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CHURCHES ACTIVELY PROMOTE ADOPTION AND FOSTERING

EDITOR'S NOTE: JAN. 17 IS SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

By Karen L. Willoughby | TEXAN Correspondent

Southern Baptist churches in Texas are reflecting the gospel by serving kids and families in the areas of foster care and adoption, where the needs are great.

Even before the pandemic, the nation's foster system was strained. In January 2019 there were 29,927 children in foster care in Texas, and 3,378 children waiting for adoptive families. According to Adoption, Inc., more than 60 percent of those available for adoption nationwide spend two to five years

in the foster care system.

Lakepointe Church in Rockwall, Fielder Church in Arlington and Houston's First Baptist Church see the tragedy of children who hurt, and their families—biological or adoptive—as desperately in need of God's unconditional love.

"We have a heart to love on all sides of what happens in foster care and adoption," said Kasi Pruitt, director of Lakepointe's foster care and adoption ministry. "No matter how you enter [the situation] there's brokenness involved. We want to be a light in the darkness and bring God glory in the midst of some really hard situations."

See ADOPTION, 7

ADOPTION BY THE NUMBERS

29,927 children
IN FOSTER CARE IN TEXAS

3,378 children
WAITING FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

60 percent
OF THOSE AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION
NATIONWIDE SPEND TWO TO FIVE
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—FROM ADOPTION, INC., JANUARY 2019

Empower: equipping believers to 'share the gospel as never before'



By Rob Collingsworth | TEXAN Correspondent

IRVING Although next month's Empower conference is still slated to move forward as an in-person event on Feb. 22-23 in Irving, much of the conference will also be available online, an unsurprising development in an increasingly virtual world thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

See EMPOWER, 5

"I'D ENCOURAGE ANY PASTOR, ANY MINISTRY LEADER TO BE THERE. ... THE LINEUP IS TOP-NOTCH—NOT JUST BIG PLATFORM NAMES, BUT PASTORS AND MINISTERS WHO ARE IN THE DAILY GRIND."

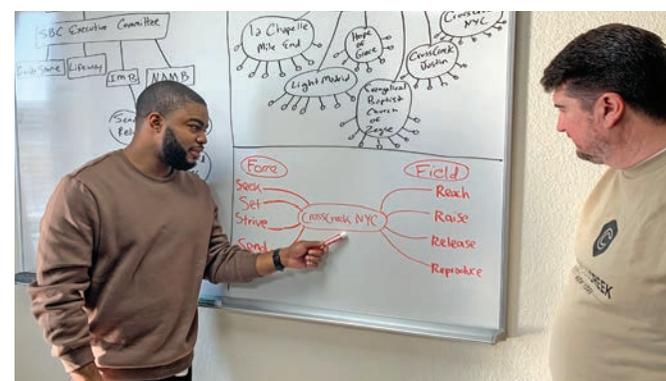
RYAN FONTENOT, SBTC EVANGELISM STRATEGIST

Multiracial New York church plant aims to 'redefine church,' change city, through discipleship

by Rob Collingsworth | TEXAN Correspondent

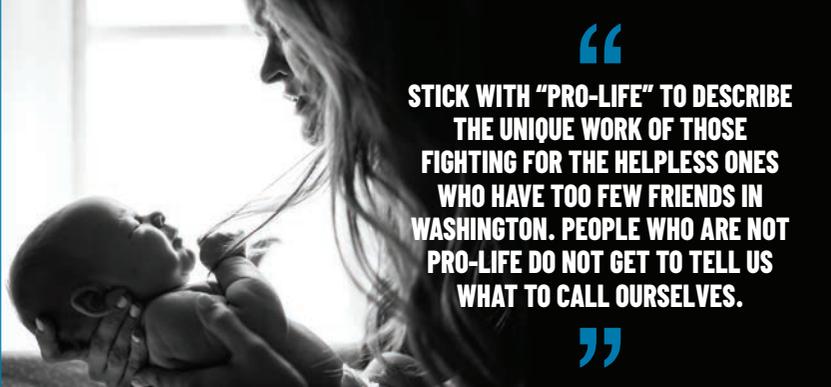
NEW YORK When Cross Creek New York City launches this fall, it will be following a blueprint that has already proved successful for First Baptist Church Colleyville. After planting five churches in the last two years, missions pastor Chad Vandiver says he believes the Hamilton Heights plant can transform not only the city, but the world.

See NEW YORK, 6



Charles Wolford, lead pastor of Cross Creek New York City, and Chad Vandiver, missions pastor at FBC Colleyville, strategize together as they look at the partnerships that have coalesced to make the NYC church plant possible. PHOTO BY ROB COLLINGSWORTH

Is being 'pro-life' pro-life enough?



“STICK WITH ‘PRO-LIFE’ TO DESCRIBE THE UNIQUE WORK OF THOSE FIGHTING FOR THE HELPLESS ONES WHO HAVE TOO FEW FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON. PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT PRO-LIFE DO NOT GET TO TELL US WHAT TO CALL OURSELVES.”

This discussion is not new but the call to make “pro-life” a term that encompasses nearly every compassionate cause has gained ground as a new generation reaches voting age.

A columnist at Religion News Service recently, the day before the election, called for the pro-life label to be “rescued” from those who believe abortion is the killing of a human person. Jonathan Merritt’s column was the same old stuff about how anti-abortionists are hypocrites who care too little about the already born, and he seemed to be primarily worried that evangelicals might vote differently from him. We’ve faced the accusation of hypocrisy for decades from those who never knew us. Wherever it turns up, the list of things lacking from the convictions of pro-lifers sounds a lot like a party platform, a pro-abortion one.

But some who are actually against abortion on demand also support broadening the term to include everything from criminal justice reform to immigration reform to fighting climate change. Let me make two arguments against redefining a term its detractors seem to think is no more than brilliant marketing by hypocrites.

First, those who want to make “pro-life” mean “everything compassionate” do harm to the term without helping anyone. If a term works for the anti-abortion movement, it doesn’t mean that it will improve the priority of everything else you shove under it. It’s like other identities or slogans: it begins with a specific meaning. Making it mean everything will make it mean nothing. In some cases, making it mean nothing is the agenda.

Here’s an example of how this dissipation of meaning works. “Evangelical” at one point had a specific meaning, intended to distinguish those who believe in salvation by grace and the inerrancy of Scripture from increasingly liberal Protestants. Now, used popularly in the press, it means any Christian who is not a Catholic. Universalists call themselves evangelical in some cases, as do those who doubt the truth of the Bible, as do open theists (who believe God is limited in knowledge and power). There was no reason to coin a term if it would include unorthodox Christians alongside biblical ones. We already had that. The need was to identify one group as

different from another. Now, to refer to yourself as “evangelical” requires a lengthy explanation.

My second argument has to do with message. Pro-lifers have been saying from the start that we believe a nation that legalizes and funds abortion for any reason and at any stage lacks a commitment to life. When we say we are pro-life, we are saying the nation is not. Legal abortion on demand is the most egregious reason we believe this to be true. Our nation is wrong-headed about other things, but this one is most terrible in our generation. You can’t say that about every cause you consider life-affirming; only one thing can be number one.

Our nation spends billions on health care for the poor and food for the hungry. We corporately decry our racist history. We don’t generally agree about environmentalism, but we also have a truckload of regulations about clean water and air quality. Regarding these issues, you can always make the argument that we don’t do enough, quickly enough, but you can’t argue that we, as a political body or culture, do nothing. These causes have advocates among the powerful and the support of more law than you can lift.

Abortion is as different from hunger as homicide is from neglect. We should not do anything to muddle that distinction.

So long as we, as taxpayers, fund the nation’s number one abortion provider, abortion is not just another life-related issue. So long as some politicians, for fear of the abortion lobby, deny medical treatment to a child born alive accidentally during an abortion, we are not a pro-life nation, regardless of how generally compassionate we are. This is an evil thing we do and praise rather than a good thing we do inadequately—a sin of commission, not of omission.

I’d add in closing that the accusation that pro-lifers neglect the already born—orphans and single moms, the poor and the elderly, the hungry, and those suffering from natural disasters—is puzzling. Where this work is done, you can’t turn around without running into a Bible-spouting, pro-life Christian. Maybe we don’t do enough, but saying we care only about the unborn is slander. Pro-lifers work on important issues as well as on the ultimate one.

Stick with “pro-life” to describe the unique work of those fighting for the helpless ones who have too few friends in Washington. People who are not pro-life do not get to tell us what to call ourselves. ✝

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January 17 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday



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What's Next?

sbtxan.com/events



January

06 SBTC Chapel Grapevine	26 Tax Seminar Online (10am - 2pm)
14 Tax Seminar Online (10am - 2pm)	27 Tax Seminar Online (6 - 9pm)
20 Tax Seminar Online (10am - 2pm)	28 RevTalks Live Faith Memorial BC, Houston
21 RevTalks Live SBTC, Grapevine	28 Today's Interim Pastor San Antonio
26 Pastor Mentor Initiative San Antonio	All in person events subject to change based on COVID conditions.

