

SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
**TEXAN**

VOLUME 25 | NO. 3

# UNDERSTANDING THE CALL

We talk to the next generation about working as doctors, lawyers, and teachers. But are we talking to them about serving the Lord through the local church?

How can SBTC churches be praying for Christians in Iran? Frisco pastor has a unique insight

Panhandle church that has been ministering for more than a century is just getting started

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **NATHAN LORICK**



## God is moving in mighty ways

**G**OD HAS DONE TREMENDOUS THINGS through the churches of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. From 120 churches in 1998 to almost 2,900 churches today, we are continuing to grow as a network.

As that growth happens, our staff is always asking how we can serve churches more effectively and efficiently. We consider it a high honor to be able to come alongside churches and serve.

As I did in our last issue, I want to highlight a couple of SBTC ministries that are doing a great job serving across Texas.

### **Disaster Relief**

Our SBTC Disaster Relief ministry, led by Scottie Stice, is second to none. I believe Scottie is the best DR director in the country, and we have an incredible group of volunteers. Whether it's through feeding units, chainsaw units, shower units, mud out, or any of the other ways our

**FOR OUR DR TEAM, IT'S NOT  
JUST ABOUT CRISIS—IT'S  
ABOUT SHARING CHRIST IN  
THE MIDST OF CRISIS.**



teams serve, SBTC DR is willing and ready. For our DR team, it's not just about crisis—it's about sharing Christ in the midst of crisis. If you have a desire to meet people in their moments of great need, reach out to Scottie and become part of seeing those needs met and sharing the gospel.

### **SBTC En Español**

This is another great and growing SBTC ministry. Luis González leads these efforts alongside Jesse Contreras, Juani Shelton, and Arlene Sanabria. They are leading the way in assisting Spanish-speaking congregations to fulfill the Great Commission. Through conferences, trainings, and planting new churches, this team is eager to walk alongside SBTC churches with excellence. If you want to find out how to be a part of this exciting ministry, Luis would be delighted to talk to you.

The SBTC exists for the churches by the churches. We are so thankful for the opportunity to serve churches across our great state. We believe God is moving in mighty ways—and the best is yet to come! I love you and consider it a joy to serve you.

*To connect with one of our  
ministry associates, contact  
the SBTC at 817-552-2500.*

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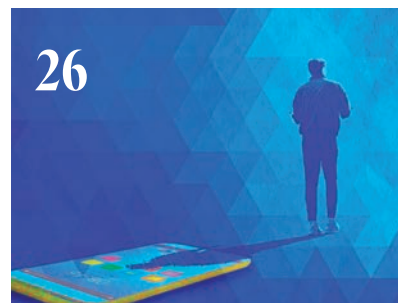


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# Make the most of every opportunity

**O**UR FAMILY RECENTLY EXPERIENCED MAJOR BREAKING NEWS: Our 6-month-old grandson had his first taste of solid food. He started with mashed-up avocados and quickly graduated to sweet potatoes. He really liked the sweet potatoes, we're told, and we know this because he apparently kept grabbing for the spoon to guide bite after bite into his mouth.

Now, if you're speeding along in life's fast lane as a younger person, that may not land all soft and sentimental on your heart the way it did for new grandparents like us. Every "first" as a parent felt like a big moment; as grandparents, those feelings are sweetly amplified. The first time we held him. His first Christmas. The first time we heard him chattering some nonsense that sounded to us like a beautiful chorus ... you get the idea.

Not long ago, I came across a post on social media that provided a much different perspective: "At some point in your childhood, you and your friends went outside to play for the very last time—and nobody knew it." I'd never thought about it that way and immediately began to consider other "lasts"—my last day of high school, my last day at work at the newspaper where I started my career, the last time I spoke to my mother before her death.

Equally as fascinating to me are the "lasts" that are still to come. At some point, I'll write my last article. Read my last book. Take my last breath.



These realities ought not discourage us. Instead, they should excite us about the opportunities God will provide as we move through whatever time He has appointed for us. In Ephesians 5, Paul writes, "Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil." Other translations say we are to make the most of every opportunity.

Today is a gift. It may not feel like one, and you may feel like you've been giving a lot more than you've been getting lately. But for those in Christ, the gift is so much greater—we are promised eternity in heaven with our Lord and Creator, living in a perfect place with no more pain or sorrow or struggle. Until we get there, God has given each of us a mission.

On my best days, when I'm not sure what God wants me to do, I fall back on the command of 1 Thessalonians 4:3—"For this is the will of God, that you be sanctified." In context, Paul is writing about sexual immorality, but the whole counsel of Scripture agrees that every follower of Christ is to apply this principle to every aspect of life. Be sanctified at work. Be sanctified with your family. Be sanctified at the ballpark. Be sanctified in the classroom. Be sanctified (gulp) on social media. Be sanctified in all things.

Why? Because someone within your hearing may be about to experience a first. It may be the first time they have interacted with someone who is a Christian. And in some cases, someone may be experiencing a last. I wonder how many times we come into contact with someone who is spending their last day on earth. It probably happens more than we think.

All the more reason we should make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious. Be kind. Be honest. Be courageous. After all, we never know when it will be our first—or last—chance to do so.



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## 5 MINUTES TEXAN Q&A WITH AFSHIN ZIAFAT

Afshin Ziafat, lead pastor of Providence Church in Frisco, was born in Houston but moved with his family to their native country of Iran when he was two years old. His family returned to Houston when he was six, during the Iranian Islamic Revolution. As a high school senior, Ziafat became a Christian while reading a Bible an elementary school tutor had given him years earlier. His family disowned him because of his faith in Christ. Ziafat and his wife, Meredith, have three young children.

---

### **What is something Providence Church has been able to celebrate recently?**

This past year we celebrated 20 years of our church. It was very special to look back and remember all that God has done in and through our body of believers. It inspires us greatly to continue seeking the Lord for more of His kingdom in our lives and extending through us to our community.

### **What do you want American Christians to know about the current conflict in Iran?**

Although war is never something we desire and there are many debates online surrounding the conflict, the truth remains that God is sovereign over all the affairs of the world. Our desire is to pray for safety for all nations involved but also to pray for freedom for the people of Iran. I would want people to make sure they separate in their minds the people of Iran from the government of Iran. The people of Iran are some of the warmest and most hospitable people in the world.

### **How can American Christians be praying for Iranians, including fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?**

The people of Iran have suffered 47 years of oppression under this Islamic regime, and yet one of the fastest growing underground churches in the world is in Iran. Our prayer is that a new day will dawn where these courageous believers will be able to spread the gospel openly without fear of retribution from the government.

### **What is a challenge Providence is facing?**

We have been blessed to see God move in powerful ways as we have been a thriving and growing church. We have planted churches over the years and will continue to do so. To increase our capacity to reach more and send more people out, we have purchased land and are moving four miles to a new church site. There are many challenges as we are in the process of this expansion over the next year and would covet prayers for wisdom, guidance, and provision.

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

I have learned that God is bigger than anything I face. He sees the big picture and no obstacle stands in the way of His purposes. It is a joy to know that He sees the big picture and is in control. It reminds me to not keep looking ahead for my satisfaction but look to Him and enjoy the process of ministry.

### **How can SBTC churches be praying for Providence Church?**

We would be so honored for you to pray for us to continue to be faithful to unashamedly proclaim the gospel and the whole counsel of God's Word, that God would continue to make us a disciple-making church that pursues maturity.



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# BORN TO

BY ERIN ROACH

→ The Well in Argyle is spinning off new churches to keep up with rapid growth in North Texas

# SEND



Senior Pastor Matthew Harding and The Well Community Church has planted four other churches in the past five years to reach North Texas.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## ARGYLE

**T**HE WELL COMMUNITY CHURCH is only 10 years old, but in the past five years this group of believers has helped launch four church plants to reach the fast-growing North Texas region.

“There are not very many churches that I know of where the lead pastor stands in front of his entire church and says, ‘Hey, I want 100 of you to leave our church and go to King’s Church in Denton,’” said Zach Cunningham, lead planter of King’s Church.

The Well started as a plant from RockPointe Church in Flower Mound in 2015. Ten families joined staff member Matthew Harding and his wife on a core team that met in their home for three months. When the group grew to more than 70, they moved to Argyle High School.

“We just celebrated our 10-year anniversary this past August, and we had 2,700 people attend our worship service that Sunday,” said Harding, senior pastor of The Well. “We average over 2,000 a Sunday now, and in 2022, we were able to build our first building on 30 acres that we own in Argyle.”

New churches can be especially nimble and strategic in reaching new communities, Harding said.

“We have to start new churches for the purpose of evangelistically reaching new waves of generations of people moving in all these new areas all through North Texas,” he said. “For example, in our small town, within five miles of us, there will be 50,000 people moving near us in the next three to five years.”

Since The Well cannot reach 50,000 new residents alone, it plans to keep multiplying. “We were planted with the DNA inside of us that we knew we were going to be planting churches for the rest of our existence.”

In 2020, The Well planted The Parish Church in Denton with Justin Jester as the pastor, “and they’re thriving,” Harding said. In 2023, The Well planted Grace Bible Church in Ponder with Mike Waldrop. In 2025, The Well helped launch King’s Church in Denton with Cunningham aiming to reach college students. This year, The Well started The Hope Church, an Indian fellowship in Argyle led by Naveen Kaukuntla.

“We’re excited to plant Bible-preaching, gospel-centered, church-planting churches,” Harding said.

Each of the church planters sponsored by The Well has been through a church planting residency hosted by the Denton Baptist Association with a goal of training leaders for more sustainable plants.

By embedding with The Well for a year before planting, the pastor planters are able to connect through community groups and preaching so that when it’s time to launch, a good number of church members could be open to God’s call to follow them.

An estimated 50,000 people will move to the Argyle area in the next three to five years, and The Well is strategically reaching them for Christ.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

“That way they can be launched with people from our local context who live close and can go with them and tithe and support them, which is really important and helpful for sustainability,” Harding said.

Cunningham grew up in Denton and moved to Iowa with The Salt Network before helping plant a church in East Lansing, Mich., to reach students at Michigan State University. When that church wanted to send him to another college town, he felt a passion for the growing number of students at his alma mater, the University of North Texas in Denton.

The Well is seven miles from Denton, but it might as well be 700 miles away, Harding said, because few UNT students make it to The Well. As the church felt burdened to reach college students with a new plant, God led them to Cunningham at a time when he needed a local church sponsor for the work he hoped to start in Denton.

Through The Salt Network, Cunningham’s primary sending church is The Commons Church in East Lansing, and The Well is his local church sponsor. The Salt Network is “a theologically-aligned ministry

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MATTHEW HARDING





that cooperates with the Southern Baptist Convention for the purpose of planting new churches near university campuses,” Harding said.

King’s Church has a young staff, Cunningham said, and The Well’s staff has “encouraged us, they pray for us, they have bought meals for us, they have offered coaching and any advice that they can give us as a more seasoned church plant, and financially they have backed our church plant pretty significantly.”

