



COVID

COVID-19 ILLNESSES AND DEATHS FELT IN CHURCHES AS PANDEMIC PASSES ONE YEAR

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST Texan

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Empower 2021 focuses on not forgetting our 'first love'



More than 1,200 registered to attend Empower 2021 in person with nearly 250 online. The evangelism conference offered a time of worship, encouragement and challenge, despite the pandemic. See full story and photos on page 8

'Product of CP' leads Mabank church to health



By Erin Roach | TEXAN Correspondent

MABANK When Southern Baptists tithe, the emphasis usually is on what they can give to support ministries throughout the world, but sometimes it's worth considering what churches receive from the Cooperative Program.

At Grace Community Church in Mabank, pastor Michael Cooper explained one way CP dollars that went out from his church circled back to benefit the congregation.

See CP, 6

Panel discussion on racial harmony to be held April 13 in-person and online

By TEXAN Staff

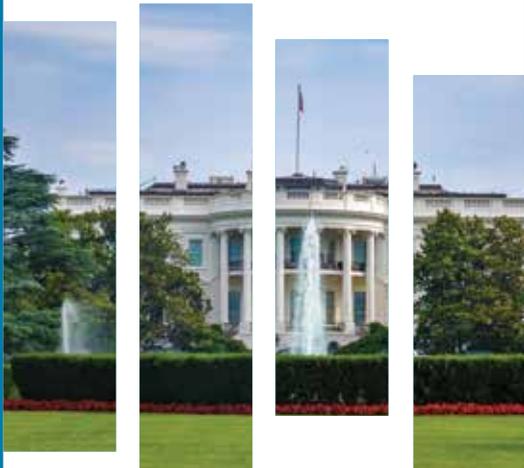
GRAPEVINE In the midst of ongoing racial tension within the body of Christ and the Southern Baptist Convention, Tony Mathews, SBTC interim senior strategist for Missional Ministries, asked himself, "What can I do?" In his 34-year pastoral career, Mathews had focused on bringing people together and breaking down barriers. In his new SBTC role, he decided to create an event to foster racial reconciliation.

See RACE, 5



FROM THE EDITOR Gary Ledbetter

A Catholic in the White House



While browsing a library discard table I noticed the subjects of books that had become irrelevant.

Several books dealt with the threat of the Soviet Union to world Christianity; others addressed the threat of John Kennedy compromising his oath to our constitution in favor of Catholic doctrine. Many Southern Baptists joined in expressing alarm about Kennedy's religion until he saw the need to address the matter head on, assuring us that he only "happen[ed] to be a Catholic." Kennedy's Catholicism turned out to be a non-issue, as has the religious affiliation of most presidents since.

Religion, particularly Romanist religion, again became an issue in 2020 as two Catholics being considered for great responsibility unashamedly owned their faith. Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed as a U.S. Supreme Court justice over objections that she held her conservative Catholicism too tightly. Joe Biden was elected president in 2020, partly because of the liberal political views he credited to his own Catholic devotion.

Baptists may find the near hegemony of Catholicism in the popular understanding of religion to be vexing. I have many times briefed a non-religious reporter on how Southern Baptists work because the reporter assumed we were organized like Catholics (I, of course, always told reporters that we are not really organized at all). Religious representations in entertainment media are nearly all Catholics, for good or ill. It's what the non-religious assume about the mysterious world of churchgoers. People as diverse as Justice Clarence Thomas and Speaker Nancy Pelosi speak of being "devout" Catholics.

But President Biden has more than once brought the issue of his own faith to the fore. This has divided the Catholic bishops as they defend or critique the president's devotion based on his selection of social issues and Church doctrine. I'm not hacking on Mr. Biden as a Catholic hypocrite for being radical on some social issues, because the last two Southern Baptist presidents held the same views. Everyone tends to be selective in the beliefs to which he or she is devoted. A conservative Catholic disregards some of what Pope Francis says and a more liberal Catholic tends to ignore earlier, more conservative popes. The remarkable thing is watching an enormous and influential religious tradition blow with the winds of change. That is why both Catholics and Baptists form subdivisions and factions—the nearly unavoidable temptation to change what God says according to the whims of men.

In passing, I'd observe that churches do this also, following a conservative pastor for a few years and then calling a winsome liberal pastor who keeps his sermons shorter. Protestant churches can blow in the wind as well.

I wince at that word "devout" as it's thrown around. It often describes someone who has to explain at length what he is and is not "devoted" to. A recent informative essay in the Wall Street Journal explained the different views on President Biden's social agenda as derived from Catholic views of natural law and the common good. The only appeal to Scripture in the article, which quotes several biblical scholars, is to Romans 2:15 ("They [those without the law] show that work of the law is written

... DEVOTION TO A RELIGION ASSURES ME OF NOTHING IF IT IS NOT THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

on their hearts...") and the scholars proceed to argue that we can reason out what is good and bad without becoming "fundamentalists," too focused on biblical revelation. Ironically, the Romans reference is used way out of context. The law written on our hearts makes us accountable to God, but it doesn't make us good or justified. Our sinful response to it will always lead us to Romans 3:23.

There's the rub, friends, with devout people in general. Those who are devoted to human reason or conventional wisdom regarding what is for the "common good" can do whatever you might imagine, and have done so. It's why we are not Catholics of any sort or Baptists of the liberal sort—those subsets of Christianity are thoroughly mixed with man-made religion. It's why some of us have seen fellow Baptists, once moderate in their beliefs about biblical authority, become true liberals over the last 30 years. The small disdain of God's Word becomes bigger as the years roll on.

Don't hear me saying that Catholics can't be saved or orthodox; there is huge span of beliefs called "Catholic." But I am saying that "reasonable" or humanistic filters for Christian doctrine will manifest when a pastor, priest, pope or president becomes the one who tells us what God really means when he speaks in Scripture or even nature. At that point, the reasonable is not reliably true and stylish morality is not reliably good. God has spoken—and he has spoken in some ways I can't figure out, but I am fundamentalist enough to believe that when God speaks, I am bound to that.

I am not troubled by a Catholic in the White House nor comforted by a born-again Baptist in the White House. Their devotion to a religion assures me of nothing if it is not the faith once delivered to the saints. ✠

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What's Next?

sbtxexas.com/events



April

Full calendar, use your phone's camera to scan QR code. →



07 SBTC Chapel Grapevine	16 Capacitarte Regional Conference Genesis BC, San Antonio	
10 Disaster Relief Phase 1 Church at Quail Creek, Amarillo	17 Capacitarte Regional Conference Oak Meadow BC, Austin	
10 Bible Drill Regional FBC Odessa	17 She Stands Women's Conference Living Water Christian Fellowship, Canyon	
12 Today's Interim Pastor Dallas Baptist Associational Office	17 Bible Drill Regional SWBTS, Fort Worth	22-23 RevRetreat SBTC, Grapevine
12-14 Reach Cities Vision Tour Austin, Houston	22 Role of the Pastor Conference SBTC, Grapevine	
13 Strengthening Racial Harmony Panel Discussion SBTC, Grapevine & online	24 Bible Drill Regional Spring BC, Spring	
15 Pastor Mentor Initiative Dallas Baptist Associational Office	25 CP COOPERATIVE PROGRAM Sunday	

May

For more details on SBTC events visit sbtxexas.com/events

07 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER	
10-11 Administrative Assistants' Retreat Calvary BC, San Marcos	
11 Hispanic Leadership Summit SBTC, Grapevine	
12-14 Collegiate Roundup Fort Worth	
15 Bible Drill State Finals SBTC, Grapevine	

All in-person events subject to change based on COVID conditions.

POLL

Churchgoers say they'll return to in-person services post-COVID



More than nine in 10 Protestant churchgoers say they will return to in-person services at least as frequently as they did prior to the pandemic, according to a new Lifeway Research survey that also found a significant percentage of young people saying they will increase their attendance.

The poll of 1,000 Protestant churchgoers found that 68 percent say they will "attend with the same frequency" as they did before COVID-19 and 23 percent say they will attend more often, for a total of 91 percent who have plans for coming back.

Young adult churchgoers ages 18 to 29 are the most likely, at 43 percent, to say they will attend church more than before the pandemic.

"Two-thirds of pastors whose churches were open for in-person worship in January saw attendance of less than

70 percent of their January 2020 attendance," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. "Many of these pastors are wondering if those who haven't returned ever will. Nine in 10 churchgoers plan to when it is safe to do so."

Only 6 percent of Protestant churchgoers say they are attending a different house of worship in their area than they did one year earlier. About nine in 10 churchgoers (87 percent) are attending the same church.

Meanwhile, 54 percent of churchgoers say they became closer to God during the pandemic.

"The faith of most churchgoers remains resilient despite a year filled with much uncertainty and fewer options for meeting in person with others from church," McConnell said.

—LIFEWAY RESEARCH

Judge rules Texas can defund Planned Parenthood



Texas followed the law in withdrawing Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood, according to a state judge's ruling in March that approved the state's plan to defund the abortion giant.

State District Judge Lora Livingston ruled that state officials gave Planned Parenthood the necessary notice as required under law.

"This decision is not made lightly," Livingston wrote. "In the light of the ongoing public health crisis, the risks of the individual losing health care and medical attention requires increased attention and scrutiny. The facts underlying the termination in this case give me great pause."

Pro-lifers say other health clinics in the state — health clinics that don't perform abortions — can fill in for the needs of low-income Texans.

It is the second time in recent months that a court sided with the state on the issue. In November, the full U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Texas could legally withdraw the funding.

The controversy began in 2015 after undercover videos appeared to show Planned Parenthood officials discussing the harvesting of organs from fetal tissue. The state then moved to pull Medicaid funding from the organization, and Planned Parenthood followed by filing suit.

Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, last year applauded the state's push to defund Planned Parenthood.

"The SBTB's first resolution in 1998 was affirming the God-given holiness of human life, born and unborn," Richards said. "Our churches have never wavered from this commitment. Planned Parenthood has, from its start, been committed to a completely contrary agenda."

—AUSTIN-AMERICAN STATESMAN/THE HILL

SBC Executive Committee disfellowships 4 churches

The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in February disfellowshipped four churches for adverse policies and practices including employing convicted sex offenders and affirming homosexuality within their memberships.

Disfellowshipped for affirming homosexuality were Towne View Baptist Church in Kennesaw, Ga., and St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky. Antioch Baptist Church in Sevierville, Tenn., was dropped for employing a pastor who confessed to two counts of statutory rape. West Side Baptist Church in Sharpville, Pa., was disfellowshipped for employing as its pastor a registered sex offender.

The EC decisions came during an executive session, following the recommendations of the SBC Credentials Committee.

The SBC repurposed the Credentials Committee in 2019 to make inquiries and recommendations for action regarding instances of sexual abuse, racism or other issues that call into question a church's

relationship with the SBC.

The committee said both Towne View and St. Matthews have membership and leadership standards that "affirm homosexual behavior" and do not have a faith and practice that closely identify with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. The committee said Antioch and West Side do not behave "in a manner that is consistent with the Convention's beliefs regarding sexual abuse."

Antioch Baptist employs as its pastor John Randy Leming Jr., who pleaded guilty to two counts of statutory rape for sex with a 16-year-old congregant when he pastored Shiloh Baptist Church in Sevier County. He pleaded guilty in 1998 to the offenses that occurred in May and June of 1994, when he was 31, and lost his appeal of the concurrent 18-month sentences he deemed harsh. Leming has served at Antioch since March 2014, according to the SBC Annual Church Profile.

West Side Pastor David Pearson is listed on the National Sex Offender registry for his 1993 conviction of aggravated criminal sexual assault of a child in Denton, Texas.

—BAPTIST PRESS

Evangelist Luis Palau, who spread gospel to millions, dies at 86

Evangelist Luis Palau, who preached in more than 80 nations and impacted millions of people worldwide for Christ, died March 11 following a battle with lung cancer. He was 86.



Born in Argentina, Palau accepted Christ at age 12 and began preaching on street corners as a teenager. He hosted his own Christian radio program by age 19 and was invited to the United States in 1960 by pastor Ray Stedman. He studied at Multnomah School of the Bible (now Multnomah

University), where he met his wife.

Palau served as an intern with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and occasionally worked as Graham's Spanish translator.

Through television, radio, print and live events, Palau reached an estimated 1 billion people with the gospel during his life.

Palau and his team held more than 500 evangelistic campaigns, festivals, and rallies in more than 80 nations, including in such cities as New York, Buenos Aires, London, Madrid, Singapore, Hong Kong, Cairo and Mexico City.

He also preached at Southern Baptist events, including at a Send North America Conference in 2013 and at the SBC annual meeting in 1997.

—LUIS PALAU ASSOCIATION

Larry Walker, former Southwestern professor of Old Testament, dies at 88

Larry Lee Walker, professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1967 to 1980, died on March 8. He was 88.