February

03 SBTC Chapel Grapevine	22 Church Health and Leadership Dinner Empower Conference
04 RevTalks Online, Zoom	22 Young Pastors Dinner Empower Conference
19-20 Apoderados, Cross City Church, Euless	22-23 EMPOWER CONFERENCE Irving Conv. Center, Las Colinas
22 New SBTC Pastor Orientation Empower Conference	28 Disaster Relief Phase 1 FBC Pflugerville
For more details on SBTC events visit sbtxan.com/events	For a full calendar, use your phone's camera to scan our QR code. →



China and Iran are world's worst violators of religious liberty, Pew report says

China and Iran were the most restrictive nations in the world toward religion in 2018, followed by Malaysia, the Maldives and Tajikistan, according to a new Pew Research Center report.

Pew's Government Restrictions Index, released in November, found that worldwide government restrictions on religion reached an all-time high in 2018 according to Pew's index, which was launched in

2007 and is based on 20 indicators. "The increase in government restrictions reflects a wide variety of events around the world, including a rise from 2017 to 2018 in the number of governments using force—such as detentions and physical abuse—to coerce religious groups," a Pew analysis said.

Pew listed 56 countries with "high or very high" levels of government restrictions, including 25 in the Asia-Pacific region and 18 in the Middle East-North Africa region. China is the world's worst violator of religious liberty, according to the report.

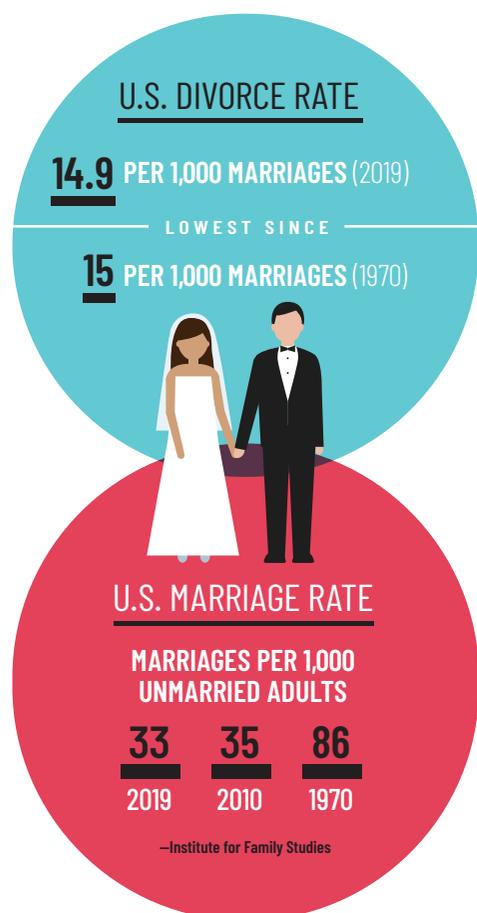
"The Chinese government restricts religion in a variety of ways,

including banning entire religious groups (such as the Falun Gong movement and several Christian groups), prohibiting certain religious practices, raiding places of worship and detaining and torturing individuals," Pew said in its analysis. "In 2018, the government continued a detention campaign against Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs and other Muslims in Xinjiang province, holding at least 800,000 (and possibly up to 2 million) in detention facilities 'designed to erase religious and ethnic identities,' according to the U.S. State Department."

—PEW RESEARCH CENTER



U.S. divorce rate hits 50-year low, new census data shows



The divorce rate in the United States hit a 50-year low in 2019, according to new census data that also shows the nation's marriage rate hit a record low.

For every 1,000 marriages in 2019, only 14.9 ended in divorce. It's the lowest figure since 1970, when roughly 15 marriages per 1,000 ended in divorce, according to Wendy Wang of the Institute for Family Studies.

"This is great news for Americans who are married," Wang wrote in an online analysis. "It means that their marriages will likely be more stable, and their children will be more likely to grow up with two married parents, which provides them the best chance for success later in life."

But the same data also revealed that fewer Americans are marrying, Wang wrote.

"For every 1,000 unmarried adults in 2019, only 33 got married. This number was 35 a decade ago in 2010 and 86 in 1970," she wrote.

America is experiencing a "marriage gap" in which college-educated and middle and upper-class individuals are more likely to marry and stay married than are "working-class and poor Americans," she wrote.

"With the rates of both divorce and marriage dropping in America, we expect to see the marriage divide deepen and poor and working-class Americans increasingly disconnected from the institution of marriage," Wang wrote. "The impact of this disconnection on our family lives can be destructive, which makes it an issue that policymakers, community leaders, and scholars should continue to pay attention to."

—INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY STUDIES

Alito: religious liberty 'in danger of becoming a second-class right'

A U.S. Supreme Court justice stirred controversy in November by warning the future of religious liberty is in jeopardy in the United States.

Justice Samuel Alito, who was nominated by President George W. Bush, told members of the Federalist Society in a virtual gathering: "It pains me to say this, but in certain quarters, religious liberty is fast becoming a disfavored right." Such outspoken language is rare for a Supreme Court justice outside of the courtroom.

Alito cited several cases the high court has heard, including one involving the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Catholic order of nuns which assists the elderly poor. Under Obama administration rules, the Little Sisters would have been forced to carry health insurance covering contraceptives and abortifacients.

"The Little Sisters are women who have dedicated their lives to caring for the elderly, regardless of religion. They run homes that have won high praise," Alito said. "Despite this inspiring work, the Little Sisters have been under unrelenting attack for the better part of a decade. ... If they did not knuckle under and violate a tenet of their faith, they faced crippling fines—fines that would likely have forced them to shut down their homes."

"The question we face is whether our society will be inclusive enough to tolerate people with unpopular religious beliefs."

Justice Samuel Alito

"The current administration tried to prevent that by adopting a new rule, but the states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey—supported by 17 other states—challenged that new rule. Last spring, the Little Sisters won their most recent battle in the Supreme Court—I should add by a vote of 7 to 2. But the case was sent back to the court of appeals, and the Little Sisters' legal fight goes on and on."

Alito mentioned other cases, including one involving Jack Phillips, a Christian and a cake artist who was ordered by the state of Colorado to design cakes for same-sex couples. He eventually won in court.

Religious liberty, Alito said, "is in danger of becoming a second-class right."

"The question we face is whether our society will be inclusive enough to tolerate people with unpopular religious beliefs," he said.

—FEDERALIST SOCIETY

Major LGBT group urges Biden to help strip accreditation of Christian schools

The nation's largest LGBT activist group is urging the incoming Biden administration to change federal rules so that Christian colleges and schools can be stripped of their accreditation if they don't prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The request by the Human Rights Campaign was part of a 22-page "Blueprint for Positive Change" document listing 85 individual policy recommendations for the Biden administration.

Under current federal law, accrediting agencies are told to ensure their standards "respect the stated mission of the institution of higher education," including a school's "religious" mission.

HRC says the language "could be interpreted to require accrediting bodies to accredit religious institutions that discriminate or that do not meet science-based curricula standards."

"The Department of Education should issue a regulation clarifying that this provision ... does not

require the accreditation of religious institutions that do not meet neutral accreditation standards including nondiscrimination policies and scientific curriculum requirements," the HRC blueprint says.

Seminary president Albert Mohler says the LGBT group is promoting a major threat to religious liberty.

"In clear text, for all the world to see, the Human Rights Campaign summons the Biden administration to deny accreditation—or, at the very least, to facilitate the denial of accreditation—to Christian institutions, Christian colleges and universities, and, for that matter, any other religious institution or school that does not meet the demands of the LGBTQ orthodoxy," said Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "This would mean abandoning biblical standards for teaching, hiring, admissions, housing, and student life. It would mean that Christian schools are no longer Christian."

—HRC/THE BRIEFING PODCAST



Sony's Affirm to purchase Christian streaming service Pure Flix

One of the top studios in faith-based films is purchasing one of the leading Christian streaming services.

Affirm Entertainment, a subsidiary of Sony Pictures, said in November it had reached an agreement to purchase the PureFlix.com streaming service.

Affirm is the studio behind such faith-based titles as War Room, Overcomer and Risen. PureFlix.com currently carries God's Not Dead and God's Compass.

"Pure Flix is a natural fit with our AFFIRM brand,

which is known for its high quality, uplifting, inspirational content," said Keith Le Goy, president of networks and distribution for Sony. "We love creating and sharing stories that are both impactful and entertaining, and the Pure Flix service will enable us to do more of that every day. Pure Flix has done an amazing job building a robust community of engaged subscribers, and we look forward to continuing to grow and delight audiences with well-curated faith and family entertainment."

Pure Flix founding partner David A. R. White will join Affirm as head of outreach and special projects of the service

—AFFIRM/PURE FLIX



OUR HELP COMES FROM THE LORD!