College students have a lot of time and a lot of energy, but they don’t often have a lot of money, Cunningham added, so the financial backing from The Well plays a critical role.

Between UNT and Texas Woman’s University, about 15,000 more college students live in Denton now than a decade ago when Cunningham was a student.

“There are some great churches in Denton that are engaging the campuses, but there’s always a need for more churches that are willing to reach college students in this very unique time of life,” Cunningham said, adding that The Well has been “such a good, consistent help down the street from us.”

Harding periodically asks church members to leave The Well and go with a church planter to a new work, multiplying the ministry.

**SUBMITTED PHOTO**

**“THERE ARE SOME GREAT CHURCHES IN DENTON THAT ARE ENGAGING THE CAMPUSES, BUT THERE’S ALWAYS A NEED FOR MORE CHURCHES THAT ARE WILLING TO REACH COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THIS VERY UNIQUE TIME OF LIFE.”**



ZACH CUNNINGHAM



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# A MILESTONE EVENT

As Second Amarillo nears its 120th anniversary, it reflects on what was, what is, and what is to come

BY JANE RODGERS



## AMARILLO

**B**Y THE TIME THE AMERICAN FRONTIER was officially closed in 1890, Amarillo had transitioned from a bustling Wild West town into a thriving hub of cattle shipping, and later a center for grain elevators, milling operations, and feed manufacturing. The population boomed as well, growing from just over 1,400 in 1900 to nearly 10,000 a decade later, according to the Texas Almanac.

At one point, three newspapers served the public, printing railroad timetables and carrying advertisements for goods ranging from clothing and dry goods to medicinal remedies. Amarillo ISD was formed in 1905, and a new courthouse and jail were completed a year later.

That same year, 1906, marked the founding of Second Baptist Church in Amarillo. To establish this mission of First Baptist Church, 20 charter members gathered in what the church website describes as “a humble frame building” at the corner of Fourth and Pierce streets. Over the past 120 years, the church has remained at that same location, though the facilities have been expanded and remodeled through the decades.

“We’ve always been right here,” said Larry Davis, who has served as senior pastor of Second Baptist the past two years.

The church will celebrate this milestone anniversary in October with a banquet, special worship services, guest singers and preachers, and representatives from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

“There’s a lot of history in this church,” Davis said, noting that the celebration will honor that legacy while looking toward the future.

Among those invited to the October celebration is Charlie Jones, who served as pastor for 32 years beginning in 1971, a time during which the congregation experienced significant growth. As part of the anniversary celebration, the church will recognize not only Jones but other former pastors who have faithfully served the congregation.

“Our church has been blessed with a strong history of long-tenured pastors,” Davis said.

After pastoring churches in Missouri and working with homeless veterans at a mission in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Davis and his wife, Sissi, sought God’s direction for their next place of ministry.

“The Lord answered the desires of my heart,” Davis said of Second Baptist. “This is one of the most loving churches we have ever been a part of. The church continues to grow, and people are excited about what God is doing. We have baptized 25 people during our first two years here.”

(From left) Pastor Larry Davis and longtime members and workers Shelley Reid and Randall Byers “wear many hats” to serve Second Baptist Church. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

## Outreach with intentionality

Intentional evangelism is a hallmark of the church.

“We are blessed with dedicated volunteers who truly desire to live out the will and work of God,” Davis said.

Outreach efforts take many forms.

“Last year, we took our first international mission trip in over 20 years,” Davis said. The trip ministered to churches in Brazil and resulted in 100 people praying to receive Christ.

Other efforts remain close to home. The church continues to host its annual VBS and fall festival, the latter drawing

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**SENIOR PASTOR LARRY DAVIS**



approximately 600 people for games, fellowship, and a gospel message in late October.

The latest Hope in the Park took place in March at Woodland Park. "For this event, we distributed 1,700 flyers to nearby homes, inviting families to the park and to our Easter service," Davis said. Families enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs grilled by church volunteers, while police officers and firefighters brought squad cars and fire trucks for children to explore when the kids weren't having fun in the bounce house. Fellowship and gospel conversations ensued. The church plans to host several such events throughout the year at local parks.

### Outreach with a kick

The family life center is also home to a unique outreach through a karate program. Sensei Candy, a karate instructor, was seeking a space to hold classes when Sissi Davis connected with her. The church offered the use of its facilities with the understanding that each session would begin with prayer and that church volunteers could connect with families as opportunities arose.

Sensei Candy now attends Second Baptist, along with several families involved in the program.

"It's an outreach God brought into our own building," Davis said. "We want people to know they don't have to go through life alone. We are here to walk alongside them."

The church's second annual karate tournament drew approximately 300 participants and spectators.

"Sharing the love of Christ and helping people become part of the body of Christ is central to what we do," the pastor said, noting that some have even joined the church through additional programs such as a ladies' exercise group.

Another popular ministry is the church's Thursday night pickleball gathering, which offers open play, friendly competition, and an opportunity to connect with the community.



"We have a lot of fun," Davis said. "We invite people to come, build relationships, and introduce them to the church. Many have come as a result."

He added, "We are using every opportunity to reach people and share the gospel. Like the apostle Paul, we are willing to become all things to all people, that we might win a few."

### Prayer as the foundation

All of these efforts are grounded in prayer. On the second Wednesday of each month, the congregation gathers in the sanctuary for a dedicated prayer service.

"We ask for God's favor," Davis said. "He tells us to ask of Him, and He hears us. Too often we leave blessings untouched because we do not call on Him. God is able to do all things."

"When Pastor Larry first came, he told us, 'You all wear many hats,'" said Shelley Reid, the church's children's ministry director. Her husband, Galen, grew up in Amarillo and was raised at Second Baptist. The couple was married at the church, and their sons were baptized there.

Reid, who also serves on the anniversary planning committee, expressed excitement about the upcoming celebration.

"We have incredible volunteers," she said. "They are faithful servants who love the Lord and are always

Second Baptist has seen fruit through a unique outreach involving karate instruction, which begins each training session with prayer and includes connections with participating families. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

willing to help wherever needed. We also have strong prayer support, and we know people are lifting up this church."

Randall Byers serves in multiple roles at the church, including youth minister, director of television ministry, chief financial officer, and IT support. After a career in the health industry as a licensed paramedic, he now invests his time in ministry at Second Baptist.

"Over the years, I've seen many changes, as most churches have," Byers said. "But through it all, the most important constant has been a shared commitment to faithfully follow God in every season.

"... I've had the privilege of serving under three pastors and witnessing decades of growth and a deepening understanding of our purpose," Byers continued. "That purpose is clear—to serve God right here where He has placed us.

"My hope for the future is that evangelism will always remain at the forefront—that bringing people to Jesus and growing the kingdom of God will continue to define who we are and what we do."

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**L**ACHARY WHITLOW WAS A JUNIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL the first time someone talked to him about the possibility God might be calling him into vocational ministry. Whitlow clearly remembers his reaction:

“Absolutely not.”

“I had it in my mind that people who went into ministry—pastors, children’s pastors, youth pastors—were super Christians,” Whitlow said. “And I just thought about myself as regular old Zach, like there was no way God would want me in a position like that.”

Despite his initial reaction, the conversation about calling began a season of wrestling for Whitlow. Throughout the rest of that year, God began using others to affirm his calling, including people in his church and even his high school librarian.

“That’s when I was like, ‘OK, my librarian in school who is not connected at all to my church is saying the same thing all the people in my church are saying, so maybe there’s something to this,’” Whitlow said.

Today, Whitlow serves as associate pastor of next gen ministries at Nolan River Road Baptist Church in Cleburne. When he reflects on his journey, he said he is grateful for those the Lord used to guide him where he is today. Among those was his former youth pastor, Grant Byrd, who now serves as student associate for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

One of Byrd’s priorities during his four decades as a youth pastor was helping students understand that God may have a unique calling on their lives through vocational ministry. Byrd worked with other leaders to develop curriculum to help students work through that process and even offered a “Called to Ministry” educational track at

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KAYLA CRADIT

youth camps. Later this summer, Byrd will lead the SBTC’s Following Your Calling event for students who may feel called to ministry. FYC will include interactive talks with ministry leaders and break-out topics focused on various areas of service.

“We have no problem asking [students] if God wants them to be a teacher or a doctor or a lawyer, but what about a minister?” Byrd said. “That needs to be a part of their thought process rather than something we never mention when we’re having those kinds of conversations.

“I just think if we don’t start talking about calling with our kids, we’re going to soon be in a bind. We’ve got to talk about it more. It’s got to be an option for our kids.”

#### Discerning what’s next

When it comes to understanding calling and following God’s guidance, there’s a moment that stands out in Kayla Cradit’s mind. During her senior year of high school, she went on a mission trip to Costa Rica. Her group was serving in a city where it was important to know which areas were safe and which ones were not. The guide helping them that day was a local 10-year-old boy.

“As he was leading us down these roads, he was saying, ‘Don’t go down this road,’ and ‘Let’s go down that one,’” Cradit recalls. “I thought that was a beautiful depiction of who God is and how He leads us. It doesn’t always mean He is going to lead us to be in the safest places, but He’s going to protect us in those situations.”

Cradit, who served as girls student minister at The Loop campus of Houston’s First the past five years, is familiar with following God’s lead into the mission field.

The high school trip to Costa Rica was preceded the year before by a mission trip to Alaska, and after graduating college she spent two years serving in Wales. She recently answered a different call that will take her back to the United Kingdom to help start that country's first Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter.

"It's really cool to be praying through the vision of what God has already set before us and trying to walk in obedience to what that looks like," she said.

During each season of her life, she can point to the people who helped her understand God's calling. It started with her parents and grandparents pointing her to Jesus, who saved her at age 9. In Wales, God placed a pair of mentors in her life. At other times, she sought the counsel of friends or ministry mentors—including Byrd, who had Cradit on his staff at First McKinney.

"I don't take for granted the fact that I have family that continues to point me toward God and His will in my life," she said. "And even with having them in my life, there were seasons specifically when I was in a stage of trying to discern [what was next]. ... Obviously, God can do anything, but having people come alongside me to complement what He was already presenting to me, that was huge."

#### **'Don't limit what God can do'**

Whitlow began serving at Nolan River Road Baptist Church in January 2023. The church's student ministry, he said, exists to equip teenagers to become lifelong disciples of Jesus. Oftentimes, that pursuit will lead students to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a secular vocation. But Whitlow said he also has students who have told him they feel called to vocational ministry. He helps those students prepare for ministry service through a mix of study and hands-on experience.

One of the lessons Whitlow tries to teach them is to identify their limiting beliefs about how God might use them—a struggle he once had himself.

"If I could go back to the younger me and advise myself, I would say, 'Don't limit what God can do. Don't say, 'Well, God could never do that with me,'" he said. "Just look at Scripture and look at all the people God uses. That's something I see now when I look back at my life, and it's definitely something I'm continuing to learn."