Walker joined the faculty at Southwestern Seminary in 1967, serving for 13 years. From 1980 to 1997, he taught at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. Following his retirement, he

served as a visiting professor at Gateway Seminary, Beeson Divinity School, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Tyndale Theological Seminary in Holland.

Walker was a member of the advisory board for the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, and he was one of the 13 original members of the Committee on Bible Translation of the New York Bible Society, which produced the New International Version of the Bible.

—SOUTHWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Bethany Christian changes policy, will place children in same-sex homes

Bethany Christian Services said in recent weeks it would begin placing children in same-sex homes in a strategy its president and CEO called an "all hands on deck" approach to foster care and adoption.

Chris Palusky, the president and chief executive of Bethany Christian Services, made the announcement in a company-wide email that was first reported in a story by The New York Times.

The move was made after Bethany changed its policies in Michigan and Philadelphia to align with LGBT antidiscrimination laws in those two locations.

Palusky said Bethany "remains steadfast in its Christian faith," and that the new policy will allow it "to provide safe, loving, and stable homes to as many vulnerable children as possible."

But some Christian leaders say Bethany gave up before the legal battle had truly begun. For example, Catholic Social

Services in Philadelphia challenged that city's requirement that it must align with anti-discrimination policies on gender identity and sexual orientation.

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the Philadelphia case in November and is expected to issue a favorable decision for Catholic Social Services.

"Back in 2018, when this controversy arose in the City of Philadelphia, Bethany basically surrendered," Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said on his podcast. "... Bethany Christian Services surrendered even before the war had been fought."

Mohler added: "These Christian organizations were put in place by Christians on Christian commitment because we genuinely believe that a child deserves a mother and a father. We genuinely believe that marriage can only be the union of a man and a woman. These are not just positioned statements that the Christian church has decided to adopt. We believe, and you can check the Bible for yourself, this is biblical Christianity. This is demanded of us."

—NY TIMES

CP: MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER FOR THE GLORY OF GOD



Jim Richards
Executive Director

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April 25 is Cooperative Program Day! It is also my spiritual birthday. Fifty-one years ago, I trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.

By his grace I was called to the preaching ministry three months later. Beginning at that time and continuing to this day, the Coop-

erative Program has been a part of my spiritual life.

At 17 years of age, I attended Louisiana College. The Cooperative Program provided partially for the housing, meals and professors. Sadly, the experience was not positive. I ran into theological liberalism at the school. (LC has since been reclaimed for biblical fidelity.) When I realized how the institution was funded, I talked with my pastor. I wanted something done. Good and godly people were giving their tithes and offerings to support something that was undermining the faith of the students.

Instead of staying and working to change the system, I bolted, leaving the Southern Baptist Convention. For six years I wandered in the wilderness outside of the SBC. The Conservative Resurgence got in motion during that time. The thrust of the resurgence was to return missions and ministries to the grassroots Southern Baptists who were paying for it. God called me back to the SBC to make a difference.

A portion of my education at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was paid by Mom-and-Pop Baptists in the pew. Their gifts through their local church participation in the CP enabled me to be trained. As a pastor participating in mission trips, I saw firsthand how in North America

“
UNDESIGNATED GIVING IS AN OPEN-HANDED GIFT FROM AN OPEN HEART ENABLING US TO DO MORE TOGETHER.
”

and internationally God was using the CP to fuel gospel work. When I transitioned to become a director of missions, I understood associational giving was separate from CP. Yet state convention partnership in church planting and SBC involvement in a local off-campus seminary site served the churches. The Cooperative Program made associational ministries better for everyone.

When I came to Texas, there were state conventions telling churches that they could give designated funds and it would be called “Cooperative Program.” Designated funds strike at the very heart of the CP. By definition, the CP is an undesignated giving channel. Undesignated giving is an open-handed gift from an open heart enabling us to do more together.

Now for the last 22-plus years I have observed how churches have sacrificially given to accomplish the Great Commission. New churches are being started, adding to the hundreds that have been started in Texas over the years. Hu-

man suffering is alleviated through Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. Struggling churches are given new life through revitalization. Evangelism is enhanced through training and tools. Students are reached for Christ. A new generation is being engaged. Beyond Texas, missionaries are penetrating darkness in North America and around the world. Seminary students are being equipped for ministry. All of this and so much more is possible because of the Cooperative Program. Thank you, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, for what you have done to the glory of God.

There are critics of the Cooperative Program. All human endeavors have their flaws, but what we have as Southern Baptists is the best option for gospel advance. Your investment of time, energy, and dollars, especially through the Cooperative Program, is well worth it.

April 25 is Cooperative Program Day! Just as CP has contributed to making my life and ministry more effective, to the glory of God, I encourage you to set aside time in your church to celebrate what God has done. You can find resources at whatiscp.com. You can contact the SBTC office at 817.552.2500. Someone will come to your church and share about this gospel tool known as the Cooperative Program. Let us stay together and move forward for the Lord Jesus Christ! 🙏

Lighting an evangelistic passion in any church



Kie Bowman
SBTC President

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@KieBowman

My first pastorate, on a back road through the tobacco fields of Kentucky, had a church building with room for about 12 pews, four Sunday School classrooms, and an old graveyard beside the church.

It also had a well-worn path to the “bathroom,” which was outside because we had no running water inside. The biggest day we ever had in Sunday School was 50 people. It was a record-breaking high attendance. I was the pastor for only a year, but that year we baptized 25 people—even though we normally had an attendance of 35-40. We managed to baptize the

equivalent of over 60 percent of our normal attendance for multiple reasons. No matter how much larger the churches I’ve pastored since then might have been, those reproducible principles I practiced in that little Kentucky congregation still help us reach people for Christ. I want to discuss one of those principles here.

The Passion Principle

As a student, I was the grader for an evangelism professor at Southwestern Seminary. On nearly every test this question appeared: “What are the two indispensable ingredients for church growth?” The answer was: “The pastor must want to grow and the people must want to grow.” No church is evangelistic by accident—you have to want it. You might say, “But we all want to see people saved.” It is true most believers would say they want to see more lost friends and family members come to Christ. Wanting it to happen, and wanting it badly enough to do something about it, however, are two different levels of passion.

One way of moving spiritual passion to strategic practice is by identifying your desired outcome. In other words, set some evangelistic goals for your church. In a 2017 article on evangelism, Thom Rainer cited numerous reasons why setting evangelistic goals for the church usually increases evangelistic effectiveness. According to Rainer, research has shown that churches, even those with little to no history of evangelistic passion, can see dramatic results when they start setting

“
NO CHURCH IS EVANGELISTIC BY ACCIDENT—YOU HAVE TO WANT IT.
”

goals for evangelism and then acting on those goals. I have found that to be true.

Some may argue that goal setting reduces the transformation of souls to a “numbers game” or a secular endeavor. Of course, it’s true that any well-intentioned focus can be tainted by selfish motives, but even the Great Commission itself is a God-sized goal-setting strategy for evangelism. Jesus challenged 11 outnumbered, over-awed disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). World evangelization is a pretty big goal, wouldn’t you agree? If you want to reach more people for Christ, you must want it badly enough to identify some goals and do something about them.

For years I’ve heard that John Knox—the leader of the 16th-century Scottish reformation—once prayed, “Lord, give me Scotland, or I die!” That kind of passion for evangelistic effectiveness isn’t secular or selfish. It grows out of a passion to see more people saved. It has its roots in a statement by the apostle Paul who passionately declared, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3). Paul

had such an ardor for the lost he would have been willing to go to hell if it meant more lost people being saved and going to heaven! Passion for evangelism motivated Paul to preach throughout the Roman empire, often experiencing prison time, riots, illness, injury, and eventually execution. Passion makes the difference between saying we want an evangelistic outcome and doing whatever it takes to lead others to Christ.

Do you want to see more people saved? Do you want your church to be more effective in evangelism? How badly do you want it? There are numerous other factors for increasing evangelistic effectiveness other than the passionate desire to see it happen, but without passion it’s unlikely we will ever make the effort to do the others. You have to want it.

Passion for reaching the lost should also eclipse everything else on our agenda. As Charles Spurgeon once said that “our grand object is not the revision of opinions, but the regeneration of natures. We would bring men to Christ, and not to our own peculiar views of Christianity.” In other words, our passion for the salvation of the lost is more important than other less significant distractions and arguments which devour our time and energy. In light of eternity, what is more valuable than a human soul?

Do you have a passion for reaching the lost? If you do, your passion is an indispensable factor in leading your church to reach more people for Christ, and lighting a fire of desire in the hearts of the people of God. 🙏

RACE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Strengthening Racial Harmony, a panel discussion, will be held on Tuesday, April 13, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. in the multipurpose room of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention building for in-person and online audiences.

Registration is open to the public.

“Pastors, church leaders, men, women, everyone is welcome,” Mathews, who will moderate the discussion, told the TEXAN. Mathews, who also pastors the predominantly African American North Garland Baptist Fellowship, said the event will be a conversation about strengthening racial relations between Black and white believers.

“Our purpose is to identify barriers and discuss factors that promote racial harmony,” Mathews told the TEXAN, adding, “Panelists were selected who desire to [do this], but who can also address the challenges with which we are met.”

Panelists scheduled to appear include Michael Criner, pastor of Rock Hill Baptist Church near Tyler; Todd Kaunitz, pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview; Joe Ogletree, pastor of Image Church in

Houston; Kasi Pruitt, adoption and foster care coordinator for Lakepointe Church, Rockwall; and Mike Satterfield, teaching pastor at Fielder Church in Arlington.

All have done significant work in encouraging racial harmony, Mathews said, noting that Pruitt will offer a unique perspective as a parent of a multiracial family. Satterfield and Ogletree, two African

American pastors on the panel have worked “across the racial divide,” Mathews said, while Criner and Kaunitz are “in tune with the racial challenges.”

The discussion will focus on Black-Anglo relations, but future conversations are planned with other ethnic groups as well, he added.

“We have so much racial unrest in the body of Christ. It’s important to have harmony among all races. We are focusing on Blacks and whites first because [the SBC] has had Black pastors to leave,” Mathews explained.

The panel’s purpose will not be to debate Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, but to examine how to focus on the issues with civility.

“We can agree to disagree and still be civil,” Mathews said. “I’m not naive. We have some real racial challenges. Instead of fighting, we have to find so-

“We can agree to disagree and still be civil. I’m not naive. We have some real racial challenges. Instead of fighting, we have to find solutions ... to co-exist and be about carrying out the Great Commission. We have to be reminded of that.”

—TONY MATHEWS

lutions ... to co-exist and be about carrying out the Great Commission. We have to be reminded of that.”

Mathews said he hopes the discussion will suggest new ways to break down racial barriers and that all who hear will be inspired to cultivate healthy relationships with all people.

Mathews is, he said, a firm believer in “carefronting,” a term coined by David Augsburger more than four decades ago. “You have to sometimes carefront folks who are unaware of some of the racially-sensitive issues,” Mathews said, noting that often it is better to carefront than to confront.

Extremism must also be avoided, Mathews said, adding, “If you deny racism exists, that’s incorrect. But if everything is racism, nothing is racism.”

Calling Jesus our model for race relations, Mathews added, “Through his death, burial and resurrection, he wants unity. We’re humans. Racism is sin. We know that this is something we have to combat.”

Challenges abound. “As Christians we have to answer with Christ in

our lives and the Holy Spirit guiding us,” Mathews said. Only then can we “really come together and help heal the hurts and challenges we have along racial lines. It’s going to take all of us to do it. We’ve got to come together.”

Division hurts and reconciliation is possible, he said, urging tolerance and forgiveness.

“God created us with distinctions. Distinctions can be celebrated without compromising doctrine,” he said, urging forgiveness: “Give people the benefit of the doubt. Let them talk. Give them space to make mistakes.”

Speaking as one who has pastored several races and ethnic groups, Mathews affirmed, “We’ve got more in common than not.”

With the April panel, Mathews hopes to get the reconciliation conversation going. ✝

For more information on the panel discussion, or to register to attend virtually or in-person, visit sbtexas.com/racialharmony. In-person attendance may be limited, depending upon COVID-19 protocols.



Tony Mathews



Michael Criner



Todd Kaunitz



Joe Ogletree



Kasi Pruitt



Mike Satterfield

Youth Alive 2021

Presented by Tim Lee Ministries

SPEAKERS



Johnny Hunt



Ergun Caner



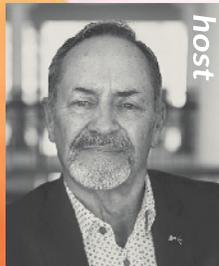
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CP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I would say that I am a product of CP, so in a sense I owe a debt to those who have given," Cooper, a two-time graduate of Criswell College and a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, told the TEXAN.

CP dollars support Criswell and Southwestern, among other entities. These schools educate leaders like Cooper who was only 24 when Grace called him in 2013. Then the 13-year-old church had members with an average age of 70 and attendance of around 30.

"The group just loved the Lord. They were older saints, but they had a desire to grow spiritually and reach the community," Cooper said.