Jim Richards
Executive Director

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Welcome to 2021! I have heard a lot of people say they would be glad when 2020 is over. The turning of a calendar does not mean that anything really changes. What we encounter may be very similar.

The coronavirus pandemic has altered our lives in unforgettable ways. We have lost precious friends and relatives. People have suffered economically. Our lives have been impacted to the point they may nev-

er return to what we call normal. A vaccine and better treatment may help but there will always be the specter of some dreaded disease beyond the horizon.

The political climate in our country is toxic. Irreparable damage to relationships and even ministries has taken place. While what kind of leaders we have matters, our concern as believers must ultimately be about the advancement of the gospel. Being the citizens of two worlds is difficult. Some are too heavenly minded to be any earthly good; others are so earthly minded that they are no heavenly good. Balance is vital.

Racial conflict has reached a fever pitch in our country. I know that some of our brothers and sisters have suffered because of the sin of racism. Even important issues in our society must be viewed through our identity as followers of Christ. Galatians 3:28 tells us we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. Our fellowship is based on him, not the color of our skin or our ethnicity. We are one in Christ.

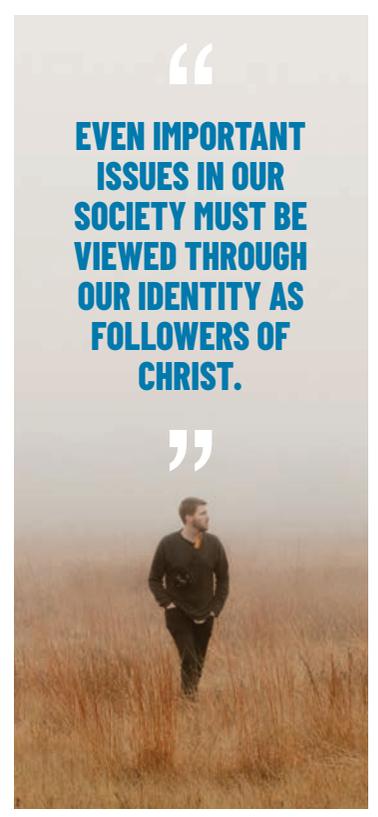
As most of you know, I am transitioning from my role as executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. Our staff has been repositioned to serve the churches better. The SBTC is financially sound. We are looking to the future with great anticipation of God's favor. Soon my responsibility before the Lord

for leading this ministry will be over. The next leader will have challenges I cannot even imagine. With the baggage of today and the uncertainty of tomorrow, what are we to do?

There is only one answer to this question. It is found in Psalm 121. There were many other contributors to the divine song book besides David. Some scholars say that Hezekiah could have written this Psalm. Hezekiah was a good king of Judah, but he often found himself in a difficult place. Isaiah 36 tells of an army threatening to destroy Jerusalem. Hezekiah cast himself on the Lord because he knew he could not win the battle. This Psalm could be Hezekiah's tribute to God's presence in time of trouble.

The question in verse one is, "I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from?" If Hezekiah wrote this Psalm, he could have been discounting the pagan religious practices often held on high places. Assistance would not come from these. He could have been looking for the armies of Egypt to appear on the horizon to break the siege of the city. In verse two we find the Psalmist's answer, "My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

Our help will not come from creation or creature but the Creator. Help does not come from the mountains but from the One



who made them. He is the sovereign God of the universe. Our God is like no other. We look to him regardless of what year it is, or what our circumstances are. As we press on through 2021, let us stay together for Jesus' sake. Let us look to our Lord who will either deliver us from chaos or through it.

Let us look up for this could be the year Jesus comes again! Maranatha! 🙏

Evangelism 2021



Kie Bowman
SBTC President

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@KieBowman

It's no secret Southern Baptists are reaching fewer people for Christ than in previous decades. Even before the coronavirus global pandemic, we were in trouble.

Our denomination raises enormous amounts of money for missions; we train ministers in theologically conservative seminaries; we publish excellent resources, and we are surrounded by incredible Southern Baptist leaders. Some of these leaders are admired around the world. Yet something has gone wrong with the harvest. We aren't reaching enough lost people. We aren't spiritually reproducing our-

selves as often or as effectively as we should.

Our story is partially told with numbers. In the last decade we've lost more than a million people from our worship services. In the last two years, instead of slowing or reversing the negative trend, we reported the single greatest membership decline in over 100 years. The most telling statistic in that recent report—the one fact that cannot be ignored—is our overall decline in baptisms. Our most reliable metric for measuring evangelistic health has fallen to at least a 75-year low. Reversing the downward spiral of evangelistic effectiveness over time has the potential to reverse all of our negative trends.

Put simply, we Southern Baptists have to evangelize our way out of our declines. I'm not suggesting evangelism alone is the solution to our challenges, but apart from evangelism, no solution exists.

I want to recommend a few practical ways to improve our evangelistic results. There are more factors than the limited number mentioned here, but these are crucial for success.

PRAYER

Evangelism is a spiritual battle, and it is won first in the prayer room. Jesus said to pray for more laborers for the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38). Paul urged us to pray for evangelistic opportuni-

EVANGELISM IS A SPIRITUAL BATTLE, AND IT IS WON FIRST IN THE PRAYER ROOM.

ties (Colossians 4:3-4). History has repeatedly demonstrated that prayer precedes evangelistic impact. Whether it was the Great Awakening, the Prayer Revival of 1857-1858, the Shantung Revival, or a successful local church evangelistic service, every great evangelistic surge has been triggered by extraordinary prayer. As individuals and as churches, we need to develop an evangelistic, Great Commission prayer strategy. What will you do in 2021 to make a prayer strategy a reality in your context?

TRAINING

Churches that train their members to share the gospel have greater evangelistic influence than those that do not. A recent survey of Southern Baptist Convention churches in Georgia, for instance, is a tale of good news and bad news. The bad news is almost 80 percent of these churches do not offer evangelism training. The good news is that among the most

evangelistic churches in Georgia, almost 90 percent do offer evangelism training. The contrast is dramatic and the facts point to the importance of equipping the people to share the gospel.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

I agree with the frequently heard adage, "Leadership comes with a microphone." In a church, the voice most likely to be heard is that of the lead or senior pastor. His support, therefore, is essential in keeping the congregation focused on evangelism. The pastor helps create the culture of the church. If he is setting an example in personal evangelism, preaching evangelistic messages, encouraging the people to attend training, and leading the staff to stay focused on evangelism, the church will respond. While as a denomination we are reaching fewer people, there are exceptions to the trend. Leadership is a factor. The research clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of the most evangelistic SBC churches are led by intentionally evangelistic pastors who lead by example.

Churches and individual believers do not accidentally become more evangelistic. They decide to take action. In these days everything is unsettled due to the cultural disruption of COVID-19. It is therefore an excellent time to refocus our energies on reaching the lost and baptizing new believers. Now is the time to begin. 🙏



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“We’re moving forward with an in-person conference, but we will have online options no matter what,” said Shane Pruitt, who serves as the next-gen evangelism director for the North American Mission Board and is coordinating the conference on behalf of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. “We’ll have live feed of main services online, and we’re constantly coming up with strategies and ideas of how to move the whole conference online if we have to,” he added.

Monday’s events kick off with a Classics (senior adult) lunch featuring comedian Dennis Swanberg, a Missional Living lunch with pastor Matt Carter, and a Student Ministers Network meeting hosted by LifeWay student ministry specialist Zac Workun.

After lunch there will be a Classics session with Ken Hemphill, Jerry Chaddick and Ted Traylor; a ladies session featuring Latasha Morrison; a meeting for new pastors, and nine separate breakout sessions with topics ranging from “Mobilizing the Next Generation” and “Multi-Ethnic Missiology” to “Evangelism as Disciple-Making” and “Holistic Christian Mission.”

La Conferencia APODERADOS tiene algo para todos: 19 y 20 febrero 2021

Por Bruno Molina | SBTC staff

La Conferencia APODERADOS de la Convención de los Bautistas del Sur de Texas comenzará en Cross City Español, en Eules, el viernes, el 19 de febrero, de 6:30 p.m. a 8:00 p.m. precedida por una cena de pastores y esposas a las 4:30 p.m. Se anima a los asistentes a seguir los protocolos de COVID-19 para el distanciamiento social y el uso de mascarillas. Contaremos con la música de Los Hermanos González y un desafío evangelístico del pastor Randolph Marcelita titulado “Respondiendo a la oportunidad en la dificultad”.

El programa del sábado incluirá dos sesiones generales, un panel de discusión y la opción de asistir a dos de los seis talleres disponibles. Para las sesiones generales, Julio Arriola, director ejecutivo de relaciones y Movilización Hispana de la Convención de los Bautistas del Sur (SBC), presentará La Visión de la SBC

para el Pueblo Hispano y el Dr. Jorge Díaz, pastor de la Iglesia Semilla de Mostaza en El Paso, y un estrategia de plantación de iglesias de la SBTC, traerá un mensaje inspirador titulado “Evangelismo en el contexto del discipulado”.