**"IF I COULD GO BACK TO THE YOUNGER ME AND ADVISE MYSELF, I WOULD SAY, 'DON'T LIMIT WHAT GOD CAN DO.'"**

**ZACHARY WHITLOW**

## Following Your Calling

Grant Byrd, SBTC's student associate, recently talked with the *Texan* about Following Your Calling, a two-day retreat for students called to ministry.

### **What is the heart behind Following Your Calling?**

So many pastors and leaders have told me they were called as a teen but didn't really get any training until they went to seminary. This will be a great opportunity for students to get a massive jump-start on their calling. We want them to leave here having a better understanding of that calling and what next steps they need to take to grow into it.

### **What can students who attend this event expect?**

This retreat is a way to give those students who feel a calling to ministry a chance to learn from some of the best leaders in many different areas of ministry. They will have time to ask questions directly of those who are serving in over 15 different ministry areas, including pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and children's and student ministers.

### **How can leaders be more intentional about helping students understand that God may be calling them to ministry?**

One great way is to talk to all your students about calling. They all need to know God has a great purpose for them, and some of them have the purpose of being a minister of the gospel. Give them opportunities to hear that call of God. When they say yes or have questions about it, allow them to talk about it and have those questions answered by you, who they trust. Also, make sure they have the resources that allow them to work through their questions.

Interested in the Following Your Calling event? Scan the QR code for more info.



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# ESTABLISHING ROOTS & BEARING FRUIT

**FBC Loraine is seeing the Lord  
bless its ministry through strong  
participation in the community**

BY JANE RODGERS

## LORAIN

**T**HE MITCHELL COUNTY TOWN OF LORAIN, located off Interstate 20 less than 60 miles west of Abilene and 100 miles south of Lubbock, is filled with hard-working cotton farmers.

Many residents in this town of about 500 work for the county, the school district, or the prison in nearby Colorado City.

In the post-World War II 1940s and 1950s, the town boomed with hardware stores and other businesses during interstate highway construction.

Since its own founding in the 1890s, First Baptist Church in Loraine has served the community. Today, the town is sleepier and quieter than it was 75 years ago, but revival is happening at the church. Attendance has more than doubled from the fewer than a dozen members who called Jerry Bennett as pastor in November 2023.

“We now average 25-30, on high days even more,” Bennett said. “The church had a good interim pastor for almost a year before me, and I credit him and the former pastor of eight years who did good work and laid a good foundation.”

Some of the growth has come from people new to the church and community, but many members have lived in Loraine all their lives.

### **The sound of children**

With the cooperation of Loraine ISD, the church began offering an afternoon Good News Club at the elementary school. With 24 students enrolled, attendance is strong. The Good News Club offers fall and spring sessions and ended for the year in April, Bennett said.

Since the beginning of the program, 14 children have trusted Christ as Savior, and several have been baptized at the church, where many regularly attend.

“We haven’t had children here in a long time,” said one older member joyfully. Parents often, but not always, accompany their kids to church.

“It good to hear the children and to see them, too,” Bennett said.

FBC Loraine volunteers are the key, the pastor noted. “We are very pleased with our folks. They want to see people saved. They want to serve. They are very helpful.



... Without God's favor, none of this would have happened."

Plans for the future include restarting children's Sunday school with the addition of a part-time children's ministry director and continuing to put on VBS this summer.

"This will mark the third year we have done VBS without assistance from an outside mission group," the pastor said.

### Active in the community

As the National Day of Prayer rolls around in May, FBC Loraine will again invite other area churches to participate in a combined prayer service at a local park, the third such community gathering involving five congregations. FBC Loraine also stays visible in the community by participating in outreaches including the local bank's Easter egg hunt, where members have a booth and distribute Bibles, water, and gifts to children.

A yearly revival also bears fruit. "Our folks are faithful. They enjoy worship," Bennett said, adding that a young father who works at a plant in a nearby town was saved at last fall's revival and among those baptized in recent months.

Since Bennett's arrival, the church has held two revivals: one in spring 2024 with evangelist Dennis Parish and the second in fall 2025 with guest preacher Harold Tucker. Five were baptized and several saved following the second revival.

A community Bible distribution is also planned later this spring. "We'll go door-to-door and hand out Bibles with literature about the church. If we catch folks at home, we'll greet them and give our testimony," Bennett said. The Bible distribution will be combined with a prayer walk. "We want to put Bibles on each door within our city limits."

### Strengthened through prayer

An active prayer team of 18 members supports every evangelistic effort of FBC Loraine. "We understand that



everyone realizes without prayer, we could do nothing," Bennett said.

Personifying this commitment to prayer was Christine Britton, a 98-year-old church member who passed away in November 2025. When the Bennetts dropped by to visit "Miss Christine" after she became homebound, they typically asked her for prayer requests. Each time, Miss Christine declined to share her woes.

"I just want to pray for the lost people of Loraine," she always insisted. So they did.

With Acts 9:31 as the model, FBC

Top: The congregation of FBC Loraine has grown over the last two years, adding families and reaching the community.

Bottom: The church's well-attended after-school Good News Club ministers to kids at the local elementary. **SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

Loraine hopes the flock will continue to "be built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit," increasing in numbers.

"We're nothing special," Bennett said. "We are just serving the Lord ... and having fun."

# 'GOD CAN RESTORE ANY LIFE'

**East Texas pastor's former struggles serve as a launching pad for ministry to others**

BY ARLENE SANABRIA

## LUFKIN

**A CASA DEL ALFARERO**, pastored by Faustino "Tino" Treviño, is a church that can testify to God's faithfulness.

The church has existed for approximately 20 years and draws between 60-70 people each week. Its services reflect the diversity of this hard-working East Texas community: They are bilingual, with worship and preaching in English and Spanish. On Sunday mornings, the congregation offers Bible study for adults, women, youth, and children, while on Wednesday evenings, Bible studies are held in Spanish.

Treviño's mission is to reach those in his city with the same saving message that rescued him decades ago, when God's restorative grace sent his life on a path he never considered.

### **Transformed by the gospel**

Although he heard the gospel as a child, Treviño's life took a difficult turn when he was a teenager. For many years, he struggled with addictions and destructive habits.

"On the outside, it seemed like everything was fine, but there were many things people didn't know," he said.

In 1996, after years of living that lifestyle, he reached what he describes as rock bottom. On Jan. 28, 1997, he gave his life to Christ and, shortly afterward, entered a rehabilitation center with the support of his employer, who was a Christian.

Treviño began to get involved in a Baptist church in Mississippi, where he was baptized and discipled. In 1998, he was invited to serve as a translator on a church mission trip to Mexico. That experience opened up new opportunities for service.

The following year, Treviño began sharing brief reflections at a different church where some Hispanic members wanted to hold meetings in Spanish. What began as a monthly gathering soon became a weekly meeting. The mother church eventually ordained him for ministry, and that group became a new Hispanic church.

For more than two decades, Treviño was involved in the development of several Hispanic congregations in Mississippi, including Nueva Vida Esperanza and La Primera Misión Bautista in Batesville. Many of those churches continue to serve today.

In 2000, he married María Virginia “Vicky” Treviño, whom he had the blessing of leading to Christ and baptizing before their marriage. The Treviños have been married for 25 years, and together they have six children—four daughters and two sons—nine grandchildren, and three great-granddaughters.

### **An unexpected call to the pastorate**

In October 2020, a church in Texas invited him to preach while they were searching for a new pastor following the retirement of their previous leader. Treviño was not looking for a change in ministry and accepted the invitation without imagining he would eventually be considered for the pastorate.

After several interviews and a process of prayer, church leaders visited Mississippi to get a closer look at Treviño’s ministry and finally invited him to move to Texas. He arrived in Lufkin in May 2021.

“It was something we didn’t expect, especially at this stage of life,” says Treviño, who recently turned 66.

Before his arrival, the church had been going through a significant period of transition. For years, the congregation met in various spaces loaned by local churches

**“IN LIFE AND IN MINISTRY,  
THERE ARE DIFFICULT  
MOMENTS. BUT WHEN WE LOOK  
AT ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE,  
WE SEE HIS FAITHFULNESS.”**

**TINO TREVIÑO**

while searching for a suitable place to grow. Over time, attendance swelled and the space became insufficient.

At that time, Redland Baptist Church, a local Anglo church, invited Treviño’s church to use its facilities and share the expenses. Over time, attendance at Redland continued to decline, and maintaining the building became difficult.

Finally, the congregation made the decision to give its building to La Casa del Alfarero, allowing the Hispanic church to continue its ministry in those facilities. The building has a capacity for 400-500 people and also includes a gym.

### **A heart for missions**

Throughout his ministry, Treviño has maintained a strong passion for missions.

In 2012, he participated in a mission trip to Indonesia, where a relationship subsequently developed with the Manggarai people on the island of Flores. For years, teams have traveled there to visit homes, share the gospel, and conduct Bible studies. On one of those trips, they even had the opportunity to baptize a handful of new believers in a river.

Treviño has also participated in ministries in Honduras and Nicaragua, where teams visited communities and shared the gospel.

Meanwhile, La Casa del Alfarero continues to seek ways to serve its own community in Lufkin.

Among its outreach activities are vacation Bible school, back-to-school events where church members distribute backpacks and school supplies, and home Bible studies. Treviño also

Pastor Tino Treviño, pictured with his family, uses his past to help minister to people in the present. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**



encourages members to view their daily conversations as opportunities to share hope.

“At any moment of the day, we may encounter someone who needs prayer or to hear from the Lord,” he said.

**A ministry marked by restoration**

The difficult experiences Treviño went through before knowing Christ are now part of his pastoral ministry.

He frequently counsels people struggling with addiction, marriages in crisis, and family wounds. He also dedicates time to helping couples go through difficulties, reminding them restoration is possible.

“I know what it’s like to be lost, desperate, and tired of living that way,” he says. “That’s why I know God can restore any life.”

In addition to his pastoral work, Treviño continues his academic studies. In 2025, he earned his bachelor’s degree in biblical studies, and he is pursuing a master’s degree in Christian counseling, which he hopes to complete this spring.

In the meantime, his desire is to continue guiding La Casa del Alfarero toward a deeper faith and a greater commitment to the gospel.

“In life and in ministry, there are difficult moments,” he said, “but when we look at all that God has done, we see His faithfulness.”

La Casa del Alfarero has participated in ministries both locally and abroad in places such as Honduras and Nicaragua. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**



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# ‘DIOS PUEDE RESTAURAR CUALQUIER VIDA’

Las dificultades que superó un pastor del este de Texas le sirvieron de punto de partida para ayudar a los demás

POR ARLENE SANABRIA



## LUFKIN

**A CASA DEL ALFARERO**, pastoreada por Fausto ‘Tino’ Treviño, es una iglesia que puede dar testimonio de la fidelidad de Dios.