The Cedar Creek Lake area southeast of Dallas has hundreds of churches of various sizes, Cooper said, but finding a church that prioritizes the gospel is not easy. Some people have come to Grace Community after having bad experiences at other churches, he added.

"One of the things we've really tried to do here at Grace is to cultivate a focus on gospel community both within the church and outside the four walls," Cooper said.

Grace Community has three core values to guide their focus: Christ-exalting simplicity, biblically-faithful worship and family-oriented community. In his first few years at the church, Cooper led the congregation to a healthier culture primarily through preaching and small group discipleship, he said.

Church attendance reached 140 before COVID hit, the pastor said, and since then it has backed down to around 100. As the church gained some health, more people were saved and baptized, Cooper said, and last fall, despite the pandemic, the church paid off its debt. Now they're in a good position to build a new sanctuary for the years ahead.

"I'm convinced we're at the precipice of really seeing good gospel growth and gospel transformation within our church but also within our community," he noted.

Within the next two years, experts predict Mabank will see a population increase of 1,500 people, Cooper said. "For us as a little rural town, that's big time."

Most of that growth is headed toward Grace Community.

"There are about 300 homes that are being built less than 500 yards away from our church," Cooper said. "We already have plans in place to make sure we knock on every single one of those doors so that every person in that home receives a personal invitation to church and a

“
I'M THANKFUL THAT
OUR CONVENTION
FORWARDS 55
PERCENT ON TO THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST
CONVENTION.
”

—MICHAEL COOPER

personal invitation to come to Christ."

At Grace Community, the pastor envisions a funneling discipleship process where people start by attending a worship service and then go deeper by branching off into small groups. Beyond Sunday School and Wednesday nights, people can join Ladies of Grace or Men of Grace Bible studies offered on weekdays.

The Ladies of Grace and Men of Grace ministries identify and cultivate gifts and train leaders for service, Cooper said. "For us, that is one of the identifying marks of discipleship, when our leaders are training up new leaders for various ministries."

Grace Community forwards 7 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program and gives another 5 percent to its local Baptist association.

"If a normative size church like Grace Community Church can impact darkness all around the world through the Cooperative Program, then I'm going to support that," Cooper said.

"I'm thankful that our convention forwards 55 percent on to the Southern Baptist Convention. That's one of the dominant reasons I love being a Southern Baptist of Texas Convention pastor—we believe in CP," he said.

When Grace Community called Cooper as pastor, he remembers the search committee telling him they didn't want to hire a pastor just to benefit from him; they wanted to be a blessing to that pastor.

"I can say from that time to now, being 32, nearly eight years of pastoring a single church, I would not trade any of it for anything," Cooper said, adding that he has done a lot of funerals of saints who laid the groundwork for the fruit that is visible now.

The vision of Grace Community is not just something the congregation made up, he said.

"It goes back to Jesus—to be a blessing to our community, to be a blessing to the nations, to see people come to know him, to be baptized, to be taught. It ultimately goes back to the Great Commission. We're called to something bigger than ourselves." ❖

“Un producto del PC” dirige a la iglesia de Mabank a ser saludable

Por Erin Roach

Corresponsal del TEXAN

MABANK Cuando los Bautistas del Sur diezman, generalmente el énfasis se hace en lo que ellos pueden dar para apoyar los ministerios alrededor del mundo, pero en ocasiones vale la pena considerar lo que las iglesias reciben por medio del Programa Cooperativo (PC).

En la Iglesia Grace Community en Mabank, el pastor Michael Cooper explicó cómo los dólares que salieron de la iglesia para el PC, regresaron de vuelta para beneficiar a la congregación.

"Yo diría que soy el resultado del PC, entonces de cierta manera estoy en deuda con aquellos que han dado," dijo Cooper al TEXAN, quien es dos veces graduado del Criswell College y estudiante del Seminario Teológico Bautista del Sur.

A través del Programa Cooperativo, los Bautistas del Sur de Texas apoyan financieramente al Criswell College y al Seminario Southwestern, entre otros esfuerzos. Estas escuelas forman líderes que, como Cooper, regresan para dirigir las Iglesias Bautistas del Sur para que sean saludables.

Grace Community comenzó en el año 2000 y asistían cerca de 30 personas cuando llamaron a Cooper como pastor 13 años después. Él tenía 24 años y la edad promedio de la congregación rondaba los 70.

"El grupo amaba mucho al Señor. Eran santos mayores, pero tenían el deseo de crecer espiritualmente y alcanzar a su comunidad," comentó Cooper.

El área Cedar Creek Lake al sureste de Dallas tiene cientos de iglesias de varios tamaños, mencionó Cooper, pero encontrar una iglesia que prioriza el evangelio no es fácil. Algunas personas han llegado a Grace Community después de haber tenido malas experiencias en otras iglesias, dijo.

"Una de las cosas que de verdad tratamos de hacer aquí en Grace es crear una comunidad centrada en el evangelio, tanto dentro de la iglesia como fuera de sus cuatro paredes," dijo Cooper.

Grace Community tiene tres valores fundamentales que rigen su enfoque: sencillez que exalta a Cristo, adoración fiel a las escrituras y una comunidad orientada a la familia. En sus primeros años en la iglesia, Cooper dirigió a la congregación a una cultura más saludable principalmente con la predicación y el discipulado de grupos pequeños, dijo.

La asistencia en la iglesia llegó a ser de 140 personas antes de que llegara el COVID, dijo el pastor, y desde entonces ha disminuido a cerca de 100. A medida que la iglesia consiguió ser saludable, más personas fueron salvadas y se bautizaron, dijo Cooper, y el otoño pasado, a pesar de la pandemia, la iglesia pagó su deuda. Ahora están en un buen momento para construir un nuevo santuario para los años venideros.

"Estoy convencido de que estamos a punto de ver un gran crecimiento y transformación por el evangelio dentro de nuestra iglesia, pero también dentro de nuestra comunidad." ❖

En los próximos dos años, especialistas afirman que Mabank verá un incremento de 1,500 personas en su población, mencionó Cooper. "Eso para nosotros, que somos un pequeño pueblo rural, es increíble."

La mayor parte de ese crecimiento se dirige hacia Grace Community.

"Hay cerca de 300 casas que están construyéndose a menos de 500 yardas de nuestra iglesia", dijo Cooper. "Ya tenemos planes para asegurarnos de tocar cada una de esas puertas y que cada persona en esos hogares reciba una invitación personal a la iglesia y una invitación personal para venir a Cristo."

En Grace Community, el pastor proyecta un proceso de discipulado desarrollado de tal manera que las personas comienzan asistiendo a un servicio de adoración y luego profundizan en la enseñanza al dividirse en grupos pequeños. Además de la Escuela Dominical y los miércoles por la noche, las personas pueden unirse a los estudios bíblicos Mujeres de Gracia u Hombres de Gracia que se dan entre semana.

Los ministerios "Mujeres de Gracia" u "Hombres de Gracia" identifican y cultivan los dones y capacitan líderes para el servicio, dijo Cooper. "Para nosotros, esa es una de las señales que identifican al discipulado, que nuestros líderes capaciten a nuevos líderes para diferentes ministerios."

Grace Community envía el 7 por ciento de sus donaciones no asignadas a través del Programa Cooperativo y da otro 5 por ciento a su asociación Bautista local.

"Si una iglesia de tamaño regular como la Iglesia Grace Community puede impactar la oscuridad que hay en el mundo a través del Programa Cooperativo, entonces yo voy a apoyarlo," dijo Cooper.

"Estoy agradecido de que nuestra convención destine el 55 por ciento a la Convención Bautista del Sur. Es una de las principales razones por las que amo ser un pastor de la Convención Bautista del Sur de Texas—creemos en el PC," dijo.

Cuando Grace Community llamó a Cooper para ser pastor, él recuerda al comité de búsqueda diciéndole que ellos no querían contratar un pastor sólo para beneficiarse de él; querían ser una bendición para ese pastor.

"Puedo decir desde entonces hasta hoy, con 32 años de edad, casi ocho años de pastorear una sola iglesia, que no lo cambiaría por nada," dijo Cooper y agregó que ha llevado a cabo varios funerales de santos que sentaron las bases para el fruto que se ve ahora.

La visión de Grace Community no es sólo algo que la congregación inventó, dijo.

"Todo es por Jesús—ser una bendición en nuestra comunidad, ser una bendición a las naciones, ver a las personas conociéndolo a Él, ser bautizadas, ser enseñadas. Al final todo es por la Gran Comisión. Somos llamados a algo más grande que nosotros mismos." ❖



Church Positions

PASTOR

- ♦ FBC Pflugerville is seeking a senior pastor to lead a large evangelical church in fast-growing, diverse area near Austin. Requires a spiritual leader displaying the Lordship of Christ in all facets of life; maintaining personal integrity; basing his life/sermons on the truth of the Bible; a disciple-maker. Email resume to rck2270@outlook.com.
- ♦ Bolton Street BC in Amarillo is seeking a FT lead pastor who has a growing compassionate relationship with Jesus Christ and a genuine love of others. He should have a heart for children's ministry and lead the church family to grow in their walk with Jesus Christ. Send resume to Pastor Search Committee, Bolton Street Baptist Church, 2555 S Bolton Street, Amarillo, TX 79103 or boltonstreetbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.
- ♦ Crestview BC in Lamesa is seeking a FT pastor. Parsonage included. We are a small SBTC church that adheres to the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. Send resume to PO Box 818, Lamesa, TX 79331 or email to crestviewbc@pics.net.
- ♦ FBC Crystal Beach is in search of a FT pastor for their small church with a big heart. Email resume to Loyd Shoemaker at shoeloy@gmail.com.
- ♦ FBC Linden is seeking a FT pastor who has a growing, compassionate relationship with Jesus Christ and a genuine love for others. For more information, or if you would like to submit your resume, send to tbond@reliantndt.com.
- ♦ FBC De Leon is accepting resumes for a FT pastor. Send to First Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 228, De Leon, TX 76444 or fbdeleon@cctc.net.
- ♦ FBC Madisonville is seeking a FT senior pastor. Submit resumes to pastorsearch@madisonvillefb.org.
- ♦ Bethel BC in Graham is prayerfully seeking a FT Southern Baptist pastor to lead and grow our small, dedicated congregation. A parsonage is available. Send resumes to Bethel Baptist Church, 209 Tennessee St., Graham, TX 76450 or Bethelpastorsearch21@gmail.com.
- ♦ Carey FBC is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor whose first love is Jesus Christ with a distinct calling to share Christ's love to others in service to Him. Some Seminary training and at least 5-10 years of pastoral experience is preferred. Resumes will be accepted through April 15 at careybaptistpastor@gmail.com.
- ♦ Grace Gathering Church in Llano is a non-denominational Bible church searching for a senior pastor with a mission to win people to Christ, build them up in Christ and to send them out to spread the gospel. Send resume to ggsearch@jhhouston.com.
- ♦ Wilcrest BC is a multi-ethnic church located in Houston. We average 350 in worship attendance. We will celebrate our 50th anniversary next year and are currently searching for our fifth senior pastor. Email resume to jonathan@wilcrestbaptist.org.
- ♦ West End BC in Beaumont is seeking a FT or bivocational pastor. Financially secure, loving congregation of 50 average attendance, traditional worship service. We are affiliated with the SBTC. Send resume to webcbeaumont@gmail.com.
- ♦ Sylvester BC, a small SBTC rural church, seeks a bivocational pastor. Parsonage available. Send resume to dpippin38@yahoo.com or Sylvester Baptist Church,

PO Box 8, Sylvester, TX 79560.

- ♦ FBC in Avinger is currently seeking a PT or bivocational lead pastor. Please inquire with the church for more details at 903-910-6120 or firstbaptistchurchavinger@gmail.com.
- ♦ Green Valley BC in Aubrey seeks a bivocational pastor. Send resume and personal testimony to pastorbensmith@gmail.com.
- ♦ The Church at 242 in Conroe is searching for a bivocational lead pastor. Send resume to transitionteam@churchat242.org.
- ♦ Harmony BC in Weatherford is currently accepting resumes for a bivocational senior pastor. Email resume to harmonybc@harmonybc.org.
- ♦ FBC Flat is searching for a bivocational pastor. We are an SBTC church and adhere to the BF&M 2000. Parsonage available. Send resume to First Baptist Church, PO Box 87, 9775 S. St Hwy 36, Flat, TX 76526 or fbcflat.bookkeeper@outlook.com.
- ♦ Southside BC in Granbury is seeking a bivocational senior pastor to grow, minister and teach his Word. Please submit resumes to southsidebaptistgranbury@gmail.com.
- ♦ Wilcrest BC is a multi-ethnic church in Houston, currently searching for an interim pastor. Potential candidates will work with the search committee and personnel committee to determine the schedule and whether this will be a full-time, part-time, or bivocational position. The church is open to discuss this. Email resume to jonathan@wilcrestbaptist.org.