Apoderados ofrece algo para todos. Los temas de los talleres, y los talleres, incluyen “Lecciones en el Ministerio Durante el Corona Virus” con Chuy Ávila, “Mujer: El Poder de Tu Vida y Tus Palabras” con Miriam Picot, “Vivir Libre en Cristo” con Over Ochoa, “Discipulado Virtual” con Miguel Faúndez, “El Evangelismo en La Consejería” con Edgar Trinidad, y “Discipulando a Sus Hijos” con Eric Puente. El evento es gratuito y no hay preinscripción excepto para la cena de pastores y esposas. Los detalles del programa son los siguientes.

Lugar: Cross City Español, 1000 Airport Fwy., Eules, TX 76039

APODERADOS

Viernes, 19 de febrero

- ◆ 4:30 PM -6:00 Cena con Randolph Marcelita y su esposa para animar a los pastores y esposas con un tiempo de preguntas y respuestas y oración
- ◆ 6:30 PM Bienvenida-Bruno Molina, Hermanos Gonzalez
- ◆ 6:45 PM Reconociendo la oportunidad en la dificultad con Randolph Marcelita
- ◆ 7:30 PM Preguntas y respuestas
- ◆ 7:45 PM Canciones de Júbilo-Hermanos Gonzalez
- ◆ 8:00 PM Conclusión

Sábado, 20 de febrero:

Sesiones Generales y Talleres

- ◆ 8:00 AM Registración
- ◆ 8:30 AM Bienvenida y Oración—

Bruno Molina y Humberto Gonzalez

- ◆ 8:35 AM Alabanza—Hermanos Gonzalez
- ◆ 8:55 AM Orientación (Bruno Molina)
- ◆ 9:00 AM La Visión Hispana en la SBC con Julio Arriola
- ◆ 10:00 AM Taller 1
- ◆ 11:00 AM Taller 2
- ◆ 12:00 PM Lunch
- ◆ 1:00 PM El evangelismo en el discipulado con Jorge Diaz
- ◆ 2:00 PM Panel de Discusión (Conferencistas y talleristas)
- ◆ 2:40 PM Testimonio, alabanza y desafío—Bruno Molina
- ◆ 3:00 PM Conclusión

Para más información, favor de ponerse en contacto con Bruno Molina vía correo electrónica en bmolina@sbtexas.com o vía teléfono al 817-637-8776.

“
WE’VE INTENTIONALLY SHIFTED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS SO THAT ANYBODY IN THE CHURCH WILL BE ABLE TO CONNECT: THE PASTOR, THE PERSON IN THE PEW, STAFF, VOLUNTEER LEADERS, MEN, WOMEN, ALL AGES, FROM YOUNGER PEOPLE TO SEASONED SAINTS.
 ”

SHANE PRUITT

“I think this can be one of the most impactful Empower conferences we’ve ever had,” Pruitt said. “I know so many pastors and ministry leaders who are tired and worn out. They don’t know what to do next; they’re looking for solutions and ideas,” he added. “So many of them have just said that their idea-meter is running on low and that they’re kind of sucking fumes when it comes to innovation because they’ve used up all of their ideas.”

While there was a time in the past that Empower was aimed primarily at senior pastors, Pruitt said that the conference now provides something for every demographic.

“We’ve intentionally shifted over the last few years so that anybody in the church will be able to connect: the pastor, the person in the pew, staff, volunteer leaders, men, women, all ages, from younger people to seasoned saints,” Pruitt said. “Empower is really multiple events taking place under the umbrella of the conference. It’s truly something for everyone.”

Headlining Monday evening will be Nick Vujicic, Gary Chapman and Costi Hinn. Vujicic is an Australian evangelist and speaker whose story of being born without arms or legs has given him a platform to preach the gospel all over the world.

“My prayer for Empower 2021 is that a leader, volunteer, pastor, or church member can leave and be encouraged with one idea to move forward. If they make one new friend, are encouraged by one thing, meet someone new, walk away with one idea for their context or mission field—that would be a huge win for us,” Pruitt said.

Thanks to funding from the Cooperative Program, Empower—which exists to encourage Texas Southern Baptists in their ability to be evangelistic—is offered for free.

“I’d encourage any pastor, any ministry leader to be there. It’s an absolutely free conference and the lineup is top-notch—not just big platform names, but pastors and ministers who are in the daily grind,” said Ryan Fontenot, who works as an evangelism strategist for the SBTC and will be taking over leadership of the conference moving into 2022. “We know they’ll be encouraged, equipped and empowered to share the gospel like never before.”

To register for the Empower conference and to see the full schedule for the event, visit sbtexas.com/empower.



Brian Haynes



Gary Chapman



Charlie Dates



Adam Greenway



Costi Hinn



Johnny Hunt



Latasha Morrison



Grant Skeldon



Dennis Swanberg



Nick Vujicic



OPEN CAMERA OR QR READER & SCAN CODE

“
 The conference served as a great reminder, refreshing and intensifying my awareness of the difference my ministry can make. It was good to be reminded that
IT’S NOT ONLY IMPORTANT THAT I BE WILLING TO PERSONALLY GO AND SERVE WHEN GOD CALLS, BUT THAT I NEED TO BE CHALLENGING AND ENCOURAGING THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN OUR MINISTRIES
 to constantly be considering how God may be calling them to serve.
 ”

NEW YORK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The church launch is designed to “transform the city and make people take notice. And in the Northeast U.S., you’re also redefining church for the people,” Vandiver said. “There are two kinds of churches in the Heights and Harlem and Manhattan. There’s a liturgical, academic church, and then there’s an attractional, surface church. There’s nothing in the middle. We want to redefine church by not only making disciples, but being contextualized for the city.”

According to Craig Etheredge, who has served as senior pastor at FBC Colleyville since 2007, the church spent much time praying through how to accomplish the goal of multiplication.

“About two years ago we were wrestling with questions like what do we do as a church? What does church growth look like for us?” Etheredge said.

As the church prayed about their strategy, they considered multisite as an option but eventually concluded that they were being called to church planting. The Cross Creek Network was birthed from the vision to plant churches using discipleship as the primary model for multiplication, Vandiver said.

“My experience really led me to see that the way lives are transformed is through church planting,” he added. “In dreaming about where we needed to plant churches we knew that we needed to create a church planting movement that was both national and international. Internationally, we’ve looked for cities where there’s the most lostness, where the gospel needs to go where it’s never gone before. And nationally, we did the same thing.”

According to Etheredge, Scripture ultimately guided their strategy.

“We decided to put our efforts in discipling leaders, then releasing them to do the same,” he added. “We felt convicted that was the New Testament model Jesus had in mind. That pivoted our course away from multisite and toward church planting.”

Etheredge said the church has “a disciple-making DNA where people invest in one another and replicate it,” and multisite didn’t seem like it went with that model.

“We prayed God would give us a big vision for planting churches both locally and around the world. The plan was to plant nine churches in five years and though that was pretty aggressive, over the course of the last two and a half years God has really blessed that,” he said.

When Vandiver came on staff at FBC Colleyville in 2018, he brought with him a wealth of knowledge and experience from over 15 years of working as an IMB missionary, an SBTC missions strategist, and both a Send City missionary and mobilization specialist with NAMB.

The strategy that the Cross Creek Network has employed in its first five church plants—one of which is already preparing to multiply—will benefit planting pastor Charles Wolford, III, who moved to New York in December 2020 with his wife.

A search for gospel-led racial reconciliation

Wolford’s connection to Etheredge and Vandiver came through his own pastor, Ronnie Goines, pastor of Koinonia Christian Church in Arlington. After the death of George Floyd earlier this year, Etheredge said he reached out to Goines to make a short video that would address race, the gospel and discipleship-making.

“What I thought was going to be a 10-minute video turned into an hour and 20-minute uncut discussion,” Etheredge said. “Part of what came out of that discussion was an acknowledgment that yes, it’s good to make a statement about racial reconciliation or to advocate for that, but we need to do more. We need to do something that really provides an answer to the problem instead of just crying out against it,” he said.

“We felt like church planting together was something that we could do that would advance the kingdom and make a difference and really demonstrate what racial reconciliation looks like.”

Etheredge said his connection with Goines helps make this church plant unique, that “it was born out of two pastors who have a heart to demonstrate how the gospel breaks down racial walls and really demonstrate the gospel in a powerful way.”

When they began looking for a pastor to lead the plant, Goines suggested Wolford, who grew up as the son of a pastor in Wichita, Kansas.

As Wolford told the TEXAN, it was only when he started attending Morehouse College in Atlanta that he realized he had never truly started following Jesus. When he was a sophomore he was introduced to the idea of discipleship, a concept that he says changed his life.