La iglesia existe desde hace aproximadamente 20 años y reúne entre 60 y 70 personas cada semana. Sus servicios reflejan la diversidad de esta comunidad trabajadora del este de Texas: los servicios son bilingües, con adoración y predicación en inglés y español. Los domingos por la mañana, la congregación ofrece estudios bíblicos para adultos, mujeres, jóvenes y niños, mientras que los miércoles por la noche se llevan a cabo estudios bíblicos en español.

La misión de Treviño es llegar a la gente de su ciudad con el mismo mensaje salvador que lo rescató hace décadas, cuando la gracia restauradora de Dios llevó su vida por un camino que nunca había imaginado.

Transformado por el evangelio

Aunque escuchó el evangelio de niño, la vida de Treviño dio un giro difícil cuando era adolescente. Durante muchos años, luchó contra adicciones y hábitos destructivos.

“Por fuera, parecía que todo iba bien, pero había muchas cosas que la gente no sabía”, dijo.

En 1996, tras años de llevar ese estilo de vida, tocó fondo, como él mismo lo describe. El 28 de enero de 1997, entregó su vida a Cristo y, poco después, ingresó en un centro de rehabilitación con el apoyo de su jefe, que era cristiano.

Treviño empezó a participar activamente en una iglesia bautista de Misisipi, donde fue bautizado y recibió formación como discípulo. En 1998, lo invitaron a servir como traductor en un viaje misionero de la iglesia a México. Esa experiencia le abrió nuevas oportunidades de servicio.

Al año siguiente, Treviño empezó a compartir breves reflexiones en otra iglesia donde algunos miembros hispanos querían celebrar reuniones en español. Lo que comenzó como una

reunión mensual pronto se convirtió en una reunión semanal. La iglesia matriz finalmente lo ordenó para el ministerio, y ese grupo se convirtió en una nueva iglesia hispana.

Durante más de dos décadas, Treviño participó en el desarrollo de varias congregaciones hispanas en Misisipi, entre ellas Nueva Vida Esperanza y La Primera Misión Bautista en Batesville. Muchas de esas iglesias siguen hoy en día.

En el 2000, se casó con María Virginia 'Vicky' Treviño, a quien tuvo la bendición de guiar a Cristo y bautizar antes de su matrimonio. Los Treviño llevan 25 años casados y juntos han criado a seis hijos—cuatro hijas y dos hijos—nueve nietos y tres bisnietas.

### Un llamado inesperado al pastorado

En octubre de 2020, una iglesia de Texas lo invitó a predicar mientras buscaban un nuevo pastor tras la jubilación de su anterior líder. Treviño no estaba buscando un cambio en el ministerio y aceptó la invitación sin imaginar que, con el tiempo, lo considerarían para el pastorado.

Tras varias entrevistas y un proceso de oración, los líderes de la iglesia visitaron Misisipi para conocer más de cerca su ministerio y finalmente lo invitaron a mudarse a Texas. Llegó a Lufkin en mayo de 2021.

"Fue algo que no esperábamos, especialmente en esta etapa de la vida", dice Treviño, quien recientemente cumplió 66 años.

Antes de su llegada, la iglesia había atravesado un importante periodo de transición. Durante años, la congregación se reunió en diversos espacios prestados por iglesias locales mientras buscaba un lugar adecuado para crecer. Con el tiempo, la asistencia aumentó y el espacio se quedó pequeño.

En ese momento, la Iglesia Bautista Redland, una iglesia local anglosajona, invitó a la iglesia de Treviño a usar sus instalaciones y compartir los gastos. Con el tiempo,



la asistencia a Redland siguió disminuyendo y mantener el edificio se volvió difícil.

Finalmente, la congregación tomó la decisión de ceder su edificio a La Casa del Alfarero, permitiendo que la iglesia hispana continuara su ministerio en esas instalaciones.

El edificio tiene capacidad para entre 400 y 500 personas y también cuenta con un gimnasio.

### Un corazón para las misiones

A lo largo de su ministerio, Treviño ha mantenido una gran pasión por las misiones.

En el 2012, participó en un viaje misionero a Indonesia, donde poste-

Treviño y su iglesia están firmemente comprometidos con llegar a la comunidad a través de iniciativas como la Escuela Bíblica de Vacaciones, eventos de regreso a clases y estudios bíblicos en los hogares. (Página opuesta) Estas iniciativas están ayudando a la iglesia a llegar a un número cada vez mayor de niños y familias. **FOTOS COMPARTIDAS**

riormente se desarrolló una relación con el pueblo manggarai de la isla de Flores. Durante años, varios equipos han viajado hasta allí para visitar hogares, compartir el evangelio y llevar a cabo estudios bíblicos. En uno de esos viajes, incluso tuvieron la oportunidad de bautizar a un grupo de nuevos creyentes en un río.

También ha participado en ministerios en Honduras y Nicaragua, donde los equipos visitan comunidades y comparten el evangelio.

Mientras tanto, La Casa del Alfarero sigue buscando formas de servir a su propia comunidad en Lufkin.

Entre sus actividades de alcance están la escuela bíblica de vacaciones, eventos de regreso a clases donde reparten mochilas y útiles escolares, y estudios bíblicos en casa. Treviño también anima a los miembros a ver sus conversaciones diarias como oportunidades para compartir esperanza.

**“EN LA VIDA Y EN EL MINISTERIO HAY MOMENTOS DIFÍCILES. PERO CUANDO MIRAMOS TODO LO QUE DIOS HA HECHO, VEMOS SU FIDELIDAD”.**

**TINO TREVIÑO**



“En cualquier momento del día, podemos encontrarnos con alguien que necesite oración o escuchar del Señor”, dijo.

Un ministerio marcado por la restauración

Las experiencias difíciles por las que pasó Treviño antes de conocer a Cristo ahora forman parte de su ministerio pastoral.

Con frecuencia aconseja a personas que luchan contra la adicción,

matrimonios en crisis y heridas familiares. También dedica tiempo a ayudar a parejas que atraviesan dificultades, recordándoles que la restauración es posible.

“Sé lo que es sentirse perdido, desesperado y cansado de vivir así”, dice. “Por eso sé que Dios puede restaurar cualquier vida”.

Además de su labor pastoral, Treviño continúa con sus estudios académicos. En el 2025 obtuvo su licenciatura en estudios bíblicos y actualmente está cursando una maestría en consejería cristiana, que espera terminar esta primavera.

Mientras tanto, su deseo es seguir guiando a La Casa del Alfarero hacia una fe más profunda y un mayor compromiso con el evangelio.

“En la vida y en el ministerio hay momentos difíciles”, dijo, “pero cuando miramos todo lo que Dios ha hecho, vemos su fidelidad”.



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# STEERING AWAY FROM DISTRACTION

Digital declutter campaign has church's members engaging with screens less and the Bible—and one another—more

BY ERIN ROACH

## GRAPEVINE

**C**HURCH AT THE CROSS has been going through a digital declutter this spring, identifying unhealthy connections to technology and intentionally making space for God to form their spiritual character.

"It's no shock that in our cultural moment, screen times and people's use of social media is extremely excessive," said JR Vassar, lead pastor of Church at the Cross.

"Some stats are saying adults spend seven hours and two minutes a day on screens. It's higher among Gen Z and Millennials, and all that time on screens has decreased our capacity to give sustained attention to things that are significant and truly meaningful."

Intense focus on screens has led to the breakdown of human relationships and a negative impact on mental health, particularly among teenagers, whose levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation has escalated.

"It's not just that these are unintended consequences," Vassar said. "These technology companies have actually built their products in such a way as to create addiction and to keep you tied to it. It's sort of like a symbiotic relationship. We are feeding off them for entertainment and dopamine hits, and they're getting rich off of it."

With insights from Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* and Cal Newport's *Digital Minimalism*, Vassar led Church at the Cross through a 30-day digital declutter in March alongside a sermon series called "The Attention Economy: Paying Attention to What Matters."

"We're doing this so that we can open our lives up and make ourselves available to God and let Him shape us with His Word in the context of community while eliminating all the competing things that would seek to capture our imagination and shape our values," Vassar said.





◀ If believers don't intentionally choose to be formed by God, they will take their cues from the culture and be formed by the world, Lead Pastor JR Vassar says. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**



**WE'RE DOING THIS SO THAT WE CAN OPEN OUR LIVES UP AND MAKE OURSELVES AVAILABLE TO GOD AND LET HIM SHAPE US WITH HIS WORD IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY WHILE ELIMINATING ALL THE COMPETING THINGS THAT WOULD SEEK TO CAPTURE OUR IMAGINATION AND SHAPE OUR VALUES.**



The goal was not for members to use their phones less, but to redefine their relationships with technology. During the 30 days, the church was encouraged to identify which digital tools were necessary in their lives—news feeds, texting, etc.

“These things are required for your job, they’re critical for your communication with people in your family. If a tool is deemed necessary, you mark it necessary,” Vassar said.

If a tool was deemed unnecessary, the goal was to eliminate that for 30 days. “This could be social media accounts. It could be streaming services. It could be a number of things that have stolen your focus and that tend to cannibalize a lot of your time and attention,” he added.

If a technological tool was deemed necessary, the pastor led the congregation in placing some rules for use around it. For instance, they would only text when a face-to-face conversation or phone call was impossible.

Then they were to determine what meaningful activities they needed to reintroduce into their lives, such as taking walks, having

face-to-face conversations with their spouses, or having board game nights with their families.

“What we want is to remember that we are embodied people, and we’re meant to have embodied interactions with people, not just screen interactions,” Vassar said.

Most importantly, Church at the Cross was called to engage or re-engage with the Lord through the Scriptures, prayer, meditation, church attendance, and community life with other believers.

To facilitate the entire emphasis, church leaders developed a digital declutter workbook. At the end of each week, people were asked to consider reflection questions including, “What are you doing now that you thought you didn’t have time for in the past?”

“Some people feel like they just don’t have time to read, but now they’re actually reading books because they’re incorporating that activity into their lives that they think would be beneficial for their own formation and emotional and mental and spiritual health,” Vassar said.

A married couple had a great marriage but had gotten into a habit of sitting down and watching TV with their laptops open, the pastor said. Now they spend time on the back porch, eating meals together and conversing in meaningful ways.

◀ Church at the Cross in Grapevine has been identifying unhealthy connections to technology and intentionally making space for God to form members’ spiritual character.



CATC has seen a resurgence in families spending time together, people reading the Bible, and spouses having face-to-face conversations after a digital declutter.

**SUBMITTED PHOTO**

more conversation and a lot more laughter together, and we're seeing people watching TV less and actually picking up their Bibles more," he said.

If believers don't intentionally choose to be formed by God, they will take their cues from the culture and be formed by the world, Vassar said. A digital declutter is an effort at blocking the algorithms that would catechize the imagination.

"We need God to move powerfully in the lives of people," Vassar said, "to free them from things that are weightless and incapable of actually filling the deep needs of our souls."

