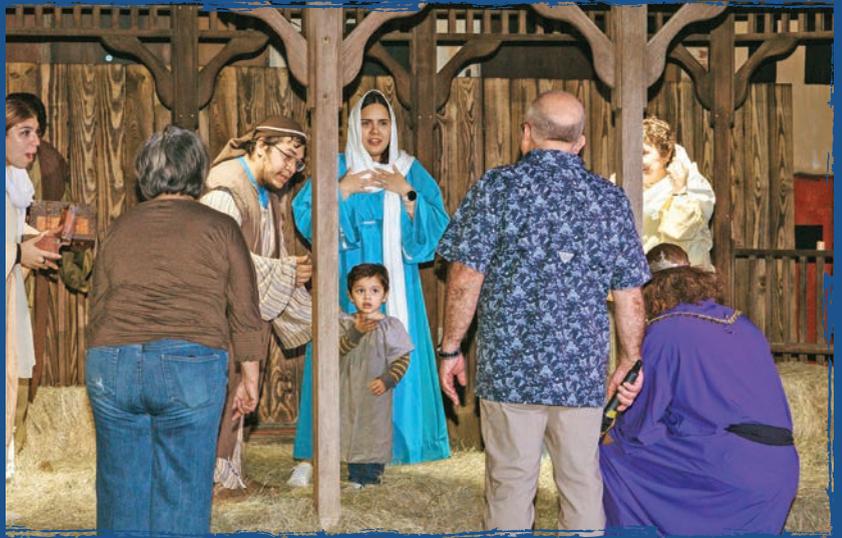
"Our growth is not the result of me being skilled or some new program," Hewett said. "We prayed. We didn't do anything else."

Teaching his people to pray using Scripture has been immensely gratifying, Hewett added.

Many of the younger generation in Carrizo Springs are not bilingual. "English is their heart language," Hewett said. "We are in a middle range here between two cultures."

Prayer is proving to be a bridge.

"Two things we say all the time," Hewett said. "'You have not because you ask not,' and 'We don't know how to do anything, Lord. But you do.'"



(Top) Pastor Hewett presides over the dress rehearsal for the church's one-night live nativity which attracted 300 this past December. All heard the story of Jesus. (Bottom) Hazel Lopez is among the recently baptized youth at the church.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



"TWO THINGS WE SAY ALL THE TIME: 'YOU HAVE NOT BECAUSE YOU ASK NOT,' AND 'WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO ANYTHING, LORD. BUT YOU DO.'"

JONATHAN HEWETT



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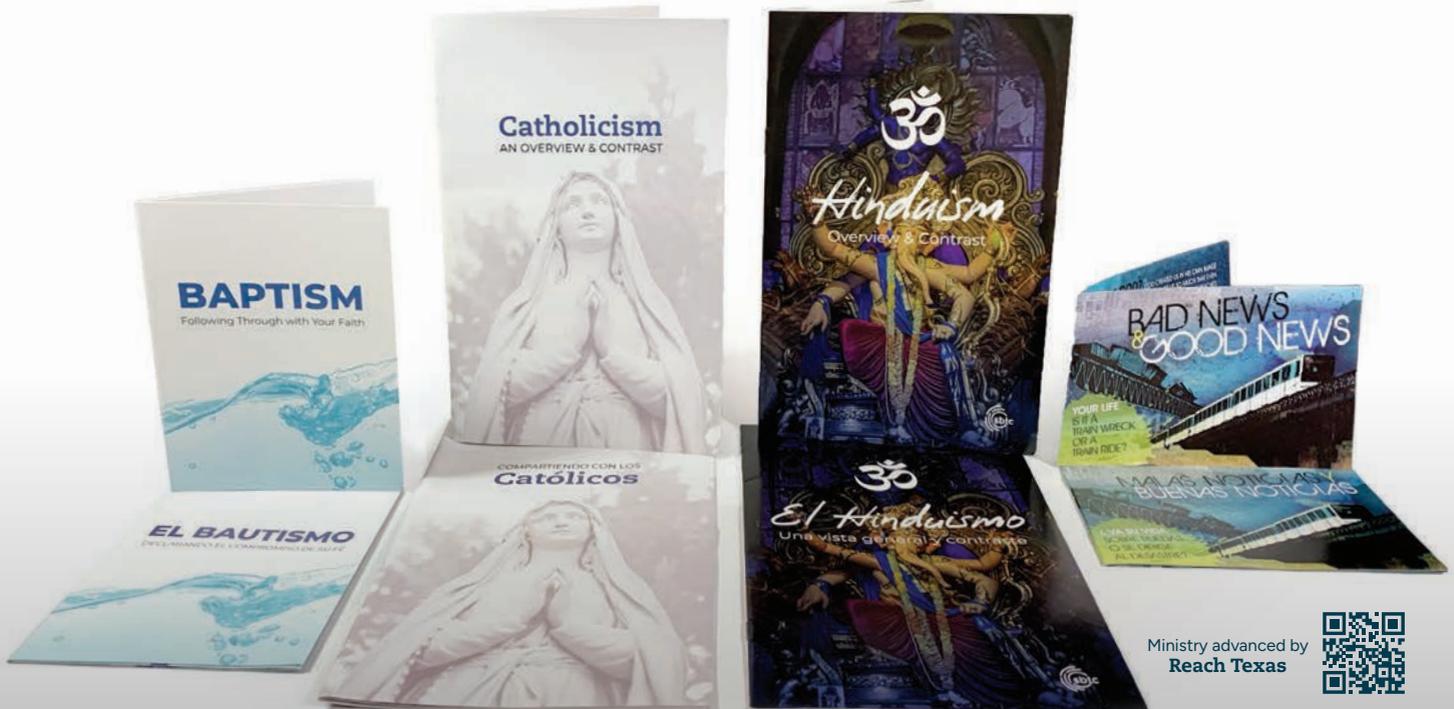
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FROM NEAR TO KNOWING

Dana had been in church her entire life. She was just missing one thing: Jesus.

BY ARLENE SANABRIA



ARLINGTON

WHEN IT CAME TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS, Dana Espinoza had seemingly done it all.

Her mother, Karina, came to know Christ when Dana was just a few months old. Karina began faithfully serving her congregation and, as a result, Dana grew up in church and was exposed to countless children's and youth studies and activities. She even helped minister to younger children in the church.

◀ Dana Espinoza is seen with her mother, Karina.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Dana had done just about everything—except make a personal decision to follow Jesus. Though her quiet and reserved nature concealed it, she was struggling internally in a way that not only impacted her life, but also her family. Starting in ninth grade, Dana surrounded herself with friends who were bad for her. Social pressure, loneliness, and a desire to fit in led her to behaviors—including alcohol consumption, vaping, and truancy—that distanced her from God.

“She was a very serious girl—without light,” said Luis González, then pastor of the Spanish-speaking congregation at Lamar Baptist Church where the family attends. “When they came to [our] church, they were already having those problems [with her].”

By 11th grade, Dana was transferred to a new school. Her troubles continued, and she even ran away from home at one point, leaving her mother distraught. “In my desperation to get her out of that, I fell into depression and anxiety,” Karina confesses. “I wondered why [Dana was struggling so much] since she had grown up around the gospel.”

Dana's story underscores a truth many youth leaders and parents know well: Being steeped in church culture and activities does not automatically mean a youth knows and embraces the gospel.

But for Dana, that would soon change.

'She told me I had to change'

Dana had attended youth camps before, even coming forward to receive prayer. At one camp, González presented the gospel to her for the first time. She listened, she cried, but she didn't make a decision.

"I didn't feel ready," she recalled.