“It became evident that most of my life I’d adopted a routine of church rather than an authentic relationship with God,” he said. “At 18 years old I was discipled authentically for the first time and could finally understand and articulate what it meant to have a relationship with God. And from that moment on, I just felt a call from God to engage my generation and to continue to reproduce that process with my peers.”

According to Wolford, he immediately began doing college ministry on campus, which in turn led to more opportunities, especially as he transferred to Dallas Baptist University and was able to serve alongside his father at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship.

It was there that Wolford began honing his teaching gift by serving in young adult ministry and met Goines, his eventual mentor. Wolford said he’s spent the last four



Charles Wolford II and his wife, Diane, (left) stand next to their son Charles Wolford III and his wife, Jordan, who moved to New York City in preparation to plant Cross Creek NYC. They are joined at a vision night for the church plant by Nikki and Ronnie Goines, pastor of Koinonia Christian Church, and Liz and Craig Liz Etheredge (right), pastor of First Baptist Church Colleyville. PHOTO FROM CROSS CREEK



Justin Ikerionwu, a longtime friend of Wolford, with Vandiver, Wolford and MJ Clement, worship pastor at FBC Colleyville, are excited about the NYC ministry. PHOTO FROM CROSS CREEK

years at Koinonia pouring himself into discipling different generations there.

“I’ve seen so much success, particularly with implementing a discipleship program for pre-conversion and early believers, pushing them into spiritual maturity through discipleship. That’s always been my passion,” he said.

When Goines first recommended Wolford to lead Cross Creek NYC, however, Wolford said he didn’t understand why.

“I was pretty comfortable in my role at Koinonia, and it kind of took me down a path of really seeking the Lord for a call to New York that I hadn’t quite assessed yet. And it wasn’t until I actually visited New York in the midst of this pandemic and was able to meet with planters and attend church [that I saw] there was a need,” he said, “and that God had uniquely prepared me for this time to be a part of meeting that need.”

Offering answers in ‘a time of great confusion and need’

One thing Wolford and Vandiver said they are looking forward to is the opportunity to multiply within the Hamilton Heights area and more broadly within New York City. Their initial plan is to find a theater to rent for Sunday services, but eventually they hope to purchase a church multiplication cen-

ter which will function as not only office space, but also as a ground floor from which to expand into new churches.

“That’s the secret to success in this city,” Vandiver said.

And for Wolford, the timing of this church plant—in the middle of a pandemic that has disproportionately hit New York City—couldn’t be more appropriate.

“We’re going to an area in a time of great confusion and need and disparity, not only to provide the hope that only Jesus can provide, but to be sensitive to and intentional to meet the needs as we enter into that community. The heart of this church is to engage the community of New Yorkers right where they are, to meet their needs while also compelling them to live fruitful lives in Christ and reproduce the process of discipleship in other people,” Wolford said.

“I believe that the Lord is calling not only me, but all who share in the vision of planting movements of discipleship in areas that need the gospel, to New York so that we can be a part of the resurgence, the bounce back. New Yorkers are resilient, and it’s an area that attracts the brightest, most creative, most diverse communities in our nation,” Wolford said. “We need more churches that will authentically transform the lives of New Yorkers through the only way we know how biblically, which is the process of discipleship.”

Cross Creek NYC will be hosting a mission trip March 13-20 that is open to anyone who is interested in catching the vision for what the Lord will do, Vandiver said. For more information, visit firstcolleyville.com/new-york-city.





Fielder's 97: An adoption celebration at Fielder Church drew the 97 who have been adopted to the front of the worship center. PHOTO FROM THE CHURCH

ADOPTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At Fielder, Maddie Huang serves as missions associate with specific responsibility for the church's adoption and foster care ministry.

"Our over-arching vision statement is to inhale and exhale the gospel and make disciples who do the same," Huang told the TEXAN. "One way we exhale is pursuing children through adoption and foster care. It's an outward expression of living out the gospel."

Legacy 685, an adoption, foster and orphan care ministry of Houston's First Baptist Church serves Christian families in the church and in the community, said Toni Steere, the ministry's director. The ministry focuses on resourcing foster and adoptive families in the church and community.

"Our goal is to come to a place where there are more than enough resources for all these families," Steere told the TEXAN. "Many families become discouraged when fostering because of a lack of resources and support."

LAKEPOINTE

Not everyone is called to adopt or foster, but every person can help in one way or another, said Pruitt. Lakepointe's adoption/foster care—A/FC—ministry started with a dozen couples, 15 years ago, who wanted to help others like them.

Adoption and foster care is a heartbeat of Lakepointe, Pruitt said. Countless families have jumped in to serve. More and more leadership and staff are becoming adoptive or foster families, and this is flowing outward into the church body as well. The church desires to equip and support these foster and adoptive families.

Lakepointe life groups rally around the person or couple, offering emotional and physical support. The church provides counseling on an as-needed basis for adults and/or children, a monthly support group with childcare, CPR training, gift cards for families when a new child enters their home, and grants for families who are in the adoption process.

A quarterly "respite night" gives the fostering and adopting parents a three-hour break. A community-wide conference held annually since 2006 has grown to about 700 attendees.

Lakepointe also partners with local government offices by supporting caseworkers and helping birth families as they work towards reunification.

"That's what we're called to do as believers, to love them and serve them," Pruitt said. "God calls us to the hard [tasks], to sacrifice and love people. These kiddos are made in God's image. He loves them and wants them to know him. ..."

"We love the children and also are trying to love their biological families as well," Pruitt continued. "You're able to see healing happen, families restored and see God move in amazing ways. We do that out of love for God and love for people."

"Out of the overflow of what God has done for us, we in turn do that for others," Pruitt said. "God sacrificed for us; we sacrifice for others. God shows us compassion; we do that for others. God is good to us; we are good to others."

FIELDER

Jason Paredes, pastor, rolled out a 14-goal, 10-year vision in 2016 at Fielder Church, where pre-COVID about 4,000 people attended worship. One of those goals is that 1,000 children will be fostered or adopted by 2026.

"We pray a lot as church staff and ask the Lord to move in people's hearts," Huang said. "Adoption and foster care are a normal part of the culture at Fielder. It's talked about a lot from the pulpit and is in front of people a lot. We say, 'Would you put your yes on the table when it comes to bringing a child into your home?'"

To date, 97 fostered and adopted children have become part of Fielder, and 48 families are in the process to either foster or adopt, Huang said.

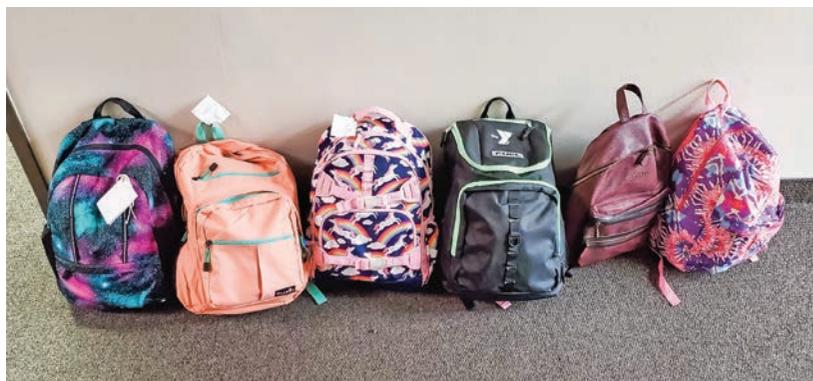
Among the church's multiple ministries for A/FC are a "First Steps Q&A" night that includes presentations by outside experts, a virtual support group, quarterly respite and family fun nights, meals for new placement families, and financial assistance to families adopting.

There's Adoption Sunday every November, Huang said. "We bring awareness to the need, celebrate families in the A/FC process, and challenge our church body, 'Would you consider adopting or fostering?'"

At least 40 of Fielder's community groups make "First Night Bags" for youngsters going to foster families—unfamiliar environments for the children who have nothing but the clothes they're wearing. The bags include age-appropriate paja-



An annual adoption and foster care conference draws 700 or more attendees who learn during presentations and from displays set up in the gymnasium at Lakepointe's Rockwall campus. PHOTO FROM THE CHURCH



Backpacks stuffed by church members with essential and comfort items for children's first nights in their new foster homes are filled with age-appropriate items such as pajamas, toothbrushes, changes of clothing, small stuffed animals.

mas, toothbrushes, small toys and more. In late fall, Christmas baskets—filled with such items as kid games, restaurant gift cards, gingerbread house kits—are distributed to agencies to give to their clients.

Fielder intentionally normalizes A/FC for the church's large Hispanic community, where adoption and foster care are culturally less common.

"We exist to lead, shepherd and equip families to exhale the gospel by relieving children through foster care and adoption," Huang said. "We do so because we're compelled by the gospel to care for orphans and other vulnerable children here in our city and around the world."