MUSIC

- ♦ Immanuel BC in Temple is in search of a FT minister of worship to balance love of choir and contemporary praise and worship with a desire to involve as many people as possible. We value a great lover of people with administrative gifts. Email resume to rmlne@ibctemple.org.
- ♦ Key Life Fellowship in New Caney, a suburb of Houston, is prayerfully seeking a FT associate pastor of worship/media to lead our congregation in worship, through music and media. Send resume to kirk@keylifefellowship.com with video or link to recent services that you have led worship in. See our recent services on Facebook to get a better idea of who we are.
- ♦ Covenant BC in Atascocita is seeking a PT worship leader. Our worship is blended in style, with a praise band and mix of new and older songs. Our goal is to eventually develop this role into a full-time position. We are also looking for a PT youth and families minister and are willing to combine these roles into a FT position (see Youth section). Email resume cover letter and video of you leading worship and/or teaching to cdtrousdale@gmail.com.
- ♦ FBC in Vidor is looking for a FT minister of music to promote and lead the music ministry of both the contemporary and traditional worship services. Email resumes to klem@fbcvidor.org.
- ♦ West Conroe BC in Conroe is seeking a FT minister of worship arts to oversee personnel, planning, and execution of the comprehensive worship arts ministries and coordinate with the senior pastor and technical manager for the planning and administering of church-wide worship services and special events. Send resume to william.mcgregor@wcbc.us.
- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT worship minister with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is a domestic and international church

- planting network. Other cities are available. Please email a video of you leading worship to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ FBC Brownfield is in search of a PT minister of music. Additional job requirements based upon talents and need. Email resume and/or questions to fbcbrownfieldmusic@gmail.com.
- ♦ River of Life Christian Fellowship, on the east side of San Antonio, is seeking a PT worship leader for Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services. Send resume to brian.kent@amjill.com or River of Life, PO Box 453, Adkins, TX 78101.
- ♦ Westside BC in Corsicana is accepting resumes for a PT music minister for Sunday morning and evening. Email resume to westside.church@sbcglobal.net or mail to Westside Baptist Church, 1522 N 24th St., Corsicana, TX 75110.
- ♦ Sherwood BC in Odessa is seeking a bivocational director of music to plan and coordinate worship services that magnify the Lord, proclaim the truth of scripture, and edify the body of Christ. Send resumes to personnel@sherwood.church.
- ♦ Nolan River Road BC of Cleburne seeks a PT minister of music. Email resumes to Adam Mathews at cmesserer@nrrbc.org.
- ♦ Church in the Center, a multi-ethnic church in inner city Houston, seeks a PT worship leader. We are a church that is "in the city, for the nations." Please email ben@thecitc.org for info and inquiries.
- ♦ NorthSide BC in Corsicana is in search of a Spanish-speaking worship leader to lead songs/worship in Spanish on Sundays. *Se busca un líder de alabanza que dirige los cantos/adoracion en Español los domingos. Send resume to donnette@nbchurch.net.

STUDENTS

- ♦ Church at the Cross, Grapevine, led by pastor JR Vassar, seeks to hire a FT minister to students. Previous experience required; seminary degree preferred. Please submit qualified resumes to jobs@churchatthecross.com.
- ♦ Huntington FBC is hiring a FT youth pastor to oversee our growing youth & children's ministries. His primary responsibility will be youth ministry, and he will also oversee our directors for pre-teen, children and nursery. We want someone who has a vision to impact the next generation in our church as well as their families. Go to huntingtonfbc.org/youthpastor to discover more information.
- ♦ FBC Groves is searching for a FT "NexGen" student pastor with 3+ years' experience with discipleship of students. Competitive salary including housing, insurance and retirement. Mid-size church; running 80 students on Wednesday and 45 students Sunday morning. Email resume to Joe Worley at jo@fbcgroves.org.
- ♦ Lake Fork BC in Alba, located about 60 miles east of Dallas, is accepting resumes for a FT minister to youth grades 6-12, with 3-5 years' experience. To view job description and submit your resume, go to lakeforkbaptist.org job opportunities.
- ♦ Sherwood BC in Odessa is seeking a FT minister of youth to introduce young people to Christ, teaching them to become spiritual mature followers of Christ and equipping them to become disciple-makers. Send resumes to: personnel@sherwood.church.
- ♦ Community Baptist Church, Crosby, a suburban Houston church, is seeking a FT youth pastor. Send resumes to dwilliams@cbccrosby.org.
- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT student pastor with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ Tanglewood BC, Jasper, is seeking a youth pastor with an evangelistic heart to help the pastor grow the church by reaching the hundreds of lost young people who live here. Email resume to tanglewoodbc@gmail.com.
- ♦ Heritage Grapevine, a church plant is looking for a PT youth pastor to disciple our teens to maturity in their faith. Media skills is a plus. Email resume to pastor@heritagegrapevine.org.
- ♦ Shamrock FBC is seeking a young man to serve as PT youth pastor. Submit a

resume and letter of interest to ruth@shamrockfirst.com.

- ♦ Shady Grove BC in North Richland Hills is looking for a PT youth pastor that will develop, promote and maintain a total church youth program for grades 7-12. We are looking for a born again, baptized believer, engaging teacher and someone called to the youth ministry. Email resume to pastor@shadygrovebaptist.com.
- ♦ Southcliff Church in Fort Worth is searching for a missional youth ministry intern to focus on teens whose families don't attend church, willing to live and work with a team of mission-minded young adults who lead creative ministry efforts. Gain ministry experience by living in the same apartment complex as the people you are engaging in ministry. Contact Stu Cocanougher at stu@southcliff.com.

CHILDREN

- ♦ Southcliff Church in Fort Worth is in search of a missional children's ministry intern to make a difference in the lives of children who are not connected to a church, love families no matter what their background and be involved in cutting-edge, team-based children's ministry both inside and outside the walls of the church building. Email resume to Stu Cocanougher at stu@southcliff.com.

COMBINATION

- ♦ Covenant BC in Atascocita, Northeast Houston, is seeking a youth and families minister. Send a cover letter, resume, and video of you teaching/preaching to chris@cbcemail.com.
- ♦ CrossRoads Church in Fort Worth is in search of an associate pastor of worship and youth who has a heart for reaching teenagers and their families and leading God's people to worship in a leading-edge worship environment in-person and online. Email resume to info@crossroadsfortworth.org.
- ♦ FBC Edna is seeking a FT minister of music and media FT First Baptist Church, Edna, Texas. Send resume to fbcenednamusic@gmail.com.
- ♦ Peachtree BC in Jasper is searching for a FT youth and music minister. Must be able to teach and lead our youth in Sunday School and Wednesday evening Bible studies. Lead our youth in a camp experience once a year during the summer. The worship minister will lead in a blended worship style and be able to play would be helpful. We currently have piano, bass, and drums as part of the Sunday worship team. Send resume to gweaver.1@outlook.com.
- ♦ FBC Seagoville is searching for a minister of worship and youth. Send resume to fbcseagoville@sbcglobal.net.
- ♦ Harvest Point Church in Nacogdoches is seeking a FT associate pastor with primary responsibilities of leading worship and overseeing the student ministry. Full job description is available at hpcnac.org. Resumes accepted through April 30 and must include a reference letter. Send to Harvest Point Church, 2708 South Street, Nacogdoches TX 75964 or janice.b@hpcnac.org.
- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT kids and family minister with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

OTHER

- ♦ Dogwood Trails Baptist Association in Jacksonville is in search of a FT executive director, Send resumes and/or questions to DTBASearch@gmail.com.
- ♦ Prestonwood Baptist Church is a large multi-site congregation located in Plano, Texas. Prestonwood is seeking residents to serve in their ministries. Residents will receive PT pay, housing and be given the opportunity to serve primarily with either the Adult Ministry, Student Ministry or Kids Ministry. For more information, email jlowrie@prestonwood.org.
- ♦ FBC Garland is seeking a trained and experienced minister to join its staff as our young adult minister. Send resume and other inquiries to Dr. Doug Powell doug@fbcgarland.org. A copy of the job description is available through the SBTC website.
- ♦ College Heights BC in Plainview is seeking a FT associate pastor of

- discipleship. This role will develop leaders in all discipleship ministries from birth through adult education, with a special emphasis on youth and university. This role will be a "second chair" elder-track leader at CHBC. Email resume to search@collegeheightsbc.org.
- ♦ Flint Baptist Church is in search of a FT executive pastor. Contact dbritt@flintbaptistchurch.net.
- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT lead planter with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is a domestic and international church planting network. Other cities are available. Please email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT pastor of community engagement with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ Lakeland Christian Academy, Lewisville, is seeking a FT head of school, who walks closely and maturely in their relationship with Jesus Christ, loves the local church, possesses proven leadership experience in Christian education, relates and communicates well to others and exhibits strong administrative skills. Email resume to dgraham@lakelandbaptist.org.
- ♦ First Colleyville Church is seeking a FT pastor of spiritual development with CrossCreek Network in Colleyville. CrossCreek is an international and domestic church planting network. Other cities are available. Email resume to Sarai Harding at saraih@firstcolleyville.com.

Paid Classifieds

- ♦ Parkway Baptist Church in Creve Coeur, MO, is now accepting resumes for a part-time student minister who would be responsible for leadership and vision-casting for an established middle/high school student ministry. The position has a competitive compensation package including benefit options. Interested applicants may send a letter of interest, resume, references and statement of faith to studentsearch@parkwaybaptist.net or by mail to Student Search Committee, Parkway Baptist Church, 12465 Olive Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63141-6499.
- ♦ Jacksonville College, a vibrant, faith-based, liberal arts institution, is accepting resumes for the office of President. Applicants must have an earned Doctorate degree with Education or related disciplines preferred. This confident, well-spoken leader must be a conservative, growing Christian with deep experience in institutional development, fund-raising and administration. Pastoral ministry-related experience is a plus. For consideration, please send: a cover letter; a personal resume which includes family information, your history of work experience, your personal testimony of faith; contact information for three references. Please email your resume to Donnie at dpage@hillcrestbc.com by April 10 for full consideration. Jacksonville College in Jacksonville, TX, was founded in 1899, and is affiliated with the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.
- ♦ FBC Ruidoso is seeking a PT team player and humble leader to serve as worship pastor for blended worship and praise band responsibilities. Please contact 575-257-2081 for questions.



ESL English as a Second Language

HYBRID TRAINING

Class will meet online from **May 1-June 1**, concluding with an in-person session on **June 12**.

For more info contact Anna Whitson · 817-552-2500

sbtexas.com/esl



Corporate prayer and praise characterized Empower sessions.
PHOTOS BY ANDREW PEARLE

“
The gospel is power. There’s no way around that, there’s no other message you need to preach to get that.
”

—COSTI HINN, EXECUTIVE PASTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP AT REDEEMER BIBLE CHURCH IN GILBERT, ARIZONA



Even casual conversations between sessions featured social distancing and masks.



An SBTC DR quick response food truck offered breakfast tacos to participants Tuesday morning. Here Scottie Stice, DR director, greets attendees with coffee.

“
IF YOU DISCOVER ANYTHING IN SOCIAL RESEARCH, IF IT’S TRUE, IT WILL NEVER CONTRADICT THE SCRIPTURES.
”

—GARY CHAPMAN, AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING 5 LOVE LANGUAGES® SERIES

Empower 2021 focuses on not forgetting our ‘first love’

By Jane Rodgers & Rob Collingsworth
TEXAN Correspondents

IRVING The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention’s 2021 Empower evangelism conference held Monday-Tuesday, Feb. 22-23, at the Irving Convention Center, drew more than 1,200 participants from across Texas determined to fulfill the Great Commission.

Quite a bit had changed from last year’s Empower, when COVID-19 was barely on the Texas radar.

But the pandemic’s influence was ubiquitous in 2021 ... with events at limited capacity, hand-washing stations, guests wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

Also ubiquitous were the presence of the Holy Spirit and the undeniable gospel purpose infusing the 1,207 registered in-person participants and 249 watching online through a ticketed digital platform.

They found a lot to like at Empower.

Monday’s Classics luncheon featured comedian Dennis Swanberg and was followed by the Classics session that afternoon with worship led by Greater Vision and messages from Jerry Chaddick, Ken Hemphill and Ted Traylor.

Other Monday luncheons were sponsored by Missional Ministries and the Student Ministers Network, while that evening’s meal events included a Church Health and Leadership dinner featuring a panel discussion with Juan Sanchez and Deron Biles, moderated by Tony Wolfe, and the Young Pastors dinner, with Gary Chapman, Christian author and counselor who also spoke in the opening main session.

Participants were able to choose two of 10 Monday and Tuesday afternoon breakouts on a variety of topics from evangelizing during the pandemic to mobilizing the next generation to starting a disaster relief ministry to encouraging adoption and foster care.

Tuesday’s program included the Cooperative Program lunch with Brian Haynes, pastor of Bay Area Church in League City, in which the top 10 CP-giving SBTC churches were recognized.