That changed when she attended Florece, the annual women's retreat hosted by SBTC En Español. During one of the general sessions, she heard a message referencing God as a light and guide, of the need for repentance, and of the difference between the way of the world and the way of Christ. During an altar call, a song touched Dana's heart deeply and she began to cry.

"I felt it was directed at me," she said.

The worship leader noticed and came over to pray for her. Then another woman came and hugged her, along with her mom. Afterward, a third woman approached her and shared her personal testimony, showing her a bracelet inscribed with Bible verses.

"She had gone through the same thing I was going through," Dana said. "She told me I had to change, to leave behind everything that was separating me from God."

After Florece, Dana clearly expressed she wanted to change and be baptized. González first took time to carefully share the gospel with her.

"Many young people don't really understand the gospel," said González, who now serves as director of SBTC En Español. "They think it's about not failing, about behaving well. ... The gospel is not that you transform yourself first and then God saves you. The gospel saves you, frees you, and then transforms you."

In the days that followed, González taught Dana about baptism and also met with her parents. At that meeting, Dana asked her parents for forgiveness for all the suffering she had caused them. Then she turned to González.



Dana (second from left) and Karina are pictured with Luis Ángel (far right), Luis, and Ian (front).

SUBMITTED PHOTO

"SHE HAS HAD AN IMPACT ON OTHER GIRLS. NOW SHE TALKS, SHARES ABOUT CHRIST, AND WANTS TO HELP."

LUIS GONZÁLEZ

"Like the passage about the Ethiopian in Acts, if there is water here, can I be baptized?"

On Sunday that week, she was baptized.

After her baptism, Dana had another relapse. But this time, something was different. She leaned not only on the support group God had placed around her, but also on her genuine confession of faith.

"The key was not to let her go," González said, "to take the time to be with her, to patiently explain who Christ is and what it means to follow Him."

Dana's decision impacted her family, as well. Karina said she recognized God was working in her own heart. At another church the family had attended, Karina had been so focused on serving in worship and children's ministry that she neglected her personal devotion and time with her children. At Lamar, she has rediscovered the importance of prayer and daily dependence on the Lord.

Passing it on

Today, the change in Dana is evident.

Once withdrawn, quiet, and living without purpose, the 17-year-old is now lively and communicative with a desire to serve. She does not present herself as perfect, but as a young woman in progress.

"She has had an impact on other girls," González said. "Now she talks, shares about Christ, and wants to help."

Dana's testimony is a powerful reminder that God continues to work in new generations when the gospel is presented clearly and accompanied by love. She has also been an answer to prayer for leaders involved with Florece, who have been asking God to raise up and awaken the next generation of young women for Christ.

For Dana, Florece was where she truly met Jesus. Leadership follow-up was critical. God's grace did the rest.

DE LA CERCANÍA A LA INTIMIDAD

Dana había asistido a la iglesia toda su vida. Sólo le faltaba una cosa: Jesús.

BY ARLENE SANABRIA

ARLINGTON

EN LO QUE RESPECTA A ASUNTOS ESPIRITUALES, Dana Espinoza aparentemente lo había hecho todo.

Su mamá, Karina, conoció a Cristo cuando Dana tenía sólo unos meses de edad. Karina comenzó a servir fielmente a su congregación y, como resultado, Dana creció en la iglesia y participó en innumerables estudios y actividades para niños y jóvenes. Incluso ayudó a atender a los niños más pequeños de la iglesia.



Dana había hecho casi todo, excepto tomar la decisión personal de seguir a Jesús. Aunque su naturaleza tranquila y reservada lo ocultaba, luchaba internamente de una manera que no sólo afectaba su vida, sino también a su familia. A partir del noveno grado, Dana se rodeó de amigos que eran una mala influencia para ella. La presión social, la soledad y el deseo de encajar la llevaron a comportamientos —como el consumo de alcohol, fumar “vaping” y faltar a clases— que la alejaron de Dios.

“Ella era una chica muy seria, sin gozo”, dijo Luis González, que era el pastor de la congregación en español de la Iglesia Bautista Lamar, a la que asiste la familia. “Cuando llegaron a [nuestra] iglesia, ya tenían esos problemas [con ella]”.

En el grado 11, Dana fue transferida a una nueva escuela. Sus problemas continuaron e incluso se escapó de casa en un momento dado, dejando a su madre angustiada. “En mi desesperación por sacarla de esa situación, caí en depresión y ansiedad”, confiesa Karina. “Me preguntaba por qué Dana estaba pasando por tantas dificultades, ya que había crecido rodeada del evangelio”.

La historia de Dana subraya una verdad que muchos líderes de jóvenes y padres conocen bien: estar inmerso en la cultura y las actividades de la iglesia no significa que automáticamente un joven conozca y acepte el evangelio.

◀ Dana Espinoza junto a su madre, Karina.

Pero para Dana, eso pronto cambiaría.

“Ella me dijo que tenía que cambiar”

Dana había asistido antes a campamentos de jóvenes, e incluso se había acercado al altar para recibir oración. En uno de esos campamentos, González le presentó el evangelio por primera vez. Ella escuchó, lloró, pero no tomó una decisión.

“No me sentía preparada”, recuerda.

Eso cambió cuando asistió a Florece, el retiro anual para mujeres organizado por SBTC en Español. Durante una de las sesiones generales, escuchó un mensaje que se refería a Dios como luz y guía, la necesidad del arrepentimiento y la diferencia entre el camino del mundo y el camino de Cristo. Durante un llamado al altar, una alabanza tocó profundamente el corazón de Dana y ella comenzó a llorar.

“Sentí que estaba dirigida a mí”, dice.

La líder de adoración se dio cuenta y se acercó para orar por ella. Luego, otra mujer se acercó y la abrazó,

junto con su mamá. Después, una tercera mujer se le acercó y compartió su testimonio personal, mostrándole un brazalete con versículos bíblicos inscritos.

“Ella había pasado por lo mismo que yo”, dice Dana. “Me dijo que tenía que cambiar, dejar atrás todo lo que me separaba de Dios”.

Después de Florece, Dana expresó claramente que quería cambiar y ser bautizada. González primero se tomó el tiempo para compartir cuidadosamente el evangelio con ella.

“Muchos jóvenes no entienden realmente el evangelio”, dijo González, quien ahora se desempeña como director de SBTC en Español. “Creen que se trata de no fallar, de comportarse bien... El evangelio no es que primero te transformes y luego Dios te salve. El evangelio te salva, te libera y luego te transforma”.

En los días siguientes, González le enseñó a Dana sobre el bautismo y también se reunió con sus papás. En esa reunión, Dana les pidió perdón a sus papás por todo el sufrimiento que les había causado. Luego se dirigió hacia González.

“Como en el pasaje sobre el etíope en Hechos, si hay agua aquí, ¿puedo ser bautizada?”.

“HA INFLUIDO EN OTRAS CHICAS. AHORA HABLA, COMPARTE ACERCA DE CRISTO Y QUIERE AYUDAR”.

LUIS GONZÁLEZ

El domingo de esa semana, fue bautizada.

Después de su bautismo, Dana tuvo otra recaída. Pero esta vez, algo fue diferente. No sólo se apoyó en el grupo de apoyo que Dios había puesto a su alrededor, sino también en su sincera confesión de fe.

“La clave fue no dejarla ir”, dijo González, “dedicarle tiempo, explicarle pacientemente quién es Cristo y lo que significa seguirlo”.

La decisión de Dana también tuvo un impacto en su familia. Karina dijo que reconoció que Dios estaba obrando en su propio corazón. En otra iglesia a la que asistía la familia, Karina estaba tan centrada en servir en el culto y en el ministerio

de niños que descuidaba su devoción personal y el tiempo con sus hijos. En Lamar, ha redescubierto la importancia de la oración y la dependencia diaria del Señor.