HOUSTON'S FIRST

The foster and adoption ministry Legacy 685 at Houston's First Baptist Church started in 2008 when six families who had fostered or adopted children gathered for mutual encouragement and information sharing.

The ministry derives its name from Psalm 68:5-6a, "believing firmly that it is God who forms forever

families and God who sustains these families," Steere said. "Legacy 685 speaks to the power of the redemptive and restorative legacy through adoption."

The ministry founders saw a need "to provide connection, community and funding to families compelled to move toward the miracle of adoption in compassion for the orphan," according to the church's website.

The initial plan has evolved to connecting families to families as well as financial resources; equipping families with relevant, biblical, trauma-informed resources, and sustaining foster and adoptive families on their healing journey, Steere said.

"In our area there's very little support for birth moms who are creating an adoption plan for their babies, for the 5,000 or more children across greater Houston entering the foster system who need safe places to land, as well as for the families wanting to adopt internationally," Steere explained.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Odessa pastor and wife confirm fostering is difficult but rewarding

By Karen L. Willoughby
TEXAN Correspondent

ODESSA The first foster child who came to their home was there because of the brutal death of an older sibling.

Despite that emotional distress, Del and Charmaine Traffanstedt went on to provide care for 10 foster children over a three-year period.

Del, pastor of Mission Dorado Baptist Church in Odessa, and Charmaine, agree that adoption and fostering are something every church should encourage.

The steps to becoming a foster parent? "It's hard. It's long. It's full of paperwork, meetings, home studies," Del Traffanstedt told the TEXAN. "It's a good process meant to protect the child. but it took a long time.

"What was good about it was working with Texas Baptist Home for Children [a related ministry of the SBTC]," he continued. "They have someone walk through the process with you all the time, and to counsel you and pray with you."

TBHC.org explains the

purpose of the home is "to protect the sanctity of human life and promote the preservation of the family." This includes biological, fostering and adopting families. "This purpose manifests itself in preventive, rehabilitative and specialized services to children, youth, adults and families."

The Traffanstedts' oldest biological child, Taylor, was 15 when her parents determined to open their home to care for foster children.

"It's really hard but incredibly rewarding," Traffanstedt said. "These children need help. They are the biblical definition of 'the least of these,' which is why the church must step in to care for them.

"For Christians, bringing foster children into our homes is exactly what our Lord wants us to do," Traffanstedt continued. "Most people, they're willing to do the easy stuff, but this is the nitty gritty ministry Christians are called to."

The Traffanstedts adopted the last three of their foster children, which put their 1,300-square-foot home at



Del and Charmaine Traffanstedt stand with their family: (l-r) Mary, Connie, Seth and Tyson, in front of a Christmas tree at Mission Dorado Baptist Church. Firstborn Taylor is married, living elsewhere with her husband. PHOTO FROM THE CHURCH

“**I WOULD ENCOURAGE EVERY PASTOR TO INVESTIGATE THE NEED IN THEIR AREA AND HOW THEY CAN ENGAGE WITH CHILDREN IN NEED OF GOD'S LOVE AND CARE.**”

Del Traffanstedt

maximum occupancy, according to state guidelines. Since then they have added their "bonus baby" and biological son, Seth.

"We fell in love with our kids," their dad said. "When a child lives in your home for two years, that's your kid." Besides, he added, "We felt called to adopt. Our goal from the outset was to foster kids who needed to be adopted."

His advice to fostering

and adopting:

- Find a good Christian agency in your area to work with.

- Engage your church family. You cannot do this alone.

- Pray about your willingness to do this, your motivation for doing this, and "You need to prepare your heart for the brokenness you're going to encounter."

Taffanstedt has been pastor of Mission Dorado for five years. Pre-COVID, about 150 people gathered for Sunday worship.

One of the church's staff members is given paid time from the church to be a court-appointed (yet volunteer) special advocate for children in foster care. "Through her, we get access throughout the year to some of these kids, to know how to pray for them and to

provide some of the material things they need, clothes, backpacks and the like," Taffanstedt said.

Mission Dorado Baptist also participates throughout the year in Angel Tree, a ministry to prison inmates' children. This includes a big Christmas party with a meal, gifts and the Christmas story, and contact year-round.

Taffanstedt mentors and coaches other fostering and adopting families. The ministry involves recruiting new families, mentoring, counseling and coaching them as they foster and adopt.

"Every church should be engaged in foster care, orphan care ministry," Traffanstedt said. "I would encourage every pastor to investigate the need in their area and how they can engage with children in need of God's love and care." ❧

ADOPTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

In addition to the church family, which pre-COVID gathered 10,000 or more for worship, "Our mom's group serves over 50 churches that do not have the ability to resource and support families who foster or adopt," Steere said. "At Houston's First Baptist, we provide monthly gatherings where families [from both the church and the metro area] can feel supported, build community and receive needed parenting resources.

"We have found traditional parenting skills often fail for those rearing foster and adopted children," the director continued. "As a ministry we are committed to providing relevant, biblical tools for families as they seek to walk with their children toward emotional, physical, relational and spiritual health."

Legacy 685 at Houston's First is dedicated to connecting families to families,

equipping and sustaining them throughout the journey, Steere said. Families gather at the church Sunday evenings to be prepared mentally, emotionally and spiritually before fostering or adopting.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There is a need for people to take children into their homes, to help them become people who love God, leaders from all three churches said. There also is a need to minister to the parents, who deal daily, even hourly, with impulses of children still reacting to the trauma they experienced before they received a new life.

"Everybody can do something," Pruitt, Huang and Steere agreed.

Money can help provide contents for "First Night" bags, school clothes, mini golf for the family, even a parents' date night.

Students and adults can become certified babysitters. Students who can read and write can help those behind in their grade level. Those who can cook can



Adoption and foster care agencies set up informational displays in the foyer and halls of Fielder Church on Adoption Sunday each November. PHOTO FROM THE CHURCH

provide an evening or Sunday meal for a harried new mom or dad. Everyone can pray.

Steere said, "There's no reason the body of Christ cannot provide more than enough resources for chil-

dren in need and for families giving God their yes."

Fielder's Paredes, a father of six including two adopted children, summed up the heart of the ministry in comments to the TEXAN: "Adoption and foster care

are such tangible and powerful examples of God's unconditional love expressed in the gospel. As we pursue a child who hasn't earned our love and doesn't always love us back, we show the world the Father's love for us." ❧



Pfizer, Moderna vaccines are 'ethically uncontroversial,' pro-life group says

Two high-profile vaccines that showed promising results in phase 3 trials are "ethically uncontroversial" and did not involve fetal cells in their design, development or production, according to major pro-life groups.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine known as BNT162b2 and the Moderna vaccine known as mRNA-1273 are both listed as "ethically uncontroversial" by the Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research and education arm of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List. The National Catholic Bioethics Center and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops also gave the green light to both vaccines.

Both were shown to be at least 90 percent effective in preventing COVID-19.

"Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development, or production," the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said in a November memo.

Meanwhile, an AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine known as AZD1222 is listed as "unethical" by the Charlotte Lozier Institute because it used a fetal cell line in the design, development, production and testing phases.

Some controversy has surrounded the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines because fetal cells were used in a testing phase. But unlike the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine, neither have fetal DNA in them. John Brehany of the National Catholic Bioethics Center said Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are far less problematic.

"The Moderna vaccine and [the] Pfizer vaccine, which are closest to implementation, are not produced using the [fetal] cell lines," Brehany told Currents News. "They did come in at a certain point in the process, sort of at a final stage ... in testing, but they are not produced using those cell lines, like many other vaccines are."

—CHARLOTTE LOZIER INSTITUTE/
NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

Record 29 pro-life women to serve in U.S. House: Life is 'a winning issue'

A record 29 pro-life women will serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in the new Congress thanks to a better-than-expected performance by socially conservative candidates on Election Day.

All 11 pro-life incumbent women won re-election, and 18 new pro-life women were elected to the House, according to the Susan B. Anthony List, which works to elect pro-lifers nationwide. All 29 pro-life women are Republican.

Ten of the incoming pro-life female representatives flipped the seats of former pro-choice legislators.

The total (29) means the number of pro-life women in the House will more than double — and nearly triple.

SBA List President Marjorie Dannenfelser labeled the 29 women "pro-life champions" and said they will serve as a "brick wall" against any "pro-abortion agenda" in the House.

"The exponential growth of pro-life women in the



House is reflective of the fact that life has gone from being viewed as a political problem to a winning issue," she said. "These women have already done important work to expose the extremism of their radical pro-abortion opponents and we look forward to working alongside them to defend lifesaving law and policy in Congress."

—SUSAN B. ANTHONY LIST

Court: Tennessee can enforce ban on Down syndrome abortions

Tennessee can enforce a law banning abortion due to an unborn baby's sex, race or Down syndrome diagnosis while the prohibition is being challenged, an appeals court ruled in November.