Monday evening: Hinn, Chapman, Vujicic

Jimmy McNeal, with Austin Stone, provided praise and worship throughout the main Empower sessions, which kicked off Monday evening with a message from Costi Hinn, executive pastor of discipleship at Redeemer Bible Church in Gilbert, Arizona.

Hinn delivered a sermon from Romans 1:16-17 in which he focused on the necessity of being unashamed of the gospel.

“The gospel is power. There’s no way around that, there’s no other message you need to preach to get that,” Hinn said.

He shared his testimony of working in the healing ministry of his famous televangelist uncle, Benny Hinn, and expecting to be his ultimate successor—only to come to faith with the true gospel.

Hinn challenged the audience to not forget their first love.

“When we begin to abandon that foundation, like it or not we are no different than the prosperity gospel preachers that have abandoned the message of the true gospel. So if you want real power, push the throttle back where it belongs,” he said.

“
EVERYONE’S TALKING ABOUT A VACCINE FOR COVID. BUT THERE IS ONE CURE FOR DEATH. AND IT WORKS EVERY SINGLE TIME. IT’S CALLED RESURRECTION, AND THERE’S ONLY ONE OF THEM—IT’S THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.
”

—EVANGELIST NICK VUJICIC

Gary Chapman, author of the bestselling 5 Love Languages® series, followed Hinn. Chapman spoke on the five languages of apology from his book *When Sorry Isn’t Enough*.

“If you discover anything in social research, if it’s true, it will never contradict the Scriptures. It will almost always be illustrated in the Scriptures,” Chapman said as he presented a biblical case for the importance of not only learning how to apologize and but also how to forgive.

Australian-American Nick Vujicic closed out the Monday’s main session with a powerful message challenging the audience to urgent evangelism.

Vujicic, who was born without arms or legs, shared his life story, telling listeners that “my history has become his [God’s] story in his hands.” and that God had turned tragedy into “something beautiful.”

He asked the audience what they most anticipated in heaven.

“Once you’ve seen the people you think you want to see in heaven, what about the people that you won’t see in heaven?” Vujicic asked.

“Everyone’s talking about a vaccine for COVID,” he said, “but there is one cure for death. And it works every single time. It’s called resurrection, and there’s only one of them—it’s the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Vujicic pointed out the simple and somber fact that the people we know and



Casey Perry, recipient of the 2021 W.A. Criswell evangelism award, is greeted onstage by Ryan Fontenot, SBTC evangelism consultant.

EMPOWER

love, from family and friends to neighbors, will not be saved without faith in Christ.

He also shared some of his own personal testimony, including the depression, bullying and isolation that accompanied his physical challenges, including a suicide attempt at age 10.

He challenged the audience to write down 10 people they would preach the gospel to in 10 days, pointing to the fragility of life as motivation: "Sharing the gospel is not a suggestion. It's a commandment."

Tuesday morning: Skeldon, Hunt, Carter

Grant Skeldon, founder of the Initiative Network and next gen director for Q Ideas, opened the Tuesday morning main session by sharing his half Latino, half South African background. With a multi-ethnic family, Skeldon struggled to discover where he belonged as a teenager, especially after a relationship ended and he was kicked off the basketball team.

The questions became, "Who am I and what am I about now?" For the first time, he went to church and gave his life to Christ.

"Seven of 10 young people leave the church once they hit college," Skeldon said. "We keep talking about how to get back to normal. And I keep telling pastors, for the next generation, the last thing we need to go back to is normal."

Skeldon suggested instead leveraging the pandemic disruption as an opportunity "to try something new," and recommended personally discipling the next generation.

"Simply go and make disciples," Skeldon said, instead of trying "tricks and tips" that work with one generation but not another.

"We don't have a next gen problem. We have a discipleship problem," he said, calling for older believers to disciple younger ones through relationships and "make the Commission great again."

Johnny Hunt, NAMB senior vice president for evangelism and leadership, followed Skeldon and challenged the audience to evangelize with a purpose.

Hunt alluded to the Southern Baptist Convention's "Who's Your One" campaign of one-on-one evangelism, telling listeners that statistics show 85 percent of people in evangelical churches had been invited by others.

Turning to Mark 2, Hunt opened with the question, "What happens when Jesus is in the house?"



Mark 2 shows Jesus at his "home headquarters" of Capernaum, Hunt said. People heard Jesus was in the house and showed up to hear him.

"Can you think of anything better that can be said about your church [than] that Jesus is in the house?" Hunt asked.

As Jesus preached to the crowded room in Mark 2, four men opened the home's roof to lower their paralyzed friend, who soon heard from the Lord: "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Asking listeners where they were when God "spoke those eternal words" into their souls, Hunt recalled his own conversion at age 20, on a snowy Sunday night when as a high school dropout managing a pool hall, he heard God's call. Hunt found both entry into the family of God and fellowship with him, a truth the scribes of Mark 2 do not see.

The time is short, Hunt said, emphasizing the urgency of responding to Christ.

Matt Carter, pastor of Houston's Sagemont Church, followed Hunt with a call to revival, specifically, a "revival of evangelism," not necessarily of "big crusades" but revival wrought by the "manifest presence of almighty God in our churches."

Using Revelation 2:4-5 as his text, Carter spoke of the dangers of losing our first love of Jesus, warning that churches and programs will fail if Jesus is not at the center.

"Temporal things cannot satisfy an eternal hunger. Only the eternal God of the universe can satisfy the hunger that's in them," Carter said.

He also urged prayer: "When you look at the Scripture and you look at history, and you see when God really began to move in a country and began to move among a people it's when the people of God got really, really serious about prayer."

Tuesday afternoon: Fish and Criswell awards, Lorick

Tuesday afternoon's Empower session included a time of special recognition as Carol Yarber and Casey Perry, two longtime Southern Baptists of Texas Convention leaders, received the convention's Fish and Criswell awards.

Yarber, of Athens, Texas became the first female recipient of the Roy Fish award, named in honor of the professor's impact on thousands of students during his nearly 50 years at Southwestern Seminary. Casey Perry of Malakoff received the W.A. Criswell award, given to pastors known as exemplars in church evangelism. The award is named after the legendary pastor of First Baptist of Dallas and one of the best-known Southern Baptist preachers in the SBC's history.

Empower concluded with a message from special guest Nathan Lorick, SBTC executive director-elect, who called upon

attendees to "capture the heart of God."

Lorick said that behind his relationship with Christ and his duties as a husband and father, being elected to serve as executive director of the SBTC was the "greatest ministry honor of my life."

He also expressed his gratitude for outgoing director Jim Richards, of whom he said there "is no greater leader in the state of Texas" and "no greater man of integrity." He thanked Richards for how he had "poured" into his life, adding, "It is the honor of my life and ministry to follow you."

Lorick stated his desire to let the convention get to know him and his heart as he steps into this new role.

"The theme of my life is about seeing those who are lost come to faith in Christ. That is what wakes me up in the morning, that is what keeps me up at night. It is knowing that God created me, God saved me; God put a passion in me to see those who are lost come to know faith in Christ," Lorick said.

He preached from Romans 9-10, noting that the heart of God, which is captured in Scripture, boils down to the salvation of the lost. He pointed to three things Paul exemplifies in the chapters: brokenness on behalf of the lost, which leads to a burden for the lost, which must spur the church to beg God on behalf of the lost.

"You want a movement of God? Become a praying church that begs God for the lost in your community. You want to see God move in your family? Beg God for that son or that daughter," he said.

Lorick closed by sharing his testimony and calling the room to a time of prayer, inviting the audience to consider those in their lives for whom they needed to be broken.

Empower 2022

Shane Pruitt, Empower consultant and NAMB next gen evangelism director, told the TEXAN that Empower 2021 proved both timely and encouraging. "There are two certainties in uncertain times: Jesus is still on his throne and COVID-19 did not push pause on the Great Commission."

Pruitt added, "The church must continue to press forward and the Empower conference definitely encouraged many leaders to do that."

Richards called conference registration "phenomenal" and added, "My prayer was for God to move on hearts to bring a spiritual renewal to those in attendance. I rejoice in that many were blessed. Only eternity will show the results of our gathering together."

Empower 2022 will be Feb. 28-March 2, said Ryan Fontenot, SBTC evangelism consultant who will assume leadership of the event following Pruitt. 🙏

▲ Jimmy McNeal with Austin Stone led worship at the Empower main sessions.

PHOTOS BY ANDREW PEARLE

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FOUNDER OF THE
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YOU WANT A MOVEMENT OF GOD? BECOME A PRAYING CHURCH THAT BEGS GOD FOR THE LOST IN YOUR COMMUNITY.
”

—NATHAN LORICK,
SBTC EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR-ELECT



Shane Pruitt, Empower consultant and NAMB next gen evangelism director, poses with Carol Yarber of Athens, the first woman to receive the Roy Fish award for lifetime evangelism.

COVID-19 illnesses and deaths felt in churches as pandemic passes one year

By Diana Chandler & Tammi Ledbetter
Baptist Press & Southern Baptist TEXAN

Senior Pastor Jimmy D. Pritchard had a new vision for the future of First Baptist Church of Forney.

"Brother Jim just came into my office and said, 'I'm tired of this.' He said, 'I'm tired of being on the defensive. I'm tired of sitting back,'" Executive Pastor Ed Hancock recalls from that early January day. "He said, 'We're going on offense.' I said 'OK,' so we met with the leadership team, and he laid out his vision."

Weeks later on a Monday, as the church of about 1,200 worshipers prepared to implement Pritchard's Reignite 2021 plan with a church-wide prayer meeting, Pritchard was in the hospital with COVID-19.

Two days later Pritchard was dead. He died at 5:25 p.m. Feb. 24 of COVID-related pneumonia. The church staff announced his death at the beginning of the prayer meeting already scheduled that very evening.

"Like a lot of congregations, we're not unfamiliar with COVID," Hancock said just days after the March 6 celebration of life service honoring Pritchard. His widow Jeannette was still hospitalized with COVID-19 at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas and could not attend his memorial.

"We've had members get COVID and pass away from COVID," Hancock said. "We've had staff members with COVID."

Numerous churches are in similar predicaments as the pandemic nears the one-year mark. Many churches, like Neptune Baptist Church in Neptune Beach, Fla., have suffered illnesses and deaths.

Neptune Baptist Church Pastor Tom Bary died of COVID-19 in mid-December after a month-long battle with the virus.

Tanya McAvoy, Neptune Baptist's minister of evangelism and education, said the church has dedicated all of 2021 to walking through the grief of Bary's death with the congregation and his family, expressly noting milestones in church life without Bary's presence.

"Pastor Tom was with us for 36 years," she said, including his earlier 12 years as youth pastor and later 24 years as senior pastor after a leadership stint at another congregation. "We are grieving together, so we have been moving forward by grieving together in unity. We have decided that as a staff and as a church to dedicate this next year to walk through this grief together, to not ignore it."

Other churches have similar journeys of pastors and members succumbing to COVID-19-related diagnoses. Baptist Press previously reported on the deaths of Pastor Michael Stancil of Fulton Bridge Baptist Church in Hamilton, Ala.; retired Alabama pastor and church planter Fred Wolfe; and Willard and Wilma Gail Bowen, members of Poplar Springs Baptist Church in Hiram, Ga.

More than 538,000 people had died of COVID-related illnesses in the U.S. at press time, among more than 2.8 million deaths globally.

At First Baptist Forney, a kidney transplant Pritchard underwent at age 19, necessitating daily immunosuppressant drugs, made it difficult for the 65-year-old husband and father to survive.

"It was obviously a shock to us when Brother Jim died because he died so suddenly,"



Former SBTC President Jimmy Pritchard, pastor of First Baptist Forney, died of COVID-19 on Feb. 24 after a short hospitalization.

SBTC COVID RESOURCES

We have been heartened to see the responses of our Southern Baptist churches as they seek to continue their ministries and worship activities in new ways. For weekly encouragement during these trying times visit sbtexas.com/covid or scan the QR code →



Hancock said. "He went into the hospital on Saturday, Feb. 20, and passed away on Wednesday, Feb. 24."

Many in the congregation had sat under his ministry since he was called to First Baptist in 1994 and led the church through significant growth, welcoming over 6,000 new members, and baptizing over 2,600 new believers, with 38 people having answered a call to full-time Christian vocations. International, North American, and Texas missions has been a hallmark of his tenure, including work in Scotland, Hungary, Lebanon, Uruguay, Thailand, Czech Republic, India, Cuba and Ethiopia, various projects in the U.S., and birthing a new church in nearby Talty, Texas.

In addition to serving as president of the Southern Baptists of Texas Conven-

tion from 2014-2015, he was elected second vice president for 2008-2009, and served on the SBTC Executive Board. Most recently, he was tasked with chairing the SBTC's relocation committee. A trustee for the International Mission Board and Criswell College, he served on presidential search committees that selected Tom Elliff at IMB and Jerry Johnson at Criswell. He also offered leadership to the denomination as a trustee of Baptist World Alliance, IMB trustee chairman, Home Mission Board workshop leader, and Southwestern Seminary alumni association president, in addition to local associational duties everywhere he served in Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

First Forney is grateful that Pritchard left a vision

for the future.