A young woman was accustomed to listening to podcasts on her commute, but during the digital declutter she tried to be quiet and attentive to the Lord on the drive. "She's actually enjoying the sunrise, and she's

having some thoughts about her life that she thinks have been kind of drowned out by a lot of other noise," Vassar said.

"We're seeing families spend more time together with the TV off and just

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# When vision fades: the quiet crisis facing churches

**AM CONVINCED THE ROOT ISSUE** most churches face today is that they have lost their vision.

By this, I don't mean they have no calendar or programs. I mean they do not have a clear understanding of God's direction for their future. In my experience working with dozens of congregations, churches without vision operate on repetition, not expectation. They march through ministry from year to year without asking whether what they do helps the church become more faithful to Christ's calling.

A church stuck in repetition simply reproduces last year's calendar. Ministry leaders gather, adjust dates, and call it progress. Churches that lack vision rarely ask whether an event reached new people, produced disciples, or advanced the mission of Christ. Completion becomes the metric of success, not obedience.

A cycle of repetition leads to comfort and resistance to change. When fresh ideas surface, people protect what feels normal, often saying, "That's not the way we've always done it." Churches need a vision that calls them into the discomfort of obedience. Vision pushes congregations beyond what was comfortable into what God is calling them to become.

One reason churches lack vision is they misunderstand where vision comes from. Many believe it originates with the pastor. When the pulpit is vacant, ministry stalls. Activities decline. Decision-making is deferred. Members wait for the new guy to arrive with a vision message.

This dynamic resembles Israel at Mount Sinai. God invited the people to meet Him, but they refused, saying, "You go to the Lord ... and bring back to us what He says" (Exodus 19). Israel preferred a messenger over a personal response to God's calling. Similarly, churches often treat pastors as the source of vision rather than seeking Christ together under Scripture.

Pastors are under-shepherds, not vision originators. Jesus is the head of the church and the source of its direction (Ephesians 1:22-23). When churches look to Christ first for vision, they move beyond pastoral personality to missional obedience.

A church without a clear, God-given vision is stagnant at best and spiritually dead at worst. It may retain comfort-seekers who are satisfied with maintaining the status quo. But maintenance is not a mission and comfort is not obedience. Visionless



**CHURCHES NEED A VISION  
THAT CALLS THEM INTO  
THE DISCOMFORT OF  
OBEDIENCE. VISION PUSHES  
CONGREGATIONS BEYOND  
WHAT WAS COMFORTABLE  
INTO WHAT GOD IS CALLING  
THEM TO BECOME.**





**A CHURCH WITHOUT  
A CLEAR, GOD-GIVEN  
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churches carry on activities without kingdom outcomes.

Here are five questions to help you discern the health of your church's vision:

**1 Can our leaders clearly describe where Christ is leading our church beyond simply sustaining current ministries?**

If vision is present, it can be articulated. If it cannot be named, the church may be operating on habit rather than direction.

**2 How do we define success—by faithfulness and fruit, or by attendance and completion?**

When events are evaluated primarily by whether they happened, vision has likely given way to routine.

**3 If pastoral leadership changed tomorrow, would the church continue moving forward, or pause and wait?**

A church that stalls without a pastor may be revealing dependence on personality rather than submission to Christ's headship.

**4 Are we willing to stop good programs that no longer serve our God-given calling?**

Vision provides guardrails. Resistance to releasing familiar ministries often signals a preference for comfort over obedience.

**5 Do our people understand how their serving, giving, and discipling connect to God's larger purpose for this church?**

When vision is clear, participation has meaning. When it is unclear, the ministry feels disconnected and obligated.



Anthony Svajda is pastoral ministries associate for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. He oversees the SBTC's Regenesi church health and renewal strategy.



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# DRIVEN TO DUTY

## *Chosen to Serve* training carries with it a firm conviction: Healthy churches are served by healthy deacons

BY GARY LEDBETTER

### LEAGUE CITY

**B**AY AREA CHURCH is a large congregation located between Houston and Galveston in Southeast Texas. The church has a broad selection of ministries ranging from local benevolence and family ministries to church planting and missionary involvement in other countries, in addition to the usual selection of discipleship and fellowship opportunities for all ages.

Yet as church leaders considered ways to make their ministry more effective, they could see areas that needed shoring up. Their deacons were perhaps an underutilized resource as they focused on traditional roles such as widows ministry and serving the Lord's Supper.

"[Those ministries] had been done in our church for a long time," said John Eckeberger, a Bay Area deacon who also serves as the church's pastor for missions and mobilization, "but there seemed to be a lot of gaps in service to our church that we've since asked the deacons to step into. It's been a very positive thing."

As he considered how the deacons might catch a revitalized vision for their service, Eckeberger thought of

his friend, Jeff Lynn, who once pastored Yorktown Baptist Church down the road in Corpus Christi. Lynn moved from Yorktown to be senior strategist for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Church Health and Leadership team, a ministry area that includes deacon ministry.

Lynn saw a need and began developing a training tool called *Chosen to Serve*.

"I did a deep dive into what the Word said about deacons," Lynn said. "There's not really a job description for deacons. We infer a lot from Acts 6. We selected the title *Chosen to Serve* from that passage.

"This kind of broadens the understanding of the possibilities for service as a deacon. I think it's an awareness—that's what this training is for—that this is an office that functions to serve the church, though not to lead the church."

When Bay Area's deacons met with Lynn, the resource was in the testing and final development phase and the training manual that is now used had not yet been published. The manual has since been completed and is used by SBTC staff to train deacons in churches across the state.

The application of the training will be specific to churches applying its principles. One way Bay Area Church broadened the service of its deacons was through ministry teams. One team helps with the church's benevolence ministry, another does fix-it jobs such as repairing fences that blow over during coastal storms, still another focuses on outreach, and there are several others. A recently launched ministry of deacon teams provides a short course in financial management for families.

"We really have challenged them," Eckeberger said. "Figure out where you fit in this equation. Everybody needs to serve on a team, so pick a team that works for you and get after it.' The challenge came from our time with Jeff, reminding them that we're called to serve the church, not only to help widows."

As part of his time with the deacons of Bay Area Church, Lynn also provided each deacon with a copy of *Praying for Your Pastor* by Billy Taylor. Eckeberger said his fellow deacons still talk about that book and its impact eight months after receiving it. These are also crucial parts of

being a deacon—supporting the pastor and being spiritual men.

“Why,” Lynn emphasizes, “if all these seven men did was serve food, why was there such a premium on their spiritual nature, as we see in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3? All the other elements flow from the deacons being spiritual. We really do spend a lot of time on this spiritual element.”

One of the challenges Bay Area’s deacons faced prior to gathering for training and prayer was the sense they didn’t know what they were supposed to be doing. It led to a drop off in meeting attendance and general discouragement within that ministry body. Using *Chosen to Serve* has made a difference. Partly because of the size of their church and partly because of this expanding of their channels of service, the church is adding 15 men so it has 40 active deacons.

“I think it’s really been an encouragement to them,” Eckeberger said. “I mean, there’s a different attitude in the meetings. In fact, I was just going over our agenda this morning because we meet this Sunday, and three of the things on the agenda are service-oriented. And that’s changed from two years ago.”

“I don’t think most deacons are aware of the potency of their ministry,” Lynn added. “I think a training like this broadens their understand-

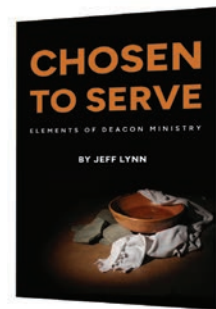


Jeff Lynn (left), the SBTC’s Church Health and Leadership senior strategist, led a group of men through *Chosen to Serve* deacon training at the Equip Conference. **SUBMITTED PHOTO**

**“I THINK IT’S REALLY BEEN AN ENCOURAGEMENT [TO OUR DEACONS]. ... THERE’S A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE IN THE MEETINGS.”**

**JOHN ECKEBERGER**

ing of what they do to stabilize the church, to work as a team. We’ve trained hundreds of deacons already. Can you imagine the extrapolated effect of that across Texas? I mean, I think healthy churches are served by healthy deacons.”



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# Doing ‘the next right thing’

MinistrySafe training offers churches a step-by-step process to minimize the risk of sexual abuse



**Gregory Love and his wife, Kimberlee Norris,** are attorneys who created MinistrySafe nearly three decades ago to help churches and ministries meet legal standards of care and reduce the risk of sexual abuse. This year, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention churches can participate in a series of MinistrySafe webinars called Journey to a Safer Ministry at no cost. Love recently spoke with the *Texan* about the challenges and opportunities churches face when it comes to protecting children.

**What’s at stake for churches in terms of doing all they can to protect children from sexual abuse?**

**GREGORY LOVE:** First and foremost, if our goal as the church is to introduce the gospel and disciple—there’s nothing more important. During that effort, however, a child or student must be safe. If a child is not safe while we share the gospel and disciple ... the enrichment that can come from that experience can be lost. When it comes to child safety, we cannot wing it. We already prioritize spiritual growth; we also must prioritize the health, safety, and wellness of the vulnerable we’re trying to reach. Our children’s ministries and VBS programs are very attractive and effective programs in our churches. From a spiritual warfare standpoint, you’ve got to know that’s where the enemy focuses, as well.

In addition to the human cost, there are other costs. For example, the financial cost of resolving a sexual abuse claim has skyrocketed. It was about \$250,000 per victim in 1997. Now the average cost is about \$2.5 million per victim if it settles, and \$10.3 million per victim if it is resolved at trial. When insurance carriers see that—and they do—they realize it is impossible to simply raise your premiums by 10% and cover those types of costs. In response, insurance carriers are limiting coverage options while also requiring churches, camps, schools, and nonprofits to improve safety system efforts in order to access sexual abuse coverage. Interestingly, insurance carriers are a unique influence in the church marketplace: They can require churches to make changes, and insurance carriers are taking this seriously.

Though there are a variety of things at stake to consider, the most important one is the impact sexual abuse has on a child and the child’s family.

**What do churches that work with MinistrySafe learn that surprises them most when it comes to child sexual abuse prevention?**

**GL:** The first big thing they learn is that most people have the preconceived idea that risk comes from an abduction offender—somebody who is on the outside just looking for an opportunity to snatch and grab a child. From that misconception, we embrace and rely on principles like “stranger danger.” But the abduction offender represents less than 10% of the problem.

The majority of the problem comes from what we call the preferential offender. This offender can be a male or female and has no visual profile. We cannot identify the preferential abuser visually; we

**“WE ALREADY PRIORITIZE SPIRITUAL GROWTH;  
WE ALSO MUST PRIORITIZE THE HEALTH,  
SAFETY, AND WELLNESS OF THE VULNERABLE  
WE’RE TRYING TO REACH.”**

**GREGORY LOVE**

must identify the preferential offender behaviorally. Those behaviors are known as the grooming process. The biggest thing churches learn is that there are types of abusers, and that they are usually focused on only the abduction offender. It is a watershed moment for a church to understand there is another type of abuser—the real risk—for which they are ill-prepared. When I share information about types of abusers, it’s a rude wake-up call for many of my churches to realize the efforts they’ve been relying upon are aimed only at the abduction offender.