Pasándolo a otros

Hoy en día, el cambio en Dana es evidente.

Antes era una joven de 17 años retraída, callada y sin rumbo en la vida, pero ahora es alegre y comunicativa, con ganas de servir. No se presenta como perfecta, sino como una joven en proceso de crecimiento.

“Ha influido en otras chicas”, dijo González. “Ahora habla, comparte acerca de Cristo y quiere ayudar”.

El testimonio de Dana es un poderoso recordatorio de que Dios sigue obrando en las nuevas generaciones cuando el evangelio se presenta con claridad y se acompaña en amor. Ella también ha sido una respuesta a las oraciones de las líderes involucradas en Florece, quienes han estado pidiendo a Dios que levante y despierte a la próxima generación de jóvenes para Cristo.

Para Dana, Florece fue el lugar donde realmente conoció a Jesús. El seguimiento de los líderes fue fundamental. La gracia de Dios hizo el resto.

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A CHILD'S DECISION



A CHILD'S DECISION TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN is by far the most important decision they will make. Parents, ministers, and children's leaders often consider how to help a child make this decision. The discussion of salvation begins with the child.

When a child is ready to become a Christian, I believe there are five crucial questions to ask. The child's responses will help determine whether the child has a clear understanding of the necessity of salvation and is ready to become a Christian.

1. What is sin?

Without the prompting of the adult, the child should respond with the meaning of sin. The adult should always consider the child's age and that the child will provide an age-appropriate response.

2. Who sins?

The child should know that everyone sins, including themselves. If a person does not sin, they do not need a Savior. Many times, the conversation ends here because they do not believe they commit sin.

3. When a person sins, who is the sin against?

When we sin, we sin against God. This is another idea or concept that may be difficult for a child to grasp.

4. What happens when we sin against God?

We are separated from Him.

5. What did Jesus do for us and why?

Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. He arose from the grave and is our living Savior. Jesus brings us to God, where sin had separated us.

If the child can answer these questions or similar ones, the child is ready to hear the gospel presented simply and sincerely. If the child is unclear about one or more questions, I suggest affirming the child and their curiosity about Christianity. Tell the child that he or she is taking a step toward God. Encourage the child to continue thinking and asking questions. Always pray with the child, asking God to work in the child's life.

The person presenting the gospel to a child should remember to:

- ◆ Use words the child will understand.
- ◆ Encourage the child to answer questions and to ask questions. Remember to engage the child in the gospel conversation. This should be a two-way conversation, not a short lecture.
- ◆ Ask open-ended questions that cause the child to think on their own and respond in their own words.
- ◆ Listen intently. Does the child understand what is being stated?
- ◆ Never pressure a child. The child will make the decision when he or she is ready. Remember, this is a decision between God and the child, not the presenter and the child.

Lifeway provides excellent resources for presenting the gospel to children—for example, *The Gospel: God's Plan For Us* and the 3 Circles conversation guide. Also, remember when the child is ready to pray the prayer of salvation, allow the child to voice their own prayer. A child needs to remember that they asked Jesus into their life.

B&H recently published an excellent book for pastors, children's ministers, and church leaders titled *Children and Salvation*, written by theologians and children's ministry experts. This is a significant piece of writing, as it is only the third of its kind in the Southern Baptist Convention world. The first was written in the 1950s by Gaines Dobbins; the second, in the 1970s, by various theologians; and this writing was published in 2025.



Karen Kennemur is professor of children's ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She also serves as a consultant with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention in the areas of family, preschool, and children's ministries.



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‘BECOMING SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OF GOD’

**CENTRAL TEXAS CHURCH SEES MUCH FRUIT THROUGH
BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO THE INCARCERATED**

BY JANE RODGERS

BROWNWOOD

DAVID NEWMAN IS A NEW MAN preparing to embrace a new direction in life after answering God's call to ministry.

Not long ago, that may have seemed like an unlikely path for this non-traditional college student and disabled veteran. But God had different plans, set into motion through the evangelistic impact of a Celebrate Recovery 12-step program and volunteers from Coggin Avenue Baptist Church.

Formerly incarcerated for probation violations following alcohol-related convictions, Newman traces the beginnings of his changed life to a brief encounter four years ago with CR volunteer Wayland Peterson. Peterson visited the Brown County jail with a CR group from Coggin, their first opportunity to do so post-COVID.

A friend had previously mentioned CR during a call, Newman recalled. He signed up to receive visits and remembers CR volunteers coming to a window to talk to inmates.

"I was part of the first group they were able to start seeing again," Newman said. "We spoke one-on-one. They let me talk. They told me to read Ephesians, told me about the program, and prayed with me." Shortly afterward, he received a CR Bible.

That meeting was the only time Newman encountered Coggin CR volunteers behind bars. He soon resumed his probation on the outside.

"That 56 days I spent in jail ... turned out to be a great thing," he said.

Busy after his release with a supervisor job at a local company, Newman didn't immediately come to church. But finding himself triggered too often in town, he started attending CR at Coggin, where he met Peterson again. Mark Mayo, a nurse he had earlier met at the

"GOD PLACED THEM IN MY LIFE FOR THIS VERY REASON: TO BE PREPARED FOR THE TASK OF BECOMING SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OF GOD."

DAVID NEWMAN

Veterans Affairs hospital, was running the sound system.

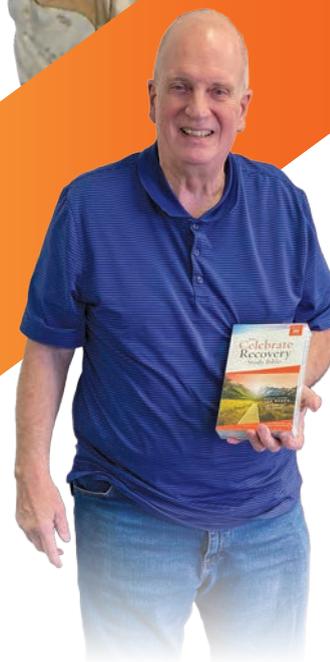
Newman kept coming, developing relationships with CR volunteers. One took him fishing. He became close with Coggin's CR pastor, Bill Allen.

"We walked through questions I had about Christ and theology and discipleship," Newman said. "Bill let me lead the men's CR discipleship group."

Newman soon sensed a higher calling: "I had served my country. I wanted to serve my God."

With Allen's encouragement and the involvement of others, Newman was admitted to the local Baptist university. When his GI Bill benefits ended, another VA program assisted. Newman, 43, is now completing a major in Christian education and minoring in cross-cultural ministry with the goal of serving on a church staff in a military town to reach service members with the gospel.

"CR and Bill Allen and the guys ... God placed them in my life for this very reason: to be prepared for the task of becoming something new, something of God," Newman said.



(Top) David Newman is pictured during his tour of duty in Afghanistan. As he once served his country, Newman now wants to serve God. (Bottom) Coggin Avenue Baptist's Bill Allen, Celebrate Recovery pastor, holds a CR Bible. More than 1,100 of these Bibles have been distributed through Coggin's jail and prison ministry. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

Booming faith behind bars

Newman's story typifies many in the Celebrate Recovery ministry at Coggin since its beginning in 2007.

"Church member Perk Carrier and I would visit the 'windows' of the jail," Allen recalled of the early days of the jail ministry that grew from CR. They had to identify inmates to be brought to the windows for a visit. Often, family members had requested their incarcerated relatives receive a visit.

"Those visits were designed to encourage faith by presenting the gospel or helping incarcerated believers ... walk through repentance and growth," Allen said.