"The elements of Reignite are to reignite your passion for prayer, reignite your passion for worship and to reignite your passion for personal evangelism," Hancock said. "It was God's plan for him to give us the vision and for us to carry it out."

At Neptune Baptist, the church of about 350 worshipers maintains a Celebrating Tom Bary memorial Facebook page.

"Some people hide grief and we've decided to display it ... so we can grieve together," McAvoy said.

"The church has been so sweet to support our staff as we've walked through grief, recognizing that our grief is important also, and we have just loved each other through it. And the church is going to be stronger because of it." ❄️



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Promotional yield available through April 30, 2021
Church Expansion Term (CET) investments are available to Texas churches and ministries.

The longest year: 6 ways to stay resilient

By Sue Sprenkle
TEXAN Correspondent

It was a challenging year. An unprecedented year. A year of loss, isolation, uncertainty, but also discovery.

Twelve-plus months of disruption: a global pandemic, a heated national election and just when

things seemed to be looking up, a February deep freeze and snowstorm that put Texas on an icy pause. The one constant in times like this is that God is always with us ... ALL of us, not just pastors.

That's why the TEXAN asked some everyday people to relate their experiences coping with the past year. These Christ-followers are husbands/wives, parents, business owners and friends—you know, people like those who used to sit next to you at church before services were streamed. They shared their tips for reliance in the hopes

that their advice might help you, too.

Bridget Jones and her husband, Jonathan, opened a Chick-Fil-A restaurant in her hometown of Brownwood, Texas, in November 2020. Mark McNeill, of nearby Bangs, is a corporate executive who has a financial responsibility ministry at his church. Amanda Jouett is a mom, wife and attorney in College Station.

Read on for ways to maintain hope and optimism under the unique circumstances of the “longest year.”



Bridget Jones

business owner, mom, wife
Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, Brownwood



Amanda Jouett

wife, mom, homeschooler, criminal defense attorney
Central Baptist Church, College Station



Mark McNeill

CPA, financial security consultant, husband, father
Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, Brownwood

Think outside the box

Moving your family and opening a new restaurant in the middle of a pandemic is no picnic. Nothing has gone as I planned it, but God was there guiding me the whole time. He brought godly people to speak truth when I panicked and thought the world was falling apart. I learned to think outside of the box, because let's face it: there's no more box.

For example:

- Since the restaurant couldn't have a traditional “grand opening” where we give out 100 gift cards, we decided to honor local teachers, choosing 100 educators at random to receive free Chick-Fil-A for a year. This time last year they were in the midst of trying to figure out how to help their students feel secure and not forgotten, let alone teaching classes online.

- When the big snow and frigid temperatures came in February, not everyone had electricity to make food. The restaurant had electricity, so our employees made sandwiches to give away. This served two purposes: 1) it allowed employees to get hours and not suffer financially and 2) it helped out our community.

- With everyone home literally all of the time now, it's hard to find alone time. That's important in my family. It's when we rejuvenate. Sometimes I was so desperate for alone time with God that we'd drive two cars to the restaurant or to church—my husband and the kids in one car and me in the other, spilling my guts in prayer.

- Social distancing and masks can make it hard to feel connected to people, especially when every employee is new. I've never seen our team members without masks. It's a barrier and I hate it! With COVID, most bonding opportunities were taken away. I had to become more purposeful in creating and maintaining meaningful relationships. I used my purse as a visual cue for team leaders to not interrupt with “business.” If it was on my shoulder, I was left alone to talk to employees or customers. Once I set the purse down, we were back to business.

This first year of business wasn't what I imagined but I learned God loves working “outside of that box” ... if you just let him. 🙏

Respect others with Jesus' love

This last year has been filled with a lot—the pandemic, an election, snow and freezing temperatures, and we even opened a dental practice for my husband. It has been difficult to navigate family situations and relationships with friends who disagree with our take on things.

At one point, I remember feeling angry at one of my friends who was on the opposite side of a debate. I realized that we are all coming from a different background and live in different situations, so our areas of focus and what's important to us differ. We ended up setting boundaries on what we discussed and remained close friends.

This year has given me the opportunity to talk to my kids about putting others above themselves and doing things that are uncomfortable in order to show Jesus' love to others. It's easy in our minds to think that those who don't agree with us are misinformed or acting out of fear, but that may not be the case at all. We never know what's going on in the lives of others or what motivates their decisions. Regardless of where someone stands on an issue, he or she is a person who is loved by God.

Remember God provides, we don't

As the wife of a small business owner, I was once again reminded that it is God who provides, not my husband or his business. We opened a brand-new dental practice in January 2020, then COVID hit. We know God's timing was perfect, but it made no sense to us why God would allow the office to shut down so soon after it opened and there was so much overhead to pay.

Despite the practice being closed for a month, no one was laid off on the team. It came to a point when we knew that the last check we wrote would bring the bank account down to zero. Our application for the PPP loan came through right before the very last check was written! It seems God always waits until the last minute to increase our faith. When we reopened, we made up for the month we were closed. That can only be attributed to God. 🙏

Set up an emergency fund

People in the last year have wanted to talk more about money and how to manage it than in the past. I feel that money is there for the glory of God, so the first thing I tell anyone is that an emergency fund is critical. It is the cornerstone of your financial stronghold. Those who had it called to say “thank you” for the advice.

Start out with an automatic deposit for every payday to accumulate \$1,000 and let it keep growing to three months of living expenses. A good way to jumpstart it is with your tax refund. Such a fund will turn an emergency into an inconvenience.

Recognize debt is servitude

During 2020, most people weren't worried about being able to put food on the table. They were worried about not being able to pay their debts. Proverbs 22:7 gives us good advice: the borrower becomes “the lender's slave.” This means, don't live beyond your means.

We all know credit card debt is dumb. Just don't go there. Don't get a mortgage more than 2.5 times your annual income or car loans totaling more than three months of your income.

Make an aggressive plan to pay off your debt by a certain date and put that plan into action.

Give to those in need

We must be prepared to bond together when another “once in a lifetime” event comes around again ... and it will! God tells us to “behold a brother in need” (1 John 3:17), so prepare for that. Set up another account for future charity and put money in the account monthly. God will make opportunities available to you.

It's amazing to see people faithfully helping others in need. Trust me, you don't want to miss this blessing. 🙏

-Interviews have been edited and condensed for clarity.

Transparency, accountability anchor Randy Adams SBC bid

By Art Toalston
TEXAN Correspondent

Editor's note: The TEXAN earlier interviewed SBC presidential candidate Albert Mohler for an article posted online Jan. 27, 2020, and reviewed his candidacy in an Oct. 23, 2020 article. Both Mohler articles are accessible at TEXAN online. The May print edition of the TEXAN will include an interview of the fourth announced SBC presidential candidate, Ed Litton.

VANCOUVER, Wash. Randy Adams intends to underscore transparency and accountability of Southern Baptist Convention entities if elected SBC president during the June 15-16 annual meeting in Nashville.

One of four announced nominees for SBC president, Adams has been executive director/treasurer of the Northwest Baptist Convention since 2013 and is a member of the Go Church plant in Ridgefield, Wash.

Adams, online at randy-adams.org, led the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's Church Outreach Team from 2004-2013, encompassing BGCO work in evangelism and missions, church planting, leadership development, associational outreach and chaplaincy. He also served as a pastor at three churches over a 19-year period.

He was a trustee of California's Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (now Gateway Seminary) from 2002-2012, serving as chairman from 2009-2011.

Adams addressed the priorities he would set forth as SBC president in answer to questions from the Southern Baptist TEXAN.

1) Four proponents of biblical inerrancy have declared their willingness to serve as SBC president. What is distinctive about your vision for serving in this role?

The SBC has suffered the worst decade in its 175-year history of advancing the Great Commission. We must return to the path that enabled us to become the greatest missionary force in our nation's history. In 2010 the SBC left the path of local control of mission strategy and chose a centralized, top-down control of North American missions. Baptisms have since plummeted to a level

not seen since the 1930s, down more than 100,000 per year. New church starts have dropped to levels not seen in over 40 years. Our international mission force has been reduced by 2,000 missionaries. Cooperative Program (CP) mission giving has dropped by over \$60,000,000 since 2010, or \$160,000,000, considering inflation.

Renewing the effectiveness of our Great Commission advance will happen as we return to a New Testament missiology in which decisions about strategy and resources begin with the local church, supported by local associations and state conventions, with re-sourcing from the national entities. Actions in three specific areas will put us on the path to needed reform:

1) Transparency builds trust. We must have transparency in finances and performance metrics. Our SBC entities must "open the books" so that every church can know how their mission dollars are spent.

2) Accountability preserves trust. In the past several months there have been noteworthy examples of massive failure in which there has been no clear accountability. The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) joined an amicus brief on behalf of NAMB, filed in the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, in which they argued that the SBC is a "hierarchy" with the SBC serving as the "umbrella" organization over all churches, associations and conventions. This violation of Baptist polity and governing documents puts every Southern Baptist church at risk. A few months ago we learned that the former chair of Lifeway's trustees approved a compensation/transition package of more than \$1,000,000 to the outgoing president without informing the board's Executive Committee or Compensation Committee. This same trustee remains on Lifeway's board, while also having three book contracts with Lifeway in violation of SBC Bylaw 15F which forbids direct or indirect compensation to a trustee of an entity. Our churches deserve better.

3) Participation in the annual meeting of the SBC must expand to every church. This could happen as associations and state

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”

—RANDY ADAMS

conventions provide locations in which to participate in the annual meeting, or it could be done through technology. The time has come to enable all our churches to participate without the expense of traveling to a distant location for the annual meeting.

My vision is birthed from experience as one who entered the SBC family through collegiate ministry at Montana Tech in Butte, Mont. I was a petroleum engineering student, preparing for what I thought would be my life's work. That changed because of the one and only Bible-teaching Christian group on campus, the Baptist Student Union. Through BSU I learned to love God's Word and to share the gospel. I also learned the value of cooperation and the Cooperative Program (CP). I learned that Southern Baptists were committed to reaching the lost with the message of Jesus, even in places far from the South like Montana.

While pastoring in McAlester, Okla., the executive director in Oklahoma asked me to lead the state convention's evangelism and missions team. In this role I learned how cooperation works best between local churches, associations, state conventions and national SBC entities. My leadership of the Northwest Baptist Convention has furthered my understanding of how Southern Baptists can cooperate to advance the mission of God.

2) What are two of the foremost challenges facing the SBC today?

Restoring trust in the

“
RESTORING TRUST IN THE SBC MISSIONARY SYSTEM IS OUR GREATEST NEED.
”

SBC missionary system is our greatest need. In 2007, 34,322 churches contributed to missions through the Cooperative Program (CP). By 2019, that number fell to 29,064 churches, a decrease of 5,258 churches, and 40 percent of SBC churches did not contribute to CP missions in 2019. Moreover, the budget percentage of CP per church fell from 6.20 percent to 4.82 percent in just one decade.

The second challenge is that of returning to true collaborative and cooperative partnership between NAMB, state conventions, local associations and local churches. NAMB has greatly reduced their work in the South and nearly eradicated partnership with state conventions and associations outside the South. Despite claims that centralization of church planting would increase mission effectiveness, the opposite has happened, even as NAMB's church planting budget has grown to \$75,000,000, an increase of over \$50,000,000 in less than 10 years,

3) Has the COVID pandemic amplified or accelerated these challenges?

The COVID pandemic has made everything more difficult. For one thing, the inability to meet together in conferences, training events, and even gathering for fellowship, has placed a strain on relationships. While we are seeing a decline in baptisms and other Great Commission metrics due to COVID, we are learning that our people are biblical stewards, not merely religious consumers. Giving to our churches has not suffered during the pandemic as much as many feared.

4) How would you hope to use the SBC president's influence/bully pulpit to impact these major challenges?

Restoring trust in the SBC missions system requires more than anecdotes. You must look at the broader picture and the trends. Too often this information is not provided because in a period of decline leaders often fail to reveal the brutal facts. After a decade of decline we must ask and answer the all-important question, "Why?"

I will also call for an end to the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) by our SBC entities, and for most of those currently silenced by NDAs to be released from them. They are used too often to prevent exposing what might be deemed

"whistleblower" information. Integrity does not fear Southern Baptists having a right to know the truth.

5) What would you say to those, particularly Black pastors, who are considering leaving the SBC because of discouragement over racial tension?

Racial tension in our nation affects every community and each institution in which there is diversity, including the church. The SBC is a large convention of churches, with great linguistic and ethnic diversity, more than any other network of churches. Nearly a third of the churches in the Northwest Baptist Convention, which I serve, worship in a language other than English. I am frequently in Korean, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese language churches, among others. The beauty of the SBC is not simply our diversity, but that our diverse network of churches unites for making disciples of Jesus Christ among all the peoples and languages of the world. Southern Baptists find unity in our theological convictions, as outlined in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, and in our common mission commitment to the sending of missionaries, the education of pastors and missionaries and the evangelization of our nation.