I will often make my point by asking ministry leaders, “What do you have in place at your church to protect children from sexual abuse?” One of the common responses involves a child check-in system. After introducing the types of abusers and peer-to-peer sexual abuse, the gaps become more clear. Will your child check-in system keep an abduction offender out of your program? Perhaps. Will your child check-in system keep out a preferential offender? No. The preferential offender often has a name tag. Will your child check-in system solve peer-to-peer sexual abuse? No.

This is an important and fundamental takeaway from our trainings. Churches must wake up to the types of offenders and understand the true risk before prevention is possible.

**What has changed over the past few decades when it comes to protecting children from sexual abuse?**

**GL:** By and large, the grooming process of the preferential offender has not changed. One thing that has changed, however, is the acceleration of social media applications and forms of electronic communication that are difficult to monitor or supervise.

During COVID, you had technology racing to meet the needs of young people who were isolated. Teenagers and preteens wanted community, so they began meeting in groups online. Next thing you know, you have this person who’s gaming with this kid online and using the online community to manipulate and deceive. This guy may have a profile that says he’s a 13-year-old boy when really, he’s a 40-year-old man who’s on a sex offender registry. Meanwhile, a parent thinks as long as the front door’s locked, everything is good. We have to be able to manage and allow transparency for the way we connect with kids,

but the predator is usually better at using technology than we are at policing it. For abusers ... it’s [about] using technology to create relationships that are manipulated and betrayed.

**What can SBTC churches expect that sign up for The Journey to a Safer Ministry webinar series?**

**GL:** This series is meant to be a comprehensive, step-by-step communication effort providing ministry leaders with what they need to know to better understand the risk. With that understanding, ministry leaders can self-evaluate and discern next steps. Additionally, ministry leaders are introduced to the necessary tools to implement an effective safety system related to how the risk unfolds in ministry programs. This training is meant to allow a church, regardless of what stage along the road to prevention it finds itself, to learn what is necessary for them to do the next right thing.



**May 21 | 10 a.m.**

Policies That Protect:  
Writing and Implementing  
Effective Policies & Procedures

**Aug. 27 | 10 a.m.**

Reporting Abuse: Understanding Reporting  
Requirements and Overcoming Obstacles

**Sept. 29 | 10 a.m.**

Screening That Protects: Identifying  
High-Risk Applicants Before They Serve

**Oct. 27 | 10 a.m.**

Creating Background Check Strategy – Part 1

**Nov. 17 | 10 a.m.**

Creating Background Check Strategy – Part 2

# Seeking God's counsel before godly counsel

**Editor's note:** This column was written by a member of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Shepherds Collective. For more information, visit [sbtexas.com/networks/shepherds-collective](http://sbtexas.com/networks/shepherds-collective).

**T**HERE'S A SAYING that it takes a village to raise a child, and God's village for raising godly children is the church. God has truly blessed me with a great village of men who have come alongside me to be the pastor I am today.

I began pastoring at 26. I knew I needed help if I was going to pastor well. God's village stepped into this gap. I reached out to my godly friends and pastors regularly, and I've made many phone calls asking for help with problems I never thought I would have to counsel church members through.

It's not that seeking godly counsel is a bad thing. In fact, it's biblical. Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of

**"ONE OF THE THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF OVER MY YEARS OF PASTORING IS HOW QUICKLY I AM TO RELY ON THAT VILLAGE RATHER THAN ON GOD'S SPIRIT FOR GUIDANCE."**

**MIKEY PESQUEDA**

counselors there is safety." Godly counsel is a blessing to all Christians and especially pastors.

But one of the things I've learned about myself over my years of pastoring is how quickly I am to rely on that village rather than on God's Spirit for guidance. I was so quick to pick up the phone to call pastors who have served longer than me rather than prayerfully waiting on the Lord in prayer on things involving His sheep.

Over time, I realized that if I can get immediate wisdom from godly counsel, it would make my decisions quicker and more informed. What I didn't realize was how unwise that was in the grand scheme of things.

God's greatest help to the Christian and pastor is the Holy Spirit. He should not be my second choice, but my first. While it is tempting

**“GO TO THE LORD IN PRAYER BEFORE YOU CALL, GOOGLE, OR ASK. IS THAT GROUNDBREAKING ADVICE? NO, BUT IT IS THE BEST ADVICE I HAVE. I HAVE FOUND THAT THE MORE I SEEK THE LORD’S COUNSEL FIRST, THE BETTER I CAN NAVIGATE THE GODLY COUNSEL OF OTHERS.”**

**MIKEY PESQUEDA**

to seek godly counsel before God’s counsel because of the immediate answers it offers, it is better for us to seek God’s counsel first because He knows His sheep best. He also knows us pastors best! He knows our blind spots, frustrations, worries, and sin. He knows our gifts, experience, and where we thrive. I say this to remind us as church leaders that while it is crucial to have many mentors, counselors, and advisors to call on, we should call on the Lord before any of them.

One of the greatest challenges for pastors is their easy accessibility to resources and wisdom. If you don’t

know the answer, someone has written a book on it. If you don’t have time to read the book, you can ask ChatGPT to summarize it. If you want to talk to someone about it, you can call your pastor friends. Immediate answers and immediate wisdom are just moments away.

But let me offer a better way forward. Go to the Lord in prayer before you call, Google, or ask. Is that groundbreaking advice? No, but it is the best advice I have. I have found that the more I seek the Lord’s counsel first, the better I can navigate the godly counsel of others, the better I can discern what

I should and shouldn’t say, and the better I can relate to the sheep He has called me to care for.

Church leaders, you have myriad problems to navigate. People are looking to you to help them with their spiritual problems. Please seek godly counsel, but not until you have approached the throne of grace first.



Mikey Pesqueda is senior pastor at Nolan River Road Baptist Church in Cleburne.



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# Remembering a faithful servant, remembering a dear friend



Denny Burk  
(left) and Nate  
Magloughlin

**Editor's note:** In March, Trinity Baptist Church Pastor Nate Magloughlin passed away after a battle with cancer. He was 49. Denny Burk, a Southern Baptist pastor and professor of biblical studies, recently wrote the following tribute to his longtime friend.

**A FEW WEEKS AGO**, my old friend Nate posted on his Caring Bridge site that he was going into hospice. I've known Nate for about 25 years, all the way back to our days as students at Southern Seminary. Our wives were both singers and became sweet friends on the worship team at our church. Our roads have long since taken us in different directions—mine to professing and pastoring in Louisville, Ky., and his to being pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, for nearly 20 years.

But over these last three years, he's been in an all-out fist fight with advanced stage cancer. On March 6, he posted this note to his congregation:

*Unfortunately, my body is running out of steam. Because I am so weak, I'm not mobile any longer. Even trying to sit up is impossible ... Every time I do, my BP drops to the point where I either faint or I begin to get so light-headed and have to lay right back down.*

*This leaves me in a tough place. Ultimately, dialysis is what has kept me going as I am in renal failure. And since I can't get up, I can't do dialysis. Truth is, I don't want to "live depended" on dialysis anyway.*

*I returned home from the hospital last night for the last time. While only the Lord knows the number of my days, I don't expect a long drawn out battle.*

*Choosing hospice care is what needed to happen. So many have been (and are) praying for miracles. Please know, I am ready to go to Jesus. So please pray that God would be gracious to us in the time I have left.*

*On Sunday morning, we'll show a short video during the church service, but please understand this is a busy weekend as my kids are in town.*

*Some things have not changed.*

*1. I am confident that He who began His work in me will be faithful to complete it (Philippians 1:6).*

*2. I am confident that God is able to guard what He has in store for those who've experienced the new birth in Jesus, and that by His power, He is able to keep me for that inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-6).*

*So much more, but these truths bring me great comfort and hope.*

*Love you!*

*Nate*



# ADVANCING THE MISSION TOGETHER



## The Cooperative Program

is the SBTC's primary funding source. As churches give, 45% remains in Texas to mobilize SBTC churches, and 55% is forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention for national and international ministry and missions.



CP giving mobilizes churches and multiplies Great Commission impact.



The next day, I had the opportunity to talk and pray with Nate over the phone. I told him how much the words he posted meant to me and countless others. I told him that I know he may not be feeling super strong, but his words surely did honor the Lord.

I had been to preach at Nate's church a little over a year ago. When we talked then, he told me about all the suffering he had faced with cancer, and it was significant. He told me about starting to talk to Amy about her and the kids' lives after he was gone. He hadn't given up, but he was planning for them. He also told me about what a challenge it was to experience the Lord's nearness in the midst of this trial.

Nate is not the only one to have experienced such difficulty. Anyone who has read the Psalms knows how intense suffering can sometimes bring with it a sense of isolation and abandonment:

*How long, O LORD?  
Wilt Thou hide Thyself forever?  
Will Thy wrath burn like fire?  
Remember what my span of  
life is;  
For what vanity Thou hast  
created all the sons of men!  
What man can live and not see  
death?  
Can he deliver his soul from the  
power of Sheol?*  
— Psalm 89:46-48

He confessed that while he had been trusting the Lord through his battle with cancer, it was nevertheless a struggle. So my prayers over the last year have not only been for his healing, but also earnestly for him to experience the nearness of the Lord.

When we spoke on the phone

three weeks ago, Nate told me that the last month had been different. The Lord had shown up and given him peace, a real sense of His goodness and nearness. I was hearing the voice of a man who had been with Jesus and who was ready to see Him. My prayers and his were answered. The last thing he said to me was, "Talk to you soon."

We received word from Amy on Tuesday (March 24) that Nate's race had finished. Yesterday (March 29) was the funeral at Trinity Baptist Church. Today (March 30) is the burial. What a beautiful tribute from his congregation in the funeral service. The men who spoke bore witness not only to Nate's faithfulness as a preacher of the Word, but also to his love for the congregation. Amy and the kids were there on the front row. It was beautiful.

In her book *The Hiding Place*, Corrie Ten Boom talks about how her father helped her to face her fear of death—not only of her own death, but also that of loved ones. She writes:

*Father sat down on the edge  
of the narrow bed.  
"Corrie," he began gently,  
"when you and I [take the train]  
to Amsterdam—when do I give  
you your ticket?"  
I sniffed a few times,  
considering this.  
"Why, just before we get on  
the train."*

*"Exactly. And our wise Father in heaven knows when we're going to need things, too. Don't run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need just in time."*

Nate Magloughlin (1976-2026). Husband, father, son, brother, faithful pastor, my friend. Talk to you soon.



# GOD PUTS PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES TO HELP US

**Editor's note:** Chip Parmer is pastor of First Baptist Church in Marlin. He recently shared part of his testimony with the Texan's Gary Ledbetter.