In 2008, Perk assumed leadership of the jail ministry, a responsibility he continued for years with his wife, Bonnie. The couple created devotionals for inmates. Perk enlisted others, including James Wooldridge, who assumed the leadership after Perk passed away.

"Window visits evolved over the years as the sheriff's department became comfortable with our reliability and began allowing us to simply show up and ask whether any inmates wanted a visit," Allen said. "This quickly increased the number of visits and gospel presentations. Later, we were allowed to present a weekly program, offering a Tuesday evening worship/teaching service to any inmates wishing to participate."

The mission expanded to include female inmates, an outreach led first by Coggin member Jackye Leal and later, by Donna Howey.

"Both ministries grew quickly," Allen said. As they had in the early days with Perk, inmates were allowed to request Bibles. More than 1,100 CR Bibles have been distributed to those behind bars to date.

Baptisms at the jail followed for those who professed faith in Christ: 63 in 2022, 41 in 2023, 44 in 2024, and more than 50 in 2025.

"A lot of what has happened is the result of Perk Carrier's years of faith-

1,100
CELEBRATE RECOVERY BIBLES
DISTRIBUTED SINCE 2007

63
PROFESSIONS OF FAITH IN 2022

41
PROFESSIONS OF FAITH IN 2023

44
PROFESSIONS OF FAITH IN 2024

50+
PROFESSIONS OF FAITH IN 2025

**"WE TELL INMATES
THAT THEIR
CIRCUMSTANCES
MAY NOT CHANGE FOR
NOW, BUT THEY CAN
CHANGE THROUGH
REPENTANCE AND
BELIEF IN THE GOSPEL
OF JESUS CHRIST."**

BILL ALLEN

fulness, going and doing at the jail. He saw little of it while he was alive," Allen said.

Today, women visit Tuesdays and Thursdays while men go Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Tuesday night worship and teaching times, segregated by gender, are going strong. Jail populations are transient, however. Inmates are released on

probation or sent to prisons. It's a temporary stop, but one Coggin CR has seen bearing fruit.

Expansion to prison

Brownwood is also home to a juvenile detention center and an adult prison, the Thomas R. Havins Unit, a pre-release facility to which Coggin CR expanded its outreach two years ago.

"The Havins Unit is designed for inmates to complete a program over several months after acceptance from the prison population, allowing them to work toward probation," Allen said. "They must complete several programs approved by the prison system." CR is an optional program inmates can join while working on other required programs.

"Our prison team takes individuals through a four-book CR curriculum ... centered on a 12-step recovery model," Allen said. Gospel conversations ensue, and over the past two years, the Coggin team has seen 85 people repent and be baptized through the prison ministry.

"The challenge with both of these ministries, the jail and prison, is that we only have the opportunity to work with the inmates for short periods of time," Allen said. "The jail ministry always faces the possibility that a person can be released or sent to prison. We do not get to follow up with them if that happens unless they attend Celebrate Recovery upon their release. In the prison ministry, inmates sometimes move out before completing the entire CR curriculum because they have earned their exit."

Despite the challenges, jail and prison ministry present unique opportunities for evangelism.

"We tell inmates that their circumstances may not change for now, but they can change through repentance and belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ," Allen said.

Like David Newman, Allen added, "They can become a new creation."



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After 27 years, inerrancy remains the cornerstone of the SBTC

BY GARY LEDBETTER

WHEN THE SOUTHERN BAPTISTS OF TEXAS CONVENTION began in 1998, it established a clear identity separate from the other convention in the state, the older and much larger Baptist General Convention of Texas. Distinctions between the two conventions in Texas developed from the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention.

To put it simply, the new convention was formed by those who favored the reform of the national denomination and were disappointed to find that this could not happen in the BGCT. The new convention has grown from 120 churches in 1998 to more than 2,800 in 2026.

As the number of affiliated churches and the span of ministries grew, founding principles remained the same: The SBTC operates as a confessional fellowship, using the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as the doctrinal statement each affiliated church affirms. It operates in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention to reach beyond even the broad reach of Texas, and it has prioritized missions and evangelism over other priorities pursued by older state conventions.

The principles by which the BGCT has operated the past 27 years have varied as new leaders emerged. The convention now supports pro-life initiatives in Austin, for example. But some of the former principles remain influential within BGCT leadership and institutions.

One flashpoint between the new and old conventions at the beginning was endorsement of women as pastors. While the BGCT's

leadership affirmed women as pastors, the SBTC supported the traditional teaching of Scripture, that only qualified men as called by God should be pastors. In its 2025 report, Baptist Women in Ministry claimed 43 women were senior or co-pastors in BGCT churches. The BGCT has elected three women as convention presidents—the most recent one, a children's pastor, was elected during their 2025 annual meeting. She is the first ordained woman to have been elected BGCT president.

The SBTC has remained in harmony with the SBC, including the allocation of 55% of undesignated receipts for national and international missions. The BGCT has had a more complex relationship with the national denomination—at one point, in 2000, mostly defunding every SBC entity that depended on Cooperative Program funds. That action was eventually reversed.

Institutions funded, though not owned or controlled, by the SBTC affirm the BF&M 2000's doctrinal guidelines in every aspect of their ministries. At this year's BGCT annual meeting, the decades-old

controversy over teaching at Baylor University continued as some BGCT pastors urged the convention to examine the university's response to an LGBTQ-friendly student group, as well as allegations of financial support for another LGBTQ-affirming group, Baptist Women in Ministry. The motion to investigate the convention's flagship institution failed.

Foundational to both state conventions is their view on Scripture. Texas is a state chock-full of churches in both conventions that affirm the full inerrancy of the Bible. However, the BGCT as an organization has been unwilling to affirm inerrancy, though some likely believe it. The result of that unwillingness has been that institutions, particularly seminaries and universities, supported by the BGCT have wres-

tled with issues that are long settled within the SBTC and the SBC—including open theism (the belief that God does not know the future because He is still learning), LGBTQ issues, and women as pastors.

This leads to a related distinction between the two conventions—confessionalism. The BGCT has repeatedly rejected the BF&M 2000 as the confession by which it operates, though churches within the BGCT are free to use the confession they choose. The 2000 confession specifically addresses the authority of Scripture, leadership of churches, and sexual morality in a direct way not present in older confessions. A confessional fellowship will require, as do the SBTC and SBC, that denominational leaders and programs, as well as professors teaching, will do that work within the

parameters of the BF&M 2000 adopted by SBC messengers from SBC churches in 2000.

A denominational body formed around an accepted confession of faith will have far less trouble sorting out how to express their biblical convictions day to day.

This was—and is—the unsettled difference between the two Southern Baptist state conventions in Texas.

"I'm so grateful for over 2,800 SBTC churches whose doctrinal unity fuels our mission focus," SBTC Executive Director Nathan Lorick said. "We have always been and will always be a network of churches that stand firmly on the inerrancy of Scripture, which is the foundation for all that we do. I believe the greatest days for the SBTC are ahead."



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STANDING EAST TOGETHER

Rural church's 'rescue groups' started to support a struggling pastor. Now they're spreading and strengthening lives.

BY ERIN ROACH

MARTIN'S MILL

DAVID YARBROUGH REMEMBERS standing at the back of the sanctuary as his congregation worshiped. His heart was racing, he was trembling, and he felt like he was going to die.

Then he looked to the front of the church and saw five men and their families. That gave him strength.

"I knew they were with me," he said.

A couple of years ago, as Yarbrough—lead pastor of The Bridge Fellowship Church in Martin's Mill—approached 25 years in ministry, he wasn't sure he was going to last much longer. At the time, he was weathering public criticism on social media—aimed at both himself and the church—while also shouldering the

emotional and financial strain of his 87-year-old mother's declining health.