One final point is that the source of much of the racial tension in the SBC is a lack of relationship to formulate ways to approach the issues and build respect for each other. This is not the sole source of tension, but it is a major source, from what African-American pastors have told me. We need to talk together, plan together and pray together.

6) Why should any pastor or church remain with the SBC, or join it—what is good and strong about our convention right now?

When someone surrenders to ministry and missions in your church, you have a network of schools and seminaries for training, a network of churches in which to serve, and mission capabilities that are unmatched. With all our troubles, and they are substantial, Southern Baptists still train more leaders, start more churches and send more missionaries than any other ministry network. We are a people who strive to obey the Scriptures, which we hold to be inerrant and completely sufficient for faith and practice. ✠

Evangelistic revivals among Mike Stone SBC priorities

By Art Toalston
TEXAN Correspondent

Editor's note: The May print edition of the TEXAN will include an interview of the fourth announced SBC presidential candidate, Ed Litton.

BLACKSHEAR, Ga. Mike Stone envisions evangelism, the sufficiency of Scripture and broadened involvement in the Southern Baptist Convention if he is elected as SBC president during the June 15-16 annual meeting in Nashville.

One of four announced nominees for SBC president, Stone served as chairman of the SBC Executive Committee from 2018-2020. He has served at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Ga., since 1996 and was elected as pastor in 2002.



Stone was president of the Georgia Baptist Convention from 2017-2018, having earlier served as chairman of the Georgia convention's Executive Committee. Online at www.pastormikestone.com, he also is a member of the steering council of the Conservative Baptist Network formed in February 2020.

Stone addressed the priorities he would set forth as SBC president in answer to questions from the Southern Baptist TEXAN.

1) Four proponents of biblical inerrancy have declared their willingness to serve as SBC president. What is distinctive about your vision for this role?

I am an evangelistic pastor and an expository preacher who has just finished preaching verse-by-verse through my 34th book of the Bible. I have been actively involved in every aspect of SBC life from my local association to the chair of the SBC Executive Committee. My threefold vision is born out of ministry in my local church.

First, I want to call our churches to an evangelistic emphasis. Our baptismal numbers are the lowest since before World War II. Evangelism must become, once again, our top priority. I will challenge our churches to two separate wave revivals. We should pick two eight-week periods and call on every congregation to have an evangelistic event.

The plan would be easily customizable to fit the schedule and methodology of participating churches. Two separate periods would allow for a "Host One, Help One" emphasis. Established churches can assist church plants. Stronger churches can assist those in need of revitalization. Larger conventions can partner with smaller conventions. I envision teams traveling across the state, region and nation to help our sister churches.

Second, I will champion the sufficiency of Scripture. Nearly every Southern Baptist pastor affirms this but we need an honest conversation about flawed ideologies entering the SBC bloodstream. The sufficiency of Scripture means that any believer of any ethnicity,

living in any time and any place, with any experiences or none of those experiences, can open the Bible and get an accurate word from God. We have many challenges but the Bible is sufficient to address them all, such as our lack of agreement over Resolution 9 and the seminary presidents' response as well as "The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel" (which I affirm) and the "Justice, Repentance, and the SBC" statement. We do not need Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality or some identity-based approach to hermeneutics. My rejection of these approaches is because I care deeply about ethnic reconciliation. I think these approaches lead to greater division and not unity.

Third, I want to encourage greater involvement in the SBC. The convention has become too top-down in its leadership. Powerful national entities and high-profile figures seem to make the majority of decisions. I believe there is a conflict of interest in denominational employees or their spouses serving as SBC president. I am an "organizational insider but a relational outsider." Georgia is one of our largest state conventions. I served as its president (2017-2018) and chairman of its Executive Committee (2015-2017). I am the immediate past chairman of the SBC Executive Committee. Yet I have never been part of the "who's who" of the SBC. I will soon celebrate my 25th anniversary at Emmanuel. We are in a very small town in a rural part of the state. Yet the Lord has planted a vibrant church here. Although Emmanuel is not a small church, it is not a megachurch. It would encourage involvement to have a more normative pastor serving as SBC president.

2) How would you hope to use the SBC president's influence/ bully pulpit to impact these challenges?

“**WITH TENS OF MILLIONS OF HISPANIC, ASIAN AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN OUR NATION, WE MUST CONTINUE TO DIVERSIFY IN MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP.**”

—MIKE STONE

The SBC was birthed on the wrong side of the slavery issue, a vile sin for which we rightly repented in 1995. We have made tremendous progress in recent decades but we have much further to go. With tens of millions of Hispanic, Asian and African Americans in our nation, we must continue to diversify in membership and leadership. Not for the sake of the SBC but for the sake of the harvest. As president, I will do what I did in Georgia. Through presidential appointments, I included Baptists from diverse backgrounds. I increased the involvement of Asian and Hispanic leaders. Georgia will soon have its first Hispanic president because of the great leaders we recruited. In June 2020, I became the first Anglo leader in the SBC to step aside to allow a non-Anglo leader to serve. Due to the cancellation of the annual meeting, a bylaw revision was needed to allow officer elections. I led that effort, making way for our first-ever African-American chairman.

The decline in the Cooperative Program is a real and present danger. CP giving has declined by tens of millions of dollars in recent years. Dr. Ronnie Floyd's address as EC president in February put a national spotlight on this. Part of his challenge in Vision 2025 is to reverse that decline. Our church has averaged just over 9 percent CP giving. That is over \$2.5 million CP dollars over my tenure. Our "Great Commission Giving" would be significantly more. That would be the highest percentage of any SBC president since 2006 and one of the highest since the Conservative Resurgence.

The challenges we face in entity accountability are real. We have many examples of boards that seem to operate in the interests of the entity heads or the trustees themselves and not the interests of the entity and the SBC. We have had trustees receive direct/indirect financial benefit from the entity in apparent violation of SBC bylaws. Sponsored church plants have not all adhered to the Baptist Faith and Message. One entity was left in financial distress while its CEO departed with a seven-figure agreement. Too many of our boards are filled by close friends and supporters of the entity heads. That does not foster accountability. I am not accusing anyone of personal wrongdoing. I am saying the trustee system

needs immediate attention. As president, I would begin by appointing a Committee on Committees that shares these concerns. Through the trustee election process, we can immediately and graciously begin addressing this in a healthy but intentional way.

3) Has the COVID pandemic amplified or accelerated these challenges?

The biggest impact was the cancellation of the 2020 annual meeting. Major concerns are on hold because they can only be addressed at the annual meeting. The discussion of Critical Race Theory is one example. I would like to see us reverse the statement made in Birmingham. Others desire a reaffirmation of Resolution 9. In either case, that matter cannot be resolved until the annual meeting.

4) What would you say to those, particularly Black pastors, who are considering leaving the SBC because of discouragement over racial tensions?

I would say the same things I would say to any pastor considering leaving for any other reason. The SBC is a diverse group of imperfect people serving a perfect Lord. We are a biblically-based, gospel-centered, missions-focused convention of churches that desires to reach people. The SBC is a family. And sometimes family can be messy, crazy and even hurtful. But the family needs to stay together to accomplish our common goal. Our unified mission to take the gospel to the world must be stronger than the tensions that would seek to divide us.

5) Why should any pastor or church remain with the SBC, or join it—what is good and strong about our convention right now?

With the blessing of the Cooperative Program, our seminaries and our mission entities, the SBC is the greatest collective tool to propel the gospel to the ends of the earth. Every Baptist body will have its unique challenges. But the SBC is, with all of its warts and flaws, overwhelmingly committed to working together in gospel ministry. One of the most important things we will do this June is affirm Vision 2025. It is a bold plan to take the gospel to every town, every city, every state and every nation throughout the world. That's the mission that God is on. And I want to be a part of that effort. ✝

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS OF TEXAS CONVENTION

2021 Exhibit Qualification Requirements

Approved exhibitors at the SBTC Annual Meeting include (subject to available space) SBTC ministries, SBC agencies, SBTC ministry relationships (under the oversight of the Ministry Relationships Committee of the Executive Board), Baptist associational ministries and any host church. All other entities desiring booth space must submit their requests in writing to Joe Davis at the SBTC, prior to July 1, 2021.

Entities or individuals may share exhibit space with approved exhibitors only with the approval of the Committee on Order of Business. For-profit entities that have no formal relationship with the SBTC shall not be granted exhibit space.

All exhibit material must be in agreement with the SBTC Constitution and Bylaws, which includes the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

Fundraising or sales that do not conflict with SBTC priorities will be allowed in the exhibit area.

IMB's Nehemiah Teams launches new gap-year program

By Caroline Anderson
IMB Writer

Taking a gap year is an appealing option for many recent graduates, and studies show growing numbers of students are choosing to pursue other interests before starting college. Significant influences in students taking gap years include the desire to travel, experience new cultures, take a break from school, gain life experience and volunteer.

The International Mission Board's Nehemiah Teams program is providing an opportunity for students to take a gap year to serve on the mission field.

Nehemiah Teams offers summer missions opportunities for students to serve among unreached people groups, and this fall a new initiative called NT365, an IMB gap year, will be launched for high school and college graduates, ages 18 to 23.

NT365 is designed to help students discover God's purpose for their lives and discern their role in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Jess and Wendy Jennings founded Nehemiah Teams in 2004 while they were living in Southeast Asia. They are now the student strategists for the Southeast Asian peoples region.

As part of this new IMB gap year, students will attend Advance Operations Training (AOT) which is designed to disciple, develop

and commission students to serve. The Jennings have been conducting this three-month training in the Philippines since 2012. Through the training, Jess and Wendy have trained 72 young adults: 65 Filipinos, one Indonesian, three Nepalese and three U.S. Americans.

NT365 will also involve the existing Hands On program. Hands On provides an opportunity for students and young adults to serve overseas for a semester.

Students will serve in Southeast Asia in as many as four countries. Students will begin by attending the Advance Operations Training in the Philippines for three months. The students will join young adults from other Southeast Asian countries. At this training, the students will serve with their cohort in two deployments in two different countries for four to six weeks.

Jess said the spring NT365 participants will fulfill a Hands On job request in a fourth country.

During the first three months, young adults will be involved in church planting in villages close to the training site, Jess explained. For the two short-term mission assignments and Hands On assignment, students will fill a specific request made by IMB personnel. Jess said this aids IMB workers as they move toward reaching their people groups with the gospel.

"As a church planter and long-term missionary, our number one goal for this IMB gap year is that students will fit into the field strategies of the company (IMB) personnel requesting them," Jess said. "Nehemiah Teams is very intentional in meeting field needs to impact the unreached."

Jess said Nehemiah Teams also places a strong emphasis on investing in young adults.

"We are intentional in helping students grow in their walk with the Lord, become world Christians and then moving them to obey the Great Commission for life," Jess said.

NT365 provides extended opportunities to extend Christ's witness.

"What excites us the most can be summed up in one word: MORE," Jess said.

Jess said he is excited about more options for students, more time to spend with the students, and more impact in and through the lives of the students.

George Siler, the student team manager in the IMB's mobilization department, spoke to the value of the program.

"Many young people are questioning the traditional path of pursuing higher education right after high school, especially when they have uncertainty about all the career choices, the cost, and the results," Siler said. "This IMB gap year puts to-

“
WE ARE INTENTIONAL IN HELPING STUDENTS GROW IN THEIR WALK WITH THE LORD, BECOME WORLD CHRISTIANS AND THEN MOVING THEM TO OBEY THE GREAT COMMISSION FOR LIFE.
”

JESS JENNINGS, NEHEMIAH TEAMS

gether the elements of mission service, cross-cultural experience and Christian education in a surprisingly affordable package. This is a gap year that is a great investment of your life, not a postponement."

Jody Dean, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor, said NOBTS and Leavell College are partnering with Nehemiah Teams to offer course credit through the school's mentoring program and involvement in NT365. Students at Leavell College can earn 18 credit hours, and students at NOBTS can earn 22 credit hours. While credits are offered through these schools, the NT365 program is not exclusive to students of these schools.

Sandy Vandercook, professor of English and education and associate dean at Leavell College, said NT365 provides an excellent opportunity for students who may not be ready to immediately move from high school to college.

"They may not yet know what they want to study,

nor may they have a direction for their careers. A gap year can provide invaluable experience related to skills of living in general, particularly since they will not be living at home," Vandercook said.

Vandercook served in the IMB's two-year journeyman program in Brazil from 1988 to 1990.

"There's something about making hard decisions, taking care of the 'little' things that someone else may have done for them, making their faith their own and doing their initial college education in a non-traditional format that 'grows' a person," Vandercook said. "Even though some of these skills and attitudes are not academic or cognitive necessarily, such 'adulting' can help students with readiness for a more traditional learning experience when the gap year has been completed."

Tentative dates for NT365 are Aug. 28, 2021 through July 30, 2022. Students should apply by June 15, 2021. ❖

South Asia contains one-third of all Muslims worldwide

By International Mission Board

"He go heaven?"