◀ Chip and Clarissa Parmer have been with FBC Marlin for about two years. Janet Evans, who faithfully served the church before her death, is pictured at far left.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

**EVERY CHURCH I'VE PASTORED** for my 19 years has been a revitalization effort. We've been here [First Baptist Church of Marlin, southeast of Waco] for nearly two years. The church was running about 50 people at the time. One of the first things we noticed about the ministry was the church had no children's ministry or youth ministry; they hadn't for a long time.

That was something we wanted to address, because if we're going to try to reach our community, we need to reach younger families. That means we had to have something for their kids.

Right away, we reached out to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and they put us in contact with Lexi Hood, who is a consultant for the convention. Lexi came in and worked with us, helping us develop a plan and a system for our first year of children's ministry.

That was about the time we met Janet Evans. Janet was from Marlin, but she had been with Cru for 40 years working all around the country, though mainly in New York. She was an amazing woman, a godly woman of prayer. And though she never had really worked with children, she said, "There's a need and I'm going to step in."

Janet became our children's director and she was faithful, plugged in. She helped so much in making sure the structure was there and that everybody had what they needed. And we started to see some slow growth. Last year, we probably ran two to three kids (after having no children's ministry previously), but we were faithful with it. This year we transitioned to Awana, and Janet became our Awana director. And again, she just went all in, making sure we had well-equipped teachers and doing an amazing job helping everything run smoothly and on the right track. Once again, we saw some growth so that we now were seeing five or six kids each Sunday night. Janet was a way that God had answered a new pastor's prayers. Overall, our church attendance had also risen by 10-15, and we'd even had some baptisms following our second VBS.

JESUS IS  
WRITING  
MY STORY



◀ SBTC consultant Lexi Hood leads Awana students at FBC Marlin.

▼ Awana students at FBC Marlin made this stained glass art in memory of their late Awana director, Janet Evans.

**SUBMITTED PHOTOS**

Karen Kennemur. Karen leads children's and family ministries for the SBTC, and she was like, "Hey, let me meet with y'all in the morning." The next morning, Karen proposed to send a counselor to come to our church to talk with the kids and the children's workers. That's the plan we formulated, that they were going to come in, Karen and Lexi, and Lexi would lead it and then take the kids. The kids did a painting project honoring Janet that we hung up in the church, a stained-glass cross with her favorite Scripture on there for her. Then they brought in a counselor from Houston and she talked with the adults. Our adults needed that so much.

It just helped remind me that God puts people in our lives to help us and to be there—that we don't have to have all the answers because God has all the answers. We can go to Him and He will direct us. Especially for me, it solidified that our state convention cares no matter what size your church is. When there's a need, they're going to meet it. Jeff Lynn

[SBTC's senior strategist for Church Health and Leadership] was also helping in the background. I heard from [SBTC Executive Director] Nathan Lorick. Everybody reached out to me, and that was a blessing and an encouragement.

I think anytime you come in and start facing adversity, you can get discouraged. At the same time, God used what has taken place with Janet to bring joy and even a little bit of rejuvenation and growth out of death. I often think about that passage where Jesus is talking about how unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it doesn't bear fruit. This is one of those instances where a death, although tragic and sudden—and we miss her—has produced spiritual fruit that I believe is going to be lasting and impactful.

I think that's a great testimony to a life lived for Jesus, that even when a great saint passes, God can still use that moment to bring forth more spiritual fruit. I think that's a great testimony to Janet.

[In February], Janet had gone out to dinner with some friends and got back in her car to go home and had an aneurysm and passed away. I was at a loss. I really didn't know how to respond. I haven't ever experienced that, didn't know what to do. Our adult ladies, our teachers were crying. I mean, they were just so emotional about losing Janet, losing a best friend. Janet had played an integral part in leading some of them to Christ, developing their relationship with Christ.

So, I started praying and the Lord prompted me to reach back out to Lexi. I made the call, and Lexi was just amazing. She was comforting. She was compassionate. She prayed with us and then she said, "I'm going to start working on some things." Within, I want to say 24 hours, she was formulating a plan to come help us minister to our kids and to our adults, because I think that's the thing [the adult workers] that is sometimes missed. I mean, the kids are so important, but the teachers, they had such a close relationship with Janet and they were suffering, too.

My wife, Clarissa, and I were at the Empower Conference about a week later and Lexi introduced us to



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# One of the most faithful expressions of leadership we can offer

By Coleman Philley

**Editor's note:** This column was written by a member of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's Shepherds Collective. For more information, visit [sbtexas.com/networks/shepherds-collective](http://sbtexas.com/networks/shepherds-collective).

**I F WE'RE HONEST**, many of us have felt the tension around corporate prayer. We affirm it theologically. We schedule it strategically. We want our churches to value it deeply. And yet we've all felt how fragile it can be, especially when attendance fluctuates or participation feels thin. In those moments, it's tempting to pivot toward something more measurable or immediately productive.

I'm convinced the issue isn't whether the church believes prayer matters. The deeper question is whether we, as shepherds, are truly leading our people in it.

Corporate prayer doesn't drift toward strength, but it will always drift toward neglect. That's not because people are indifferent, but because every church is shaped by what's consistently emphasized. Our rhythms reveal our theology. Few things expose our functional dependence more clearly than how we pray together.

**“WHEN WE INTENTIONALLY CREATE UNHURRIED SPACE TO SEEK THE LORD TOGETHER, WE DECLARE WITH OUR ACTIONS PRAYER ISN'T PREPARATION FOR THE WORK—IT IS THE WORK.”**

COLEMAN PHILLEY

Corporate prayer is one of the clearest expressions of a church's dependence upon God. We can preach trust while operating from competence. We can teach grace while subtly modeling self-reliance. But when we intentionally create unhurried space to seek the Lord together, we declare with our actions prayer isn't preparation for the work—it is the work.

In 2 Chronicles 20, when enemy armies stood at the doorstep, King Jehoshaphat didn't begin with strategy. He gathered the families of Judah to seek the Lord. His prayer was marked by honesty and humility: “We are powerless ... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” Before plans were formed, dependence was declared and demonstrated.

Corporate prayer also forms people in ways preaching alone cannot. What we consistently pray for shapes what we long for. It trains reflexes of humility and deepens instincts of surrender. It reminds us Christ is the head of the church, and we are not its engine.

How can we, as pastors, lead our people to embrace these truths?

### Clarity lowers fear

Many believers avoid corporate prayer not because they lack desire, but because they lack confidence. Lower the entry point without lowering the vision. Offer short prompts. Pray Scripture. Model simple, sincere language.

### Pace communicates priority

If prayer is consistently compressed between announcements and the sermon, it will always feel secondary. Unhurried time, even moments of silence, signals that seeking God isn't a transition but a priority.

### Substance invites engagement

Pray for real things: holiness, repentance, unity, courage, endurance, the lost, suffering saints, boldness in witness. When prayers carry weight, people lean in.

### Tone sets culture

A church often prays the way its leaders pray. So pray sincerely and with conviction rather than polished perfection. Pray with honesty and humility. Over time, a culture of dependent prayer will grow.

If you want to strengthen corporate prayer, begin with one intentional shift:

- + Reclaim meaningful space on Sundays. Build 5-10 minutes of intentional prayer into the weekly gathering. Frame it clearly and give people room to participate.
- + Establish a consistent rhythm. Consider a monthly gathering dedicated to praise and intercession. Repetition shapes culture.

+ Tie prayer to pivotal moments. Before major decisions, transitions, or during seasons of hardship, gather the church to seek the Lord together. Make dependence visible early and often.

Corporate prayer isn't a box to check, it's a culture to cultivate.

In a ministry landscape driven by outcomes and efficiency, leading a church to say together, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" may be one of the most faithful expressions of leadership we can offer.



Coleman Philley is senior pastor at Houston Northeast Church.

## Need help developing a clear and sustainable **missional partnership?**

Vision tours are scheduled in 2026 and 2027. Join us to explore how your church can partner with missionaries in Europe, Nevada, or Puerto Rico. Take the next step toward a long-term, gospel-centered missions strategy that fits your church's unique calling.

Learn more at [sbtexas.com/mobilize](https://sbtexas.com/mobilize)



Ministry advanced by **Reach Texas**

## REACH **Europe**

Fall Vision Tour  
**NOVEMBER 2-10**



## REACH **Nevada**

SEPTEMBER  
**21-22**



# Church Positions



## PASTOR

**Calvary Baptist Church** in Nacogdoches is seeking a FT senior pastor to compassionately lead our congregation. We are a friendly church with a wonderful history of service and caring. Reply to cbcnac-pastorsearch@googlegroups.com.

**Macedonia Baptist Church** in Longview is seeking a FT senior pastor. Please email resume to searchcommittee@macbc.org. Church mailing address is 4656 Page Road, Longview, Texas 75605. Contact: Harvey Maglott, committee chairman, 903-932-2617.

**Indiana Avenue Baptist Church** in Lubbock is seeking a FT senior pastor. Those who, after prayerful consideration, feel led to apply for this position are invited to submit a cover letter and resume to iabc-psc@googlegroups.com. For more information, visit iabc.org/jobs.

**First Baptist Church** in Brownsville is seeking a FT senior pastor. Please send resume to fbcpastorapply@gmail.com.

**View Baptist Church** in Abilene is seeking a FT bivocational pastor. Interested applicants should please send your resume to viewbaptistchurch@gmail.com, 250 Boynton Road, Abilene, Texas 79606. Send attention to View Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee.

**Rehoboth Baptist Church** in Arlington is seeking a bivocational or PT pastor. We are a small KJV church. If interested, please send resume to wksanders@att.net.

**First Baptist Church** in Stowell is seeking a FT pastor to lead our congregation. Candidates should be Southern Baptist by conviction, biblically qualified, and possess seminary training or comparable education, along with ministry experience. A parsonage (4BR/3BTH) is provided, and the position is salaried. Please submit resume or recommendations to fbcstowellpastorsearch@gmail.com.

**Calvary Baptist Church** in Hughes Springs is seeking a bivocational senior pastor searching for a church home to shepherd. The church offers plenty of room for growth and a parsonage. Please see Facebook page. Contact 903-720-8772. Send application to brandoncalcote21@gmail.com.

**First Baptist Church** in Point is seeking a FT pastor. For questions or to submit a resume, contact David Frost, 903-408-0365, gunsmith75440@yahoo.com.

**Shirley Creek Baptist** in Etouille is prayerfully seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. We are looking for a man who is ordained, affirms the BF&M 2000, and who possesses the biblical qualifications to lead and teach our church family. Please submit resume to scbc133@outlook.com.

**First Baptist Church** in Springlake is seeking a FT Southern Baptist pastor for Christ-centered preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, along with administrative leadership and community engagement for our rural congregation. Please submit resume by email to kentparish422@gmail.com.