"It was just more than I could take at that time," Yarbrough recalled. He told his wife he was hanging by a thread, about to break. "I had never felt like that before."

Yarbrough and his wife finally were able to retreat to Oklahoma for a couple of days. While away, he watched a podcast interview with a pastor who mentioned he surrounds himself with a group of five men in his church for accountability and encouragement.

God had already provided five men Yarbrough felt he could count on, so he asked them to meet at his house at 6 p.m. on a Thursday. All of them agreed, and though they already knew he was under more pressure than usual, they learned that night the extent of his stress.

“I never really knew what burnout was like. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to preach anymore. It wasn’t that I didn’t love the people anymore. It’s just that I didn’t have anything in the tank.”

DAVID YARBROUGH (right),
lead pastor of The Bridge Fellowship



“It wasn’t just that I wanted to step away from ministry,” he said. “I was at the point where I was ready to step away from life.”

That Thursday night, the five men started speaking encouragement into the pastor’s life. They prayed for him and decided to meet weekly. “They were coming to rescue me,” Yarbrough said.

Despite the new group, the pastor continued to struggle. As he made the 20-minute drive to church on Sunday mornings, he repeatedly would get physically ill. The morning he stood at the back of the sanctuary trembling, he had just come from his office when he experienced the first panic attack of his life.

“I never really knew what burnout was like,” he said, describing it now as being so empty he had nothing left to give. “It wasn’t that I didn’t want to preach anymore. It wasn’t that I didn’t love the people anymore. It’s just that I didn’t have anything in the tank.”

As the meetings continued, Yarbrough asked the five men to share about their lives, too, and the group would encourage one another and pray. Most Thursdays they would spend as many as five hours together.

“You would think that their wives and children would not want them doing that because they lose a whole Thursday night,” he said, “but [because of] what they were getting back in return, they wanted them to go because they were seeing the transformation that was taking place in their lives.”

‘Full of courage’

Patrick McGhee is one of those five men. He agreed to be in the group because he was intrigued that a pastor would let others get that close to him. As time went on, McGhee realized he was being rescued, too.

As the men called out the good and godly things they saw in him during their meetings, McGhee realized they were seeing things he was blind to. They saw good in him that he didn’t. It empowered him.

“I was full of courage,” he said. “I could leave that house ... and conquer whatever I was coming up against.”

McGhee’s wife encouraged him to keep going to the group because she noticed him becoming a better person, particularly by spending more time with his family and trying to live out what he knew from church.

Before long, McGhee felt led to start a group with five other men so they could experience rescue. “It was replicating itself,” he said. Now there are three rescue groups at The Bridge.

One of the chief lessons the men have learned, Yarbrough said, is based on Galatians 2:20. They have learned to die to self.

“You can’t hurt a dead person’s feelings,” Yarbrough said. “You can’t offend them. We know any time that we’re getting offended, our feelings are getting hurt and we can’t serve other people because we think they’re mistreating us. We’re too alive to ourselves.”

Sometimes God allows suffering in a believer’s life, he said, because the person needs to learn humility.



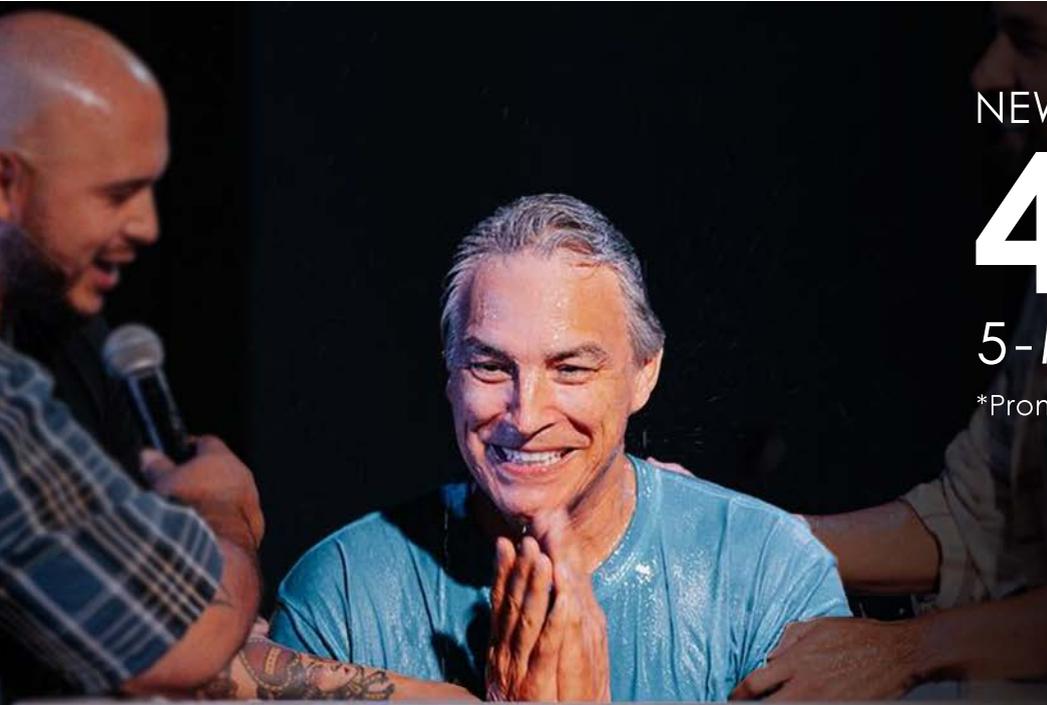
“It’s not about my platform. This isn’t my church. This isn’t my wife. These aren’t my children. They’re His, and I’m stewarding them,” Yarbrough said. “I can’t steward them effectively when I’m worried about what everybody’s doing for me.”

In all of this, the rescue group didn’t

just tell Yarbrough they loved him. They showed it.

“It’s one of the clearest pictures of the kingdom I’ve ever experienced,” he said. “God using ordinary men to do extraordinary things through simple obedience and genuine love.”

God used a group of five men to rescue their pastor when he was on the verge of giving up on ministry. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**



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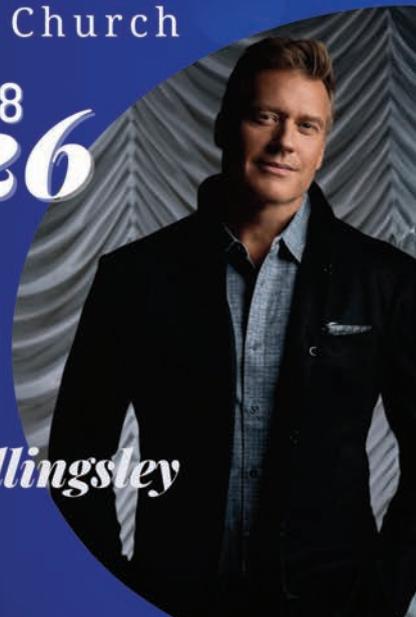
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JESUS IS LORD!

BY ERIN ROACH

NO MATTER HOW YOU SAY IT, THE PROOF IS CLEAR: ESL PROGRAMS ARE HELPING CHURCHES REACH THE NATIONS FOR CHRIST IN TEXAS

HOUSTON

MORE THAN 10 MILLION PEOPLE IN TEXAS do not speak English at home, according to the latest census. That makes English as a Second Language ministries incredibly useful tools for churches to reach them for Christ.

"The nations are our neighbors," said Del Traffanstedt, pastor of Cross Community Church in Northeast Houston. "... If the nations are here, and we're to fulfill the Great Commission, then we can start reaching those language groups now."