"He go heaven?" the auntie asked as the body of her husband was being placed in the back of the hearse. Having recently moved in and not knowing "Uncle," your IMB missionary responded, "I don't know, Auntie. I only know that Jesus came so that we could go to heaven." Those words began an ongoing gospel conversation that continues to this day.

All across the world, your IMB missionaries are taking the gospel to hard places. Lost are being saved. New believers are being baptized and discipled. Churches are being planted. National brothers and sisters are being equipped and are joining in the harvest efforts.

Recently, your IMB missionaries in South Asia trained a group in how to engage and make disciples of the Muslim majority peoples in their town. With one out of every three Mus-

lims on the globe found in South Asia, it is imperative that the church be equipped to reach them. Afterward the training, a local brother from the event shared the gospel for the first time in his life. A young woman overcame her fear and boldly declared her faith. Another, who thought one could never share with Muslims, proclaimed the gospel to a teacher at a mosque. As a result of this effort and others like it, believers are being emboldened to share their faith with even the most difficult and resistant of peoples.

We praise God for how he is moving in South Asia! And we thank you, Texas Southern Baptists, for being a part of that! Thank you for your faithfulness to boldly approach the throne on behalf of the nations. Thank you for the sacrificial spirit with which you give to the Cooperative Program and to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Thank you for coming alongside us on

short-term trips, laboring with us for the sake of our King. And thank you for sending long-term workers who have made South Asia their home, who have chosen to forsake the comforts of this world to "bring good news to the poor" (Isaiah 61:1).

God is doing great things, and yet there is still so much more to be done. While South Asia is home to over 1.7 billion people today, that number is steadily increasing, looking to rise to two billion by 2028. There are 1,000 distinct people groups with no known believers, no church, and no gospel ministry among them. Every day over 32,000 people die apart from Christ. Sadly, with these vast numbers of lostness, South Asia is lagging behind regarding the receiving of missionaries as compared to other regions of the world.

These are harsh realities Southern Baptist Texans can help change. How?

• You can pray even more fervently! We have a goal



of seeing 500,000 intercessors committed to praying for the work in South Asia. Would you be one of those? You can download the prayASAP app right now at prayasap.org and commit to pray daily. You can pass that link on to others in your family, church, small group—with anyone who will pray.

• You can continue to give

sacrificially! While Lottie Moon "season" may be over, gifts to the LMCO can be given throughout the year. There are also many special projects specifically geared towards reaching South Asians. See imb.org/lot-tiemoon and imb.org/give/projects/?search=South%20Asia.

• You can go.

• You can send! Your church can become a sending pipeline and see laborers enter the harvest in South Asia.

If you are burdened for the work in South Asia, or if you would like more information about how to be involved through any of the ways mentioned above, please contact Michael Cloer, pastor emeritus of Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC. Cloer can be reached at 252-567-6800 or mcloer@englewoodbaptist.com. Or, you may contact one of your Texas IMB trustees, Carolina Pfeiffer, at 281-705-5225 or cpfeiffer@msnpath.com. ❖

SBTC DR responds to record freeze



SBTC DR volunteer Mike Klassen from FBC Melissa helps clean out soggy insulation from a local home. The ceiling collapsed after pipes burst following record freezing temperatures. PHOTO BY TERRY JAMES



ETBU students were grateful for the 19,200 bottles of water provided by Missouri DR and the WMU working with the SBTC. A phone call from SBTC pastor and DR volunteer Clay Jones alerted SBTC DR to the need. PHOTO SUBMITTED

By Jane Rodgers
Managing Editor

MARSHALL & FRUITVALE

What do you do with 1,100 residential college students stranded on campus without water? This unwelcome problem confronted East Texas Baptist University President Blair Blackburn, faculty and staff in the wake of Winter Storm Uri, which left the university high and dry for days in February till water came from unexpected sources.

"We were down to one spigot," Blackburn told the TEXAN. Some students had left but most stayed on campus, unable to leave because of road conditions, limited gasoline supply and the fact that the situation at home was worse than what they faced at school. The campus never lost power and experienced only a brief internet outage, but the city water supply failed. Staff and students filled bathtubs of snow to melt and buckets of water till the last spigot faltered. The college was without city water for more than seven days. Even after water was finally restored, the campus remained under a boil water notice till Feb. 26.

"We cried out to God for provision and the wisdom to solve the water crisis," Blackburn said. University staff also drove to area stores to secure as much water as possible. But supply was low.

A call from Clay Jones, missions minister at Beaumont's Calvary Baptist Church, to Scottie Stice, SBTC DR director, started things rolling. Jones, whose daughters attend ETBU, told Stice of the university's plight. Stice contacted Ryan Erwin, ETBU vice president for student engagement to offer the convention's assistance.

"It all came together in about an hour and a half," Stice said of the relief effort which involved a series of phone calls and emails, beginning with Jones' call. Gaylon Moss, Missouri Baptist DR director, contacted Stice with offers of bottled

water and other assistance. Meanwhile, Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of the national Woman's Missionary Union, had emailed Jim Richards, SBTC executive director, to offer help for Texas. Richards connected her to Stice, who coordinated contact between Missouri DR and the WMU.

Gospel cooperation

Bolstered by extra funds from Missouri Baptist churches and the promise of assistance from the WMU, Moss directed Missouri Baptist DR to transport 10 pallets of bottled water to ETBU, 19 pallets to the Diboll, Texas fire department for distribution in Angelina and surrounding counties, and 10 pallets to the Fannin Baptist association for the Bonham area.

"We're grateful to our partners Missouri Baptist churches and the WMU for their generous donations to help with this Texas weather relief," Moss said.

"When people in Texas are suffering with lack of clean drinking water, of course WMU would want to help. It is our privilege to partner with Missouri Baptists and the SBTC to provide resources through a Pure Water, Pure Love grant. Our hope is people will gain access to physical water to keep them healthy, but also the living water leading to faith in Christ," Wisdom-Martin told the TEXAN.

SBTC Executive Director Richards said, "I am thankful to the national WMU for the provision of water made through SBTC Disaster Relief in conjunction with Missouri Baptist DR and Missouri churches in the recent weather event. We are blessed by such gospel cooperation to serve people in the name of Jesus."

The water could not have come at a better time for ETBU. The shipment of 3,000 bottles from Texas Baptist Men which had arrived on campus Feb. 19 was long gone by the time the Missouri DR transport rolled in on Feb. 22 with 19,200 bottles.



SBTC DR volunteers prepared more than 1,500 breakfasts and lunches for the students, faculty and staff of Fruitvale ISD in early March after burst pipes flooded the campus food preparation and eating areas. Here youngsters line up for a meal. PHOTO BY CONNIE ROARK

"We prayed together as a Tiger family for God to send us water. And that he did," Blackburn said. "These bottles of water during our crisis were an answer to prayer. ... While I regretted what we were experiencing during ETBU's loss of city water service, the result was our students' seeing God's provision through our fellow Baptists, who saw our need and came to our aid."

Blackburn expressed gratitude for the DR effort, saying it "shows the incredible partnership that Baptists have when they work together." He added, "This is kingdom work. What we do as Baptists helping one another in need. We're grateful," he said, adding a special thanks to Missouri DR and churches, the WMU, TBM and the SBTC.

SBTC DR at work in unusual crisis

ETBU's dilemma, shared by millions of Texans, occurred as Uri swept through the U.S. from Feb. 12-16, bringing snow and damaging ice from coast-to-coast, smashing snowfall records in Texas and leaving millions in the Lone Star State without power or water. The record stretch of sub-freezing weather continued days after the storm's end. Frozen pipes forced Texans to use snow melt

to flush toilets. Even as the thaw began, millions had to boil water before using it for eating or drinking or brushing teeth. Grocery store shelves emptied as weather conditions slowed transport. Even the thaw brought problems as burst pipes flooded homes, leaving residents without potable water.

The comprehensive nature of the calamity, which affected all parts of Texas, made traditional disaster relief efforts challenging.

Stice said that SBTC DR shower and laundry units scheduled to deploy to the ETBU campus were unable to do so since the city water pressure was too low. Instead, the university shuttled students to and from area hotels for showers.

Still, traditional DR work occurred.

An SBTC DR QRU quick response food truck from North Texas manned by volunteers from FBC The Colony served first responders in McKinney during a 24-hour-deployment that ended Feb. 18.

Shower units were set up at the fire station in Mountain Home and two shower/laundry units deployed to Jacksonville College to provide services to students.

Recovery units from FBC Melissa and FBC Pflugerville assisted survivors in their areas. Many churches opened their facilities as

warming stations during the crisis, Stice said.

Serving kids and staff at Fruitvale ISD

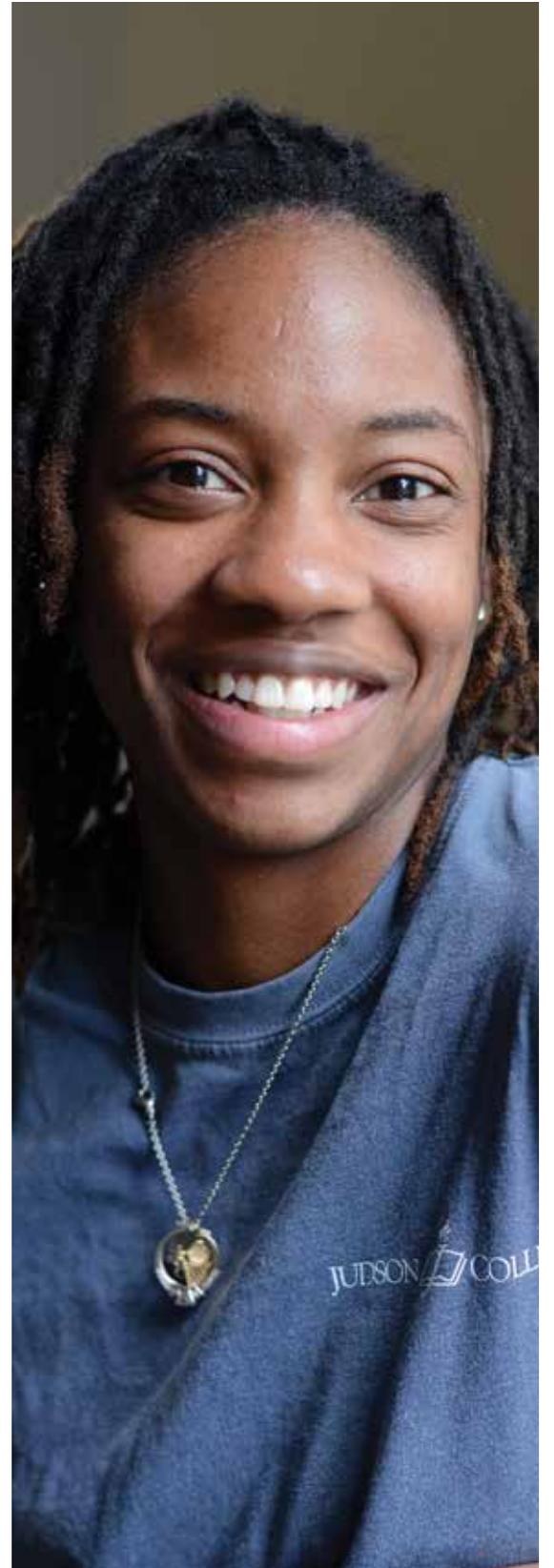
A call from the Texas Department of Emergency Management to Stice sent two QRU mobile kitchens to prepare meals for some 400 students, faculty and staff at rural Fruitvale ISD on March 4-5.

A large two-story facility in Van Zandt county houses elementary, middle and high school campuses. Following the winter freeze, pipes burst, flooding lower levels, including the cafeteria and dining areas.

DR volunteers Fredye Quain of Athens, Freddie Dikes of Abilene, and Ronnie and Connie Roark from San Antonio, assisted by Fruitvale cafeteria staff, prepared 1,547 meals over two days, serving 375-400 at breakfast and lunch. After those two days, a Salvation Army kitchen set up operations to serve the students until their cafeteria reopens.

"We stood in the gap between the initial need and when the Salvation Army could come online," Stice said, adding that SBTC DR was pleased to be able to minister to the Fruitvale community.

SBTC DR training is also ongoing, both online and in-person classes. Visit sbtexas.com/dr for details. 📧



What does the woman who opened the **WMU Training School** have in common with three executive directors of **state WMU organizations**?

What do they have in common with **14 of the first 40 Protestant missionaries to China**, or the **first and 100th Baptist missionaries to Japan**?

What do they have in common with a college student who spends her summer breaks **investing in missions efforts** in Alaska, or a woman **supporting her Christian brothers and sisters** in Myanmar?

These women, though separated by centuries and continents, earned an education and discerned a vocational calling at **Judson College** in Marion, Alabama.

Equipping women to make an impact for **God's Kingdom** in their communities and the world – no matter their vocation – has been the mission of Judson College **since 1838**.

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