The U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, in a 2-1 decision, issued a stay against a lower court ruling that had struck down the ban as unconstitutional.

The law prevents a doctor from performing an abortion if the doctor knows the "woman is seeking the abortion because of a prenatal diagnosis, test, or screening" showing the baby likely would be born with Down syndrome. The law also applies to abortions that target a baby for its sex or race.

Tennessee's governor celebrated the decision. The case eventually could be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Every life is precious and every child has inherent human dignity. Our law prohibits abortion based on the

race, gender, or diagnosis of Down syndrome of the child and the court's decision will save lives," Gov. Bill Lee, who signed the law, tweeted. "Protecting our most vulnerable Tennesseans is worth the fight."

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, an opponent of Roe v. Wade, warned in 2019 that abortion could become a "tool" to eliminate segments of the population.

"With today's prenatal screening tests and other technologies, abortion can easily be used to eliminate children with unwanted characteristics," he wrote.

Thomas made the comments when the Supreme Court declined to take up the constitutionality of an Indiana law that was similar to the one in Tennessee. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the Indiana law.

The court, Thomas wrote in 2019, "will soon need to confront the constitutionality of laws like Indiana's "due to the "potential for abortion to become a tool of eugenic manipulation."

—NATIONAL REVIEW/CHRISTIAN HEADLINES

Texas can pull funding from Planned Parenthood, appeals court rules

A federal appeals court delivered a major victory to pro-life advocates in Texas and Louisiana in late November, ruling that officials in both states can legally withdraw funding from Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest provider.

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

In November, the full U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the states could legally withdraw the funding. The decision also impacts Mississippi, which is in the Fifth Circuit.

Southern Baptists applauded the ruling.

Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, expressed his gratitude "that our state leaders have stood strong for life, and that the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has recognized the right of Texans to deny healthcare funds to this anti-life organization.

"The SBTC'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."

Steve Horn, executive director of Louisiana Baptists, said he is "thrilled" at the Fifth Circuit's decision.

"Louisiana is a staunch pro-life state and we do not believe our healthcare dollars should support abortion providers like Planned Parenthood," Horn said.

—THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/BAPTIST PRESS

ERLC plans record 10 ultrasound donations

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission announced Dec. 10 it will donate a record 10 ultrasound machines to pregnancy resource centers in the next six months.

The ERLC will make the donations to gospel-focused, pro-life centers across the United States through its Psalm 139 Project, which helps purchase sonogram technology and fund the training of staff members to operate the machines. Since 2004, the ministry—which is funded by contributions from donors—has helped place ultrasound equipment for centers in 16 states.

The announcement marks a dramatic increase in the number of machines typically placed through Psalm 139 and is made possible by a commitment from an individual donor who desires to remain anonymous, according to the ERLC. The commission will announce the recipients of the ultrasound machines separately at later dates.

The announcement of 10 placements in six months is the first of many initiatives the ERLC has planned to



bring attention to the 50th anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion throughout the country and hopefully to prepare churches for a post-Roe culture, according to the release.

The initiative's name comes from the well-known chapter in the Bible in which David testifies to God's sovereign care for him when he was an unborn child. David wrote in verse 13 of that psalm, "[Y]ou knit me together in my mother's womb."

—BAPTIST PRESS

PRE-ADOPTIVE FAMILY:

‘We could start with one’

By Karen L. Willoughby
TEXAN Correspondent

ROCKWALL Patricia “Patchi” Hasegawa and her husband Tetsuya, married 13 years, have been in the adoptive family process for two years, with perhaps another six months or more to go.

Their desire for another child and their firstborn son Kuni’s request for a brother led the Hasegawas to consider adoption when Patchi didn’t get pregnant.

“We knew nothing regarding adoption, other than a few people in my life group had adopted,” Patchi told the TEXAN. Tetsuya heard about and Patchi attended an informative adoption/foster care conference in January 2018 at Lakepointe Church, where they’d been members for two years.

Prayer and contemplation about adoption came to an end on Nov. 25, 2018, when the message Josh Howerton (now Lakepointe’s pastor) spoke from James 1:27 brought Patchi to tears and

“
WE KNOW THAT NOT ALL ARE CALLED TO ADOPT, BUT WE ALL CAN DO SOMETHING. IN OUR CHURCH AND LIFE GROUP, WE PRAY, GIVE: CLOTHES, MONEY, FOOD. WE HELP AND ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER, WE WALK WITH EACH OTHER, WE CELEBRATE EACH OTHER.”

PATRICIA “PATCHI” HASEGAWA

her husband to obedience.

“The message was so powerful and amazing,” Patchi said. “We understood the gospel of how we have been adopted into God’s family. Our hearts broke to the millions of orphans in the world.

“We did desire another child, we had the means to adopt and we wanted to obey what God was asking

us to do, despite our fear,” Patchi continued. “We could not help millions, but we could start with one.”

A week later, the Hasegawa family applied and started the adoption process with the adoption agency Holt International.

“Everything we had control over, we did quickly,” Patchi said. “Everything else is a waiting process. Our dossier has been in Korea since February. It was just approved in early December.”

While waiting for a judge to agree to the adoption, the Hasegawas’ son they named Nobu, born in August 2019, stays with a foster family in South Korea. Nobu means “walk by faith” in Japanese.

Holt International sends emails twice each month, sometimes with photos and their son’s medical updates. The Hasegawas are learning from experiences shared by adoptive parents in their life group at Lakepointe.

“We have been blessed by a church and community that is real and authentic with their adoption [ministry],”



Tetsuya and Patchi Hasegawa, with their son Kuni, await the arrival of their Korean-born son, Nobu, which means “walk by faith” in Japanese.
PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE FAMILY

Patchi said. “Yes, we knew it is not all easy and beautiful and it can be hard at times. People do share their struggles, but also joy and victories and heart changes.

“We know that not all are called to adopt, but we all can do something. In our church and life group, we pray, give: clothes, money, food. We help and encourage each other, we walk with each other, we celebrate each other.”

Holt requires an online course on adoption and suggests books and articles to read to allay concerns and

prepare families for the future. Studies cover parents, siblings and adopted child alike. Topics include attachment and medical issues; coping with grief, loss, identity and more, plus an awareness of a new dynamic in the home with a new family member.

“Kuni is excited to be a big brother,” Patchi said. “We are preparing our hearts and mind and lives to the changes. We pray every night together. We pray many things. Especially we pray and ask that we will all bond quickly.” ❄️



Thank You

to the churches of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, who along with Southern Baptists from across the country, provided \$3,207,718.15 through the Cooperative Program for this semester’s graduating students. We sincerely appreciate your sacrificial commitment.

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TEXAN's first managing editor retires

By Jane Rodgers
Managing Editor

GRAPEVINE After serving the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention in a variety of roles for two decades, journalist Tammi Ledbetter—an “unsung heroine” of the Conservative Resurgence—is retiring.

Ledbetter served in a variety of roles with the Southern Baptist TEXAN, including news editor, assignments editor and special reports editor and writer. She was managing editor of the TEXAN from 2001-2002 and 2018-2019. She also edited the SBTC promotional magazine *Crossroads*.

Ledbetter's byline has appeared in Baptist Press, the *Kansas City Star*, the *Springdale [Arkansas] Morning News* and numerous Southern Baptist publications, in addition to the TEXAN.

Her career has also included stints as managing editor of the *Criswell College* newsmagazine, the *Indiana Baptist* and *Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Heartland*.

“I've enjoyed working with dozens of freelance journalists to share

stories in the TEXAN of how God is using individuals in local church ministry, new church plants and mission endeavors around the world,” Ledbetter told the TEXAN.

She also extolled the value of keeping Southern Baptists current regarding convention business: “Reporting on trustee meetings at our Southern Baptist entities gave me a greater appreciation for how important it is to keep folks in the pew informed as to how their gifts to the Cooperative Program are being used to evangelize our communities, educate ministers and uphold biblical convictions.”

As for treasured memories, Ledbetter named more than a few, from “watching a community gather around the survivors of the Sutherland Springs shooting to pray for healing” to “hearing a 100-year-old layman describe his preparation to teach the Bible every Sunday” or even “sitting in a commissioning service of newly-appointed missionaries.” Such experiences allowed her to see the “fruit of Southern Baptist ministry,” she said.

“For my entire ministry, it's been our



Ledbetter covers a block party outreach in Houston, pre-COVID.

ministry to a great degree,” said Gary Ledbetter, TEXAN editor who is also retiring as SBTC director of communications. “During my time working for denominational bodies, we've always worked for the same institution, sometimes with Tammi working for me directly. Though she's my wife, I'm fair in saying that her work ethic, commitment, professionalism and talent have made a difference in every place she's been. I admire her greatly.”