Traffanstedt and his wife, Charmaine, researched their community before planting Cross Community and determined that people needed to advance in the workplace, assimilate into the community, and operate in the economy.

"For all of those things, English seemed like the best bridge," Del said. "We wanted to do that in a very gospel-forward way."

Since the Traffanstedts had served previously as ESL teachers, that became a reasonable way to reach the vast numbers of immigrants from Central and South America who had settled in Houston.

With the help of a trainer from the North American Mission Board, an ESL ministry at Cross Community started about four years ago with 12 students. It has grown to more than 60.

"That started to feed into church growth," Del said. "Probably a third of our members come from our ESL ministry. We baptized many. Some are in leadership now in the church."

The Traffanstedts are careful not to call ESL a program. They call it a ministry because programs tend to be about content and services. Ministries, he noted, are different because they focus on individuals.

Churches investing in one another

A priority for starting the ESL ministry at Cross Community was to do it well and tie it to the gospel, so the Traffanstedts made sure church leaders participated in the initial training offered by NAMB.

“We knew training was important both in terms of staying tightly knit to it being a ministry of the church that’s a very intentional outreach for sharing the gospel, but then also ongoing training to make sure we’re doing what we say we’re going to do well,” Charmaine said.

As Cross Community’s ESL ministry grew, the door opened for Charmaine to train Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches in ESL. Now she views that service as an investment back into the entities that have invested in Cross Community—the SBTC and NAMB.

Each summer at the SBTC’s Equip Conference, five to 10 churches are trained in ESL, Charmaine said, and she trains individual churches throughout the year. Earlier this year, a training was held at Lavon Drive Baptist Church in Garland with three churches of various sizes represented.

“We had the opportunity then to have a smaller church investing into a larger church while at the same time having a larger church invest into smaller churches,” she said.

Charmaine is ESL-certified through NAMB and also has a master’s degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages, so she does the primary training at sessions. Del teaches how to share the gospel using a believer’s testimony and leads a module on what pastors can expect.

“We start from the very beginning of establishing a ministry from scratch, so everything from the administrative pieces that go along with that to being able to market it to the community,” Charmaine said.



The training covers teaching techniques, cultural differences, and cross-cultural communication. “Then we look at incorporating biblical materials into the lesson plans on a regular basis,” she said, “... to help people understand who Jesus Christ is and their need for a relationship with Him.”

A ministry any church can do

One of the common concerns Del hears from pastors is that they don’t know the language of the people they’re trying to reach. The ministry is to teach people English, though, so knowledge of their heart language is not necessary.

Also, people who would attend classes may be from multiple language backgrounds, so it would be unlikely that any one ministry would be able to speak every language represented.

“With the majority of communication being nonverbal, you can start to establish a relationship with another person even before you can speak each other’s languages because actions matter,” Del said.

Once churches start ESL ministries, excitement quickly catches on, he said. “It is something you almost

The ESL ministry at Cross Community Church in Houston has led to church growth, with several being baptized and taking on leadership roles.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

have to walk through before you can completely grasp it.”

ESL is a good opportunity for churches to think outside their own walls and focus on kingdom advancement rather than just growing their individual churches, Charmaine said.

For instance, if a church finds through ESL that a new believer would be discipled best in his or her heart language, the church may be able to find a nearby Southern Baptist church that worships in that language.

“Understanding the importance of cooperating with one another to advance the kingdom and not just viewing these outreach ministries as a means to grow our own churches I think is very important because it puts it all in alignment with the Great Commission,” Charmaine said.

For more information about starting an ESL ministry in your church, contact Rebecca Burk in the SBTC’s Missional Ministries department at rburk@sbtexas.com.

Finding joy in the face of the unthinkable

JESUS IS WRITING MY STORY



I CAME TO PASTOR Tabernacle Baptist Church in Ennis about three years ago. Since then, God has been gracious to our church, giving us growth, more than 50 baptisms in 2025, and the opportunity to start Tabernacle En Español. I feel like I have the best job in the world.

Before we moved to Texas, I was a regular runner, doing 15 or 20 miles a week to stay in shape. I moved down here and got out of the habit for several reasons. I gained almost 17 pounds and was just not healthy. Last September, I started running again. One day, I'd run two or three miles and started having some chest pains, and they didn't go away for days.

A visit to the ER revealed I had a nine-centimeter mass in my chest. It was a rare form of leukemia that's pretty aggressive. The doctors were thankful that it was basically my running and that mass hitting up against the fluid around my heart and causing chest pains that got my attention.

They say they found it sooner than it normally would have been found. While that was good, it went from, "Oh, I'm having some chest pain," to receiving the leukemia diagnosis on Sept. 23. That

▲ Zach and Jill Crook are pictured with their children Isaiah, Caleb, and Avianna. They are displaying a shirt the church designed for a fundraiser supporting their pastor. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

was pretty difficult, especially with the fact that with leukemia, they do what's called an induction phase—21 to 30 days in the hospital where you get pretty intense chemo and cannot leave. That was obviously a very, very challenging time. The Lord in His providence had led our church to read through the Psalms together, and that was very helpful for me to reflect on while going through that long induction phase.

The last couple months have been the most difficult and trying months of my life. It's hard not to question and it's hard not to doubt and ask the Lord, "Why?" But on the flip side, Tabernacle has been incredible. They did things like an orange-out Sunday [the color of leukemia awareness] for me. They have been such a tangible picture in my life of the hands and feet of Jesus.

I've been in the hospital about 50% of the time since the diagnosis. My church and our deacon body asked me what I really needed. I



▲ Isaiah and Caleb Crook play football in Ennis. In honor of their dad's cancer battle, the boys were allowed by their coaches to wear orange, the color of leukemia awareness, on their uniforms in October. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

said, "I need to be at my kids' games, but I can't." So, we had a friend who set up videos so I could watch the games live, and that was pretty cool. People just showed up and made signs for the kids and just had a good time. My two boys play football for Ennis. Isaiah, he's running back and linebacker on the freshman team, and Caleb's a linebacker and tight end on the seventh-grade team. Avianna [our 7-year-old] was playing softball. For people to show up and support them was great.

It's been such an encouraging last few months because the body of Christ has practically ministered to me and my family. When you're a pastor, you're used to going and doing the ministering. Through this the Lord has really humbled me and shown me what a blessing it is to be ministered to.

I had a treatment this morning, and seven to 10 days after chemo is when your numbers, at least for me, are at their lowest. That has been a challenge for sure. And again, I am very blessed, I have a great staff, including an executive pastor, Carlos Gerke, who's been preaching for me when I need him. Even last Sunday, our youth pastor stepped into the pulpit, so I am very blessed we have very competent staff members who have stood in the gap for me when I've been unable. I've enjoyed the times when I have been able to get up. That's my plan. Sunday, I won't have a lot of energy, but I'm still planning on preaching and I love it. If I'm out of the hospital, I'm planning on preaching.

"YES, HE'S TAUGHT ME SOME HARD LESSONS. HE'S ALSO REMINDED ME OF THE BLESSINGS HE HAS GIVEN ME."

Obviously, it's physically hard on me, but I look at what my wife, Jill, is having to do—not only to be a support for me, but also be there for the kids. She's got so much on her plate, and some of the ladies in our church have been just awesome in ministering to her. Jill has also gone to work for the school district as the special ed counselor. The district and her bosses have been very supportive. She also has a group of ladies at church and other friends who have ministered to her over the past couple of months.