**First Baptist Church** in Hull is seeking a PT lead pastor. Please send resume to fbchullpastorsearch@gmail.com.

**First Baptist Church** in Alvarado is seeking a senior pastor. Please send resume to First Baptist Church of Alvarado, 207 Hwy. 67, Alvarado, Texas 76009, or email to office@fbcalvarado.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Lytle is seeking a FT vocational or bivocational pastor. For questions or to submit a resume, contact Steven Huntsucker at shuntsucker16@gmail.com.

**West Sherman Baptist Church** is seeking a FT senior pastor. westshermanbaptistchurch.com. wsbcpastorsearchteam@yahoo.com. 1830 W. Washington St., Sherman, Texas 75092.

**First Baptist Church** in Louise is seeking a FT pastor to lead our small congregation. Affiliated with the SBTC. Send resume to Traceylyn Courville at pastor@FBCLouise.com or mail to P.O. Box 368, Louise, Texas 77455.

## MUSIC

**Second Baptist Church** in Lamesa is seeking a music leader. Contact: 806-872-7400. Pastor: Curtis Lloyd.

**The Hill Church** in Liberty City is seeking a worship pastor to shepherd the people of God through worship and with the Word. He will be responsible for overseeing the church's worship ministry as well as shepherding members of the church toward knowing and following Jesus. If interested, please email daniel@experiencethehill.church.

**First Baptist Church** in Silsbee is seeking a PT music minister to lead Sunday music, coordinate volunteers, and help cultivate Christ-centered worship across generations. Strong leadership, teamwork, and a heart for the local church required. Send resume to info@fbcsilsbee.org. Join us in leading people to worship the Lord!

**Shady Oaks Baptist Church** in Hurst is seeking a PT (10-12 hours) worship leader. For questions and to submit a resume, contact Lead Pastor Jay Fannin at jayfannin@shadyoaks.org, 817-874-5741.

**Southview Baptist Church** in Iowa Colony is seeking a music and worship minister. For questions or to submit an application, contact Frances Underwood, fcu@msn.com, text 281-798-9807.

**The Heights Church** in San Angelo is seeking a PT worship leader to cultivate a meaningful worship experience during our Sunday morning service (can be combined as a FT youth/worship leader position). Please contact our committee chairman at 325-277-7288, The Heights Church, San Angelo, Texas 76901.

**First Baptist Church** in Queen City is seeking an associate pastor of worship. Submit resume to musicsearch@fbcqc.org. Visit fbcqc.org for church insights.

**First Baptist Church** in Sherman is seeking our next FT worship minister. Send resume to searchteam@fbcsherman.org.

**Green Acres Baptist Church** in Tyler seeks a FT worship pastor with benefits and retirement—a pastor/shepherd who will lead and supervise the worship and broadcast ministries and help the church fulfill its vision of transforming lives with the truth of Jesus Christ. Visit gabc.org/jobs for full job requirements and to apply.

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

**First Baptist Church** in Alto is seeking a PT music director/worship leader responsible for coordinating, encouraging, and supporting the glorification of God through music and song. The position reports to the pastor. \$15,000 annual budgeted salary. Apply online on the SBTC job board or email altofbc.psc@gmail.com.

**First Baptist Church** in Georgetown seeks an interim worship leader (15-20 hours/week) for a 9-month season. Lead our band, choir, and winds with a shepherding heart and contemporary excellence. We need a collaborative leader to navigate this transition. Send resume and video to msawyer@fbg.church. Visit fbg.church for church details.

## STUDENTS

**Onalaska First Baptist Church** is seeking a youth minister to plan and coordinate all youth activities, Bible studies, programs, etc., for 6th-12th grade. If interested, submit resume by mail to Onalaska First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 832, Onalaska, Texas 77360, or by email to onfirst@eastex.net. 936-646-3378.

**First Baptist Church** in Wake Village is seeking a FT youth minister. For questions or to submit a resume, contact 903-832-4588 or mail to 820 Wake Ave., Wake Village, Texas 75501.

**Friendship Baptist Church** in Cleburne is seeking a PT student minister to lead our students in grades 7-12. This role focuses on reaching students with the gospel of Jesus Christ and discipling them to become mature followers of Jesus. Please send resume to Angela Upchurch at office@friendshipcleburne.org.

**The Heights Church** in San Angelo is seeking a PT youth leader who is a growing disciple of Christ (can be combined as a FT youth/worship leader position). Please contact our committee chairman at 325-277-7288, The Heights Church, San Angelo, Texas 76901.

**First Baptist Church** in Pampa is seeking an associate pastor of student ministries. Qualifications: Seminary preferred, bachelor's minimum, 5+ years ministry experience, or substantial leadership experience in another capacity. Please submit a resume, as well as video or website link of speaking, preaching, or worship leadership by Byron Williamson, senior pastor, byron@firstpampa.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Sherman is seeking a FT student minister. Send resume to searchteam@fbcsherman.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Corinth is seeking a FT student pastor to provide leadership and direction in ministering to our students and parents. Resumes or questions regarding the position may be sent to Bruce Larson at bruce.larson@fbccorinth.org.

**East Side Baptist Church** in Haskell is seeking a FT youth pastor. pastor@esbchaskell.org.

## CHILDREN

**San Saba's First Baptist Church** is seeking a FT children's minister. For questions or to submit a resume, contact searchcommittee@sansabafbc.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Sherman is seeking our next FT kids minister. Send resume to searchteam@fbcsherman.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Porter is seeking a FT director of children's ministry. Must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a recognized university and a minimum two years of ministry experience. Contact Pastor Rob Ray, 281-354-3339, rob@porterfirst.org, or visit porterfirst.org.

**Vansickle Baptist Church** in Greenville is seeking their next children's ministry director to lead and disciple VBC kids. We are located just east of Rockwall. Apply by sending a cover letter and resume to kidssearch@vansickle.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. Candidate should be fun, mature, experienced, and love discipling kids and families. Contact Justin Dancer, 936-777-0009, justin@hopemontgomery.com.

## COMBINATION

**First Baptist Church** in Rowlett is seeking a FT worship and media minister. We are looking for a godly man who leads worship from the overflow of a vibrant relationship with Christ and provides leadership in media ministry. Send resume to FBC Rowlett, 5001 Main Street, Rowlett, Texas 75088, or cole@fbcrowlett.org.

**Second Baptist Church** in Amarillo is seeking a FT associate pastor of worship and discipleship. Candidate must affirm Baptist Faith and Message 2000, meet 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 qualifications, and lead worship and discipleship ministries. Send resume to Pastor Larry Davis at connect@sbccama.org, sbccama.org.

**First Baptist Church of Alta Loma** in Santa Fe is seeking a man with a pastor's heart to serve in a FT associate/student pastor role. This position would include overseeing students, but would also have other pastoral roles. Email jakebigford@fbcal.net for more info.

**Lake Church** in Arlington is seeking FT accounting & office manager. Send resume to Pam Mason at pmason@lakechurchdhw.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Springtown is seeking a FT pastor/minister of music and media to help us continue to grow through Jesus-exalting gatherings. The position opens in May 2026. Send resume to bobbycates@fbctown.org.

**The Hill Church** in Liberty Hill (a suburb of Austin) is seeking a FT worship/student pastor. We are looking to hire a pastor with a heart to make disciples among the next generation and lead our congregation in worship. Please send resume to daniel@experiencethehill.church and gerry.hoerster@gmail.com.

## OTHER

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

**First Baptist Church** in Cleveland is seeking a PT financial secretary. For more info, contact Bethany at 281-592-3422 or send resume to info@fbccleveland.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Bellville is seeking a FT facilities manager. Send resume to resume@firstbellville.org.

**Abilene-Callahan Baptist Association** is seeking a FT director of missions. Contact Blake White, blake@ssbaptist.org.

**Houston's First Baptist Church** seeks FT visionary executive chef. Complete job description can be found at houstonsfirst.org/jobs or by contacting Gen.Roach@Houstonsfirst.org.

**First Baptist Church** in Glen Rose is seeking a well-qualified media/communications director to join our team. Information is posted at fbccglenrose.org. Please send cover letter and resume to Gary Whittle, business administrator, gary@fbccglenrose.org, 254-897-2351.

# Event Calendar



For more information about SBTC events, visit [sbtexas.com/events](https://sbtexas.com/events) or scan the QR code

## MAY

A retreat for church associate staff & spouses

### breathe deep

14-16 Austin

- 4/29-8** Reach Europe: Spring Vision Tour
- 4/30-2** Come Away Pastor Wives Retreat, Princeton
- 4/30-2** Ven y Reposa, Waxahachie
- 2** Evento de un Día Regénesis En Español, Irving
- 5** Regenesis One-Day, Spicewood
- 5** Evangelism Connections (online)
- 6** Regenesis Online Interest Meeting
- 12** Regenesis One-Day, Alvin
- 13-15** Collegiate Roundup, Colleyville
- 14** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab, San Antonio
- 26** Regenesis Online Interest Meeting
- 28-6/1** M3 Camp, Mt. Lebanon
- 30** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab (bilingual), Odessa
- 30** Evento de un Día Regénesis En Español, Everman

## JUNE



7-10 SBC Annual Meeting, Orlando, Fla.

- 2** Regenesis One-Day, Pittsburg
- 6** Evento de un Día Regénesis En Español, Cedar Hill
- 7-8** Pastors' Conference, Orlando, Fla.
- 8** SBTC Reception at SBC Annual Meeting, Orlando, Fla.
- 21-29** Students Mission Trip, Budapest, Hungary
- 24-7/3** Pastor Israel Trip

## JULY

### CUMBRE DE Liderazgo

MINISTERIO DE MUJERES

31 CrossCreek Church, Colleyville

- 1-5** M3 Camp, Highland Lakes
- 12** Disability Ministry Sunday
- 14-18** M3 Camp, Glorieta, N.M.
- 14-18** Youth Week, Glen Rose
- 25** Evento de un Día Regénesis En Español, El Paso
- 31** Interim Pastor Equipping, Colleyville

## AUGUST

For students called to ministry

### Following *your* Calling

7-8 Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth

- 1** Equip Conference, Colleyville
- 13** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab, Mesquite
- 24** Group Essentials, Euless
- 24-26** Pastor Prayer Retreat, Forney
- 29** GoSummit, Austin
- 29** ESL Training, Grapevine
- 29** Send Network SBTC Sending Lab, Fort Worth



# EQUIP

## conference

**AUG. 1**

CROSSCREEK CHURCH  
COLLEYVILLE

A one-day conference for volunteer leaders and paid ministry staff where you:

- + Learn from proven practitioners
- + Gain practical tools for immediate implementation
- + Take next steps in multiplying disciples & creating kingdom impact



Next Gen  
Keynote

**Shane Pruitt**  
National Next Gen Director  
North American  
Mission Board



Adult  
Ministries  
Keynote

**Robby Gallaty**  
Senior Pastor  
Long Hollow Church,  
Hendersonville, Tenn.

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SPEAKERS

**30+** MINISTRY  
AREAS

**200+** BREAKOUT  
SESSIONS



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