I remember—it was over a decade ago—I heard a message by Matt Carter. His whole message was about never trusting a man of God without a limp. He was preaching on that story of Jacob wrestling with the Lord. I would say that as I've been dealing with this, that has repeatedly come to mind. While we all know our time here is short ... I'd always just thought, "I'm going to live a good, long life and I'm going to see my grandkids," and all these other things.

I think that has definitely been a lesson for me. I'm a little bit of a control freak, and so there are many times I want to tell God what He should do rather than sit at His feet and listen and really follow after Him. The Lord has really humbled me in that way and shown me how much control is an illusion.

Yes, He's taught me some hard lessons. He's also reminded me of the blessings He has given me. My church loves and supports my family. I'm very thankful that. My wife is my best friend. I'm so thankful for her and the way she pushes me to Jesus. And being Dad to these three kids is such an honor. What a blessing.

As I face this battle, pray for me that I'll trust in God's faithfulness and be full of the joy of the Lord.

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EMPOWER

STUDENT RALLY

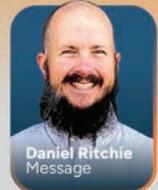
Join students from across the region for an unforgettable night that changes students' lives.

2.22 IRVING

Convention Center
6:30PM



Jared Hall
Illusionist



Daniel Ritchie
Message



SBTC STUDENTS MISSION TRIP 2026

JUNE 21-29
Budapest, Hungary

Join 9th-12th grade students from across Texas as they travel to the nations in 2026! Students will participate in a lab offering hands-on experience in missions and evangelism.



For more info & to register for events, visit sbtexas.com/students



Grant Byrd
SBTC Student Ministry Associate
gbyrd@sbtexas.com



Ministry advanced by Reach Texas



DISASTER RELIEF

PREP • TRAIN • RESPOND

What is the purpose of disaster relief? To prepare, equip, train, and mobilize churches and volunteers to fulfill the Great Commission by meeting real needs and sharing the hope of Jesus Christ with those whose lives have been or will be affected by disasters.

Would you like to be trained as an SBTC Disaster Relief volunteer?

Intro to DR + Phase 1 Training

February 28 San Angelo
Glen Meadows Baptist Church

April 11 Bellville
First Baptist Church

November 7 Mexia
First Baptist Church

Online Courses

Online Intro to DR

A course for all new volunteers and those seeking to renew their credentials. Consists of three sections with videos and quizzes to complete.

Phase 1 Clean Up & Recovery

Learn how you can help disaster survivors with mudding out or cleaning their homes after floods and debris cleanup after tornados and wind events.

Phase 1 Mass Feeding

Train to be a mass feeding ministry volunteer to help prepare meals for survivors, first responders, and other volunteers.



An opportunity 'too great to pass up'

SBTC churches are making preparations to reach out as the FIFA World Cup heads to the Lone Star State

By **Jayson Larson**

MILLIONS OF FANS are preparing to travel to Texas as it prepares to host the world's largest soccer tournament, the FIFA World Cup 2026, this summer. Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches are planning a mobilization of their own.

Beginning in June, 16 matches for the World Cup will be held in the Lone Star State—nine at AT&T Stadium in Arlington and seven at NRG Stadium in Houston. In response, SBTC churches are planning outreaches in June and July to engage those fans with the gospel.

The SBTC has planned a pair of trainings, one in DFW and one in Houston, in April. Throughout the spring, it will work to provide resources and network churches planning to participate.

"As millions descend on Texas for the World Cup, the SBTC will mobilize churches across our state to share Christ through evangelism, and we will also have focused outreach projects," SBTC Missional Ministries Senior Strategist Tony Mathews said. "This rare opportunity to welcome the nations to Texas fuels our prayerful expectation, and we look forward to all that God will do."

Nations Church in Arlington is among the churches that has expressed interest in participating.

"We are blessed to live in a community where many cultures and nationalities are already represented," said Debbie Figueroa, the church's evangelism team lead. "With the World Cup bringing even more people from around the world to our city, we have a significant opportunity to meet them, welcome them, and share the hope we have in Christ."

Glenn Melvin, Nations Church's chaplain-in-residence, said the opportunities to bear fruit abound. Those who hear the gospel and make a profession of faith in Jesus will return home and, in turn, amplify the message in places Nations

"THIS RARE OPPORTUNITY TO WELCOME THE NATIONS TO TEXAS FUELS OUR PRAYERFUL EXPECTATION, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO ALL THAT GOD WILL DO."

TONY MATHEWS

Church can't. "If Christ grabs hold of their hearts here," he said, "they can share Him with their neighbors when they return. The opportunity to reach into these countries by them visiting us is too great to pass up."

At the same time, church leaders are praying for the impact the outreach might have on its members, which it calls partners, who will carry out the unique mission of sharing Christ at home with people who live thousands of miles away.

"We hope to see our church partners develop a deeper reliance upon Christ as they share Jesus with those they meet near the stadium," Melvin said. "We hope this cross-cultural evangelism experience will give them a greater desire to reach their neighbors on a daily basis."

For now, the church has started planning and preparing, beginning with a very clear first step—prayer.

"Prayer," Melvin said, "is the connecting and energizing factor of evangelism."

Church Positions

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

PASTOR

First Baptist Church in Donie is seeking a pastor. Candidates must meet biblical qualifications per 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and believe and teach the Bible per Revelation 22:18-19. Not believe or teach any philosophy or doctrine created by man per Colossians 2:8. Submit resume with references and contact information to pastorsearch.doniebbc@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church in Batesville is seeking a FT pastor prepared to minister to all age groups and become an active part of our community. We hold that the Word of God is our authority, and we seek to glorify Him. Email resumes to fbctinnetspc@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church in Batesville is seeking a FT bivocational/bilingual pastor. Contact Jerry Fortune at 832-600-7741.

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 a resume 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@fbcwinsboro.org. 903-342-3538.

Calvary Baptist Church in 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 brandoncote21@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.

MUSIC

Coastal Oaks Church in Rockport is seeking a FT worship leader to lead us in a modern worship context. Submit your resume to cirving@coastalokschurch.org.

Northway Baptist Church in Angleton is seeking a bivocational worship leader. Please send resume to Jeff Powell, 979-849-1253, northwayworship@northwaybaptist.com.

Chapel of the Hills Baptist Church in Buchanan Dam is seeking a PT (25 hours per week) worship leader. Please contact Billy Dye at billy.dye77@gmail.com.

Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock is seeking a FT venue worship pastor to lead two of our five weekend services and collaborate with our worship volunteers and residents for our weekly college and student worship gatherings. For more information, contact katrinab@southcrest.org or visit southcrest.org/workwithus.

Shady Oaks Baptist Church in Hurst is seeking a PT (10-12 hours) worship leader. Contact Lead Pastor Jay Fannin 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 jeastep253@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 whbcwrfresume@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.

STUDENTS

Shady Oaks Baptist Church in Hurst is seeking a FT minister to students. Contact Lead Pastor Jay Fannin at jayfannin@shadyoaks.org. 817-874-5741.

Cross Community Church in Northeast Houston is seeking a FT youth director/missionary. We are a 4-year-old, gospel-centered church plant. Contact del@crossforall.com.

Parkside Baptist Church in Denison is seeking a FT pastor of student ministry to work with students in grades 7-12. Please send resume to resume@thepark.org.

Calvary Baptist Church in Nacogdoches is seeking a FT youth pastor. 3732 NE Stallings Dr., Nacogdoches, Texas 75964. 936-564-4539. mike@cbcnac.com.

First Baptist Church in Eustace is seeking a FT (preferred) or bivocational youth pastor to lead our student ministry, grades 6-12. If you are interested in this position and/or have any questions, send resume and questions to stnorrell@gmail.com, subject "Youth Pastor Search."

Cross Community Church in Houston is a growing church plant seeking a PT youth ministry resident for 2026. This is an excellent opportunity for someone to evaluate FT vocational ministry. Contact Del Traffanstedt at del@crossforall.com.

First Baptist Church in Post is 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+ hours 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.

CHILDREN

LifeBrook Church in Houston is seeking a PT kids minister. We're looking for a passionate leader to build a fun, engaging, and spiritually rich kids ministry. Join us in shaping young lives as our church continues to grow! Contact Zach Brackett at zach@lifebrook.com.

First Baptist Church in Academy is seeking a PT children's minister. We are looking for someone gifted by God to lead in children's ministry and have a heart to reach our community with the gospel. Resumes will be received through the end of March 2026 at personnel.fbca@gmail.com.

Cross Community Church in Houston is seeking a PT (12-month, paid) children's ministry resident. If you are in the Houston area and interested in vocational kids ministry, please contact Del Traffanstedt at del@crossforall.com.

Chapel of the Hills Baptist Church in Buchanan Dam is seeking a PT (20 hours per week) children's director. Please contact Billy Dye at billy.dye77@gmail.com.

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 per 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.

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 children's/young families pastor. Please call Mike Fortenberry at 903-782-6759 or send resume to mikefortenberry@hotmail.com.

OTHER

Del Rio Uvalde Baptist Association is seeking a director of missions. A job description and information can be found on our website, druba.net. For more information, please call our office at 830-278-5351.

Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving is seeking a FT business administrator for our growing church. Interested applicants should email mhenslee@plymouthpark.org.

Rock Hill Baptist Church in Brownsboro is seeking an equipping pastor who will provide vision, leadership, and direction to pastoral care, small groups, and assimilation ministries. 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.

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.



Equipping gospel agents to carry out God's mission

Editor's note: Each issue of the Texan this year will include a column written by a member of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Shepherds Collective.

"I wish my church was more serious and committed to sharing the gospel!"

I would venture to guess this thought has come to the mind of almost every pastor at some point during his ministry. While we all know evangelism springs from a heart full of devotion to Jesus and a daily walk with the Spirit, I believe pastors and church leaders have a role to play as we lead our congregations to becoming mission-minded and gospel-focused.

First, we must patiently and consistently root out bad theology as it relates to mission in the minds of our people. Some might say, "That's the pastor's job," or, "Missions is for missionaries," or simply, "I didn't know we were supposed to do that." While none of these statements find resonance in Scripture, they are

saturation the minds of many of our people due to the mixing of our cultural worldview with our faith.

As pastors, we must help our people identify these broken concepts and rebuild them with the truth of God's Word. For example, I recently preached through John's gospel, and when I came to John 20:20 where Jesus tells the disciples, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you," I made a point to show there's no such thing as a disciple who's not sent as a missionary. They go hand in hand. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be sent on mission.

Second, we need to recalibrate our training. When we do missions, it's often a separate outreach event and only those who are already confident show up. Instead, push your evangelism strategy down into the individual ministry areas within the church and integrate your training into those normal ministry routines.

In our college ministry, part of the weekly rhythm includes time on campus building relationships with the lost by giving away coffee. This isn't an add-on event; it's part of a weekly rhythm. With some creativity, we can do the same with our children's ministries, student ministries, Sunday school classes, and small groups. By integrating mission into every ministry area as part of the normal rhythm, not only are you increasing training opportunities, but you are establishing mission as a part of the culture of your church.

Finally, we need to help our congregation develop a target. I'm a bow hunter, and one of the most critical aspects of success in bow hunting is developing the ability to identify a precise target and then steady your aim on that target before you shoot. Too often, I think our pleas to our people lack a precise target, so they don't know where to start.

At our church we use the phrase "spheres of influence" to describe the target. We ask them to identify the places where they live, work, and play and to pursue relationships within those spaces. That's the target. Those are the places where God has given you responsibility to be a gospel agent, and you should be developing the kinds of relationships that allow you to share the gospel with those individuals at the appropriate time.

We can't do the work of the Holy Spirit, but clear teaching, consistent training, and helping your people identify and take responsibility for their areas of influence will go a long way in the development of a missional culture in your church.

For more information on the Shepherds Collective and other SBTC networks, visit sbtexas.com/networks.



Kendall McDonald is the lead pastor of Fredonia Hill Baptist Church in Nacogdoches.

Event Calendar



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

FEBRUARY



- 5** Pastor Wives Connection Night, Arlington
- 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
- 16-18** Pastor Prayer Retreat, Forney
- 19** Regenesis One-Day, Mexia
- 22** Empower Student Rally, Irving
- 22** Asian Evangelism Conference, Carrollton
- 22-23** Shepherds Collective Preaching Summit, Irving
- 23** Interim Pastor Equipping, Irving
- 23-24** Empower Conference, Irving
- 27-28** Charge WKND, Katy
- 28** VBS State Training, Canton
- 28** Intro to DR & Phase 1 Training, San Angelo

MARCH



- 5** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab, Celina
- 6-7** ESL Training, Corpus Christi

- 7** VBS State Training, Spring
- 10** Evangelism Connections (online)
- 13-14** Heart of the Child Conference, Broken Arrow, Okla.
- 19** Legacy Builders Training, Longview
- 21** VBS State Training, Austin
- 21** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab, El Paso
- 21** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab en Español, El Paso
- 23** Regenesis One-Day, Dayton
- 24** Regenesis One-Day, Alvin
- 24** Regenesis One-Day, Lucas
- 24** Evangelism Connections (online)
- 26** Pastor Wives Connection Night, San Antonio
- 27-28** Women's Ministry Leadership Summit, San Antonio
- 28** VBS State Training, Lubbock

APRIL



- 6-10** Reach Puerto Rico: Vision Tour
- 7** Regenesis One-Day, Terrell
- 7** Regenesis One-Day, Claude
- 9** Regenesis One-Day, Wichita Falls
- 10** Regional Bible Drill & Speakers Tournament, Odessa

- 11** Regional Bible Drill & Speakers Tournament, Spring
- 11** Intro to DR & Phase 1 Training, Bellville
- 14** Evangelism Connections (online)
- 16** Make Disciples Like Jesus Workshop, Lufkin
- 17-18** Retiro de Mujeres Florece
- 18** Regional Bible Drill & Speakers Tournament, Euless
- 18** World Soccer Championship Outreach Training, Arlington
- 20** Groups Matter, Lubbock
- 21** Groups Matter, Pittsburg
- 21** Regenesis One-Day, San Antonio
- 21** Regenesis One-Day, San Angelo
- 21** Regenesis One-Day, Palestine
- 23** Legacy Builders Training, Fort Worth
- 25** Regional Bible Drill & Speakers Tournament, Flint
- 25** World Soccer Championship Outreach Training, Houston
- 28** Regenesis One-Day, White Oak
- 30-5/2** Come Away Pastor Wives Retreat, Princeton
- 30-5/2** Ven y Repos, Waxahachie

2.23-2.24

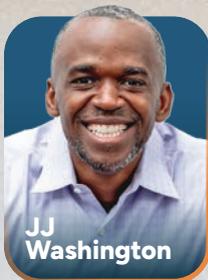
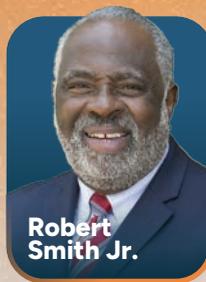
Irving Convention Center



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MOBILIZED.

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CONFERENCE 2026



Providing Texas church leaders with **proven evangelism strategies, authentic connections, and spiritual renewal** to maximize their church's kingdom impact.

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