Jim Richards, SBTC executive direc-

tor, called Tammi Ledbetter an “unsung heroine in the battle for biblical inerrancy,” adding: “Her education, convictions and God-given tenacity enabled her to tell the stores during the reclamation of the Southern Baptist Convention from theological liberalism. She is worthy of double honor for her selfless sacrifice through the years. Thank you, Tammi!”

Ledbetter's retirement plans include welcoming her sixth grandchild in early January. ✨

Rodgers appointed TEXAN managing editor

By TEXAN staff



Jane Rodgers

In November, the TEXAN welcomed as managing editor its longtime correspondent Jane Rodgers, who has covered disaster relief for the paper for years. Jane even became

trained in DR to cover that vital work.

Jane has combined writing and editing with teaching English and American or European history for more than three decades. She's a native Texan who grew up in San Antonio and has lived in Houston, Lubbock, Austin, Tyler, Rowlett and now Brownwood, where her

husband, Mike, is CFO at Howard Payne University and they are members of Coggin Avenue Baptist Church.

She has taught in a variety of private and public high schools, most recently from 2000 to 2016 at Trinity Christian Academy in Addison. She has been involved in writing, editing, and publishing since 1984,

mostly but not exclusively working with Christian organizations and authors. In addition to the TEXAN, her work has appeared in *The Federalist*, *Townhall.com*, *Baptist Press*, numerous state Baptist newspapers and *ERLC* and *NAMB* publications. Jane was also a contributor to *Tyndale's Life Recovery Bible* and has edited more than a dozen books. ✨

Church Positions

PASTOR

- ♦ FBC in Newton is currently seeking a FT lead pastor. Please inquire with the church office for more details at fbcnwtonsecretary@gmail.com or 409-379-3381.
- ♦ Dogwood Church in Athens, an elder-led church of approximately 140 members, is seeking applications for a FT senior pastor. Send resumes to Dogwood Church, Pastor Search Committee, 6467 FM 2494, Athens, TX 75751, or dogwoodathens@outlook.com.
- ♦ Keltys FBC (9Marks, SBTC and BMAA) in Lufkin is seeking a FT lead teaching pastor. Send resume, ministry philosophy and sermon links to jobs@keltys.org or Keltys First Baptist Church, PO Box 3043, Lufkin, TX, 75903. Visit keltys.org/pastorsearch for more information and a job description.
- ♦ Lakeside BC in Canton is searching for a FT senior pastor. Lakeside was established in 1988 and our current pastor has served 31 years. Must adhere to the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, minimum 5 years' experience on staff as senior/teaching pastor and a seminary degree. lakesidebaptistcanton@gmail.com.
- ♦ FBC Lovelady is seeking a FT senior pastor. Submit resumes to Mark Parker at dedemarkparker@gmail.com.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Towne North BC in Denton is searching for a bivocational pastor. Go to nextstep.sbtexas.com for a full listing. Email resume to ericpngbrn@yahoo.com.
- ♦ Greenfield Acres BC in Odessa is seeking a bivocational pastor. We are an SBTC church and adhere to the BF&M 2000. Parsonage is available. Send resume to Greenfield Acres Baptist Church, 2114 W. Yukon, Odessa, TX 79764 or gabcsearch@gmail.com.
- ♦ FBC in Tivoli is seeking a PT pastor. Email resume to the Pulpit Committee at fbctivolitx@gmail.com.
- ♦ First Church Heights seeks a bivocational lead pastor. Our vibrant multi-ethnic congregation is located in the historic Heights in Houston. Email resume to pastorsearch@fbcheights.com.

MUSIC

- ♦ The Church at Quail Creek in Amarillo is seeking a FT music minister. Must be proficient in leading choir, orchestra and praise teams. Send resume and cover letter to kclayton@tcqc.org.

- ♦ Faith BC in Wichita Falls is looking for FT minister of music to promote and lead the music ministry of a vital blended worship service. Must be capable of conducting choirs (adult/children), instrumentalists and special services and events. Send resume and leading worship video to craigl@faithwf.com.
- ♦ 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 sarah@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Anderson Mill BC is searching for a PT worship minister for a multi-generational and multi-ethnic church in northwest Austin. A heart for God and the local church, along with the appreciation for both traditional and contemporary worship are required. Submit resume to rminor@ambcaustin.org

COMBINATION

- ♦ Peachtree BC in Jasper is searching for a bivocational 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 Sealy is searching for a FT youth and worship minister. Submit resume to fbcyouthsearch@fbcesealy.net.
- ♦ Mosaic Church, a multi-ethnic church in Arlington, is searching for a PT associate pastor for teens and young adults, as well as digital ministry (social media; broadcasting; digital production). For more information and to submit your resume, contact Stephen Hammond at swhammond@gmail.com.

STUDENTS

- ♦ FBC DeKalb is seeking a FT student pastor to minister to families and equip our youth to serve Christ. We are searching for a forward thinking, strong believer that is passionate about discipling young people. Send resumes to dekalbfbcc323@gmail.com.
- ♦ Carpenter's Way Church in Lufkin is searching for a FT student pastor. Send resume to Jeff Bonnin at jeff@cwbc.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 sarah@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ FBC Mesquite is seeking a PT student minister whose primary responsibility will be to minister to students and their families in order to help them be faithful followers of Jesus Christ by sharing the gospel with those who do not know Him and discipling those who do. Please email fbcl27email@yahoo.com.
- ♦ Lighthouse Baptist Chapel in Frankston is receiving resumes for a bi-vocational youth pastor to grow a youth ministry, bring in young families and lead Sunday night worship services. Mail resumes to George Folmar, Lighthouse Baptist Chapel, PO Box 1118, Frankston, TX 75763.
- ♦ Antioch BC in Lovelady is seeking a PT youth minister (20-30 hours per week) to provide quality leadership for our Youth (Grades 7-12) through teaching God's Word, shepherding our current youth and their parents and reaching those outside of Christ. Send cover letter and resume to abcloveladypastor@gmail.com.
- ♦ Faith BC of Princeton is searching for a bi-vocational youth minister who will come and love the growing population of young people in our community. Please contact Pastor Stan Fike at 972-736-3733 or email pastor@faithprinceton.org for more information.
- ♦ Fairview Sherman is looking for a FT associate pastor of students and discipleship. Send resumes to info@fairviewsherman.com.

CHILDREN

- ♦ FBC Terrell is looking for a PT children's minister. Send resume to john@fbcterrell.org.

COMBINATION

- ♦ Moberly BC in Marshall is seeking a FT associate minister of worship/college. Position includes benefits. Send resume to gailm@moberly.org.
- ♦ FBC in Palestine is accepting resumes for a FT associate pastor of discipleship & missions. Focus will be on small groups, leadership development, missions and senior adults/outreach. Email resume to Pastor Tony Watson at tony@firstpalestine.org.
- ♦ FBC Terrell is looking for a FT minister of education & outreach. Send resume to john@fbcterrell.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 sarah@firstcolleyville.com.

OTHER

- ♦ Rosen Heights BC in Fort Worth is looking for a PT administrative assistant to the pastor, Monday - Thursday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Must be a Christian and become a member of our church. Send resume to Christian Stringer at christian@rosenheights.org.
- ♦ 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 sarah@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 sarah@firstcolleyville.com.
- ♦ 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 sarah@firstcolleyville.com.

Paid Classifieds

- ♦ Southside Baptist Church in Henderson, TX has a 2007 Ford E-450 shuttle bus for sale in good condition: 24-passenger, diesel, 30K miles, \$14,000. Contact Rob 903-646-0125 or 903-657-8277.
- ♦ First Southern Baptist Church in Lawrence, KS is seeking a pastor of worship and music. See www.fsbcfamily.com for a job description and church profile. Resumes can be sent to search@fsbcfamily.com.
- ♦ FBC Lake St Louis is seeking an associate pastor of worship and outreach. Visit FBCLSL.org/job-opportunities for more information.
- ♦ For more job listings, visit: <https://nextstep.sbtexas.com>.

Missions, mentoring among Lane Prairie's priorities

By Erin Roach

TEXAN Correspondent

JOSHUA A world map in the worship center reminds members of Lane Prairie Baptist Church in Joshua, Texas, of the Great Commission weekly, and they're working to see pins marking at least 10 locations of missionaries sent from their church through the International Mission Board.

Toward that end, the church recently hired Travis Kerns as associate pastor of missions and mentoring. Kerns served as a Send City Missionary in Salt Lake City with the North American Mission Board for six years before moving to Fort Worth as associate professor of apologetics and world religions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Matt Queen, associate dean of Southwestern's school of evangelism and missions, is a member of Lane Prairie, and with longtime pastor Jerry Clements and executive pastor Ricky Fuchs, the four are serious about getting the gospel to the ends of the earth as they shared in a recent Zoom conference call with the TEXAN.

"We want to be a Great Commission church. That's our desire, and that means not only do we share in Jerusalem but Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world," said Clements, who will mark 22 years as pastor of Lane Prairie in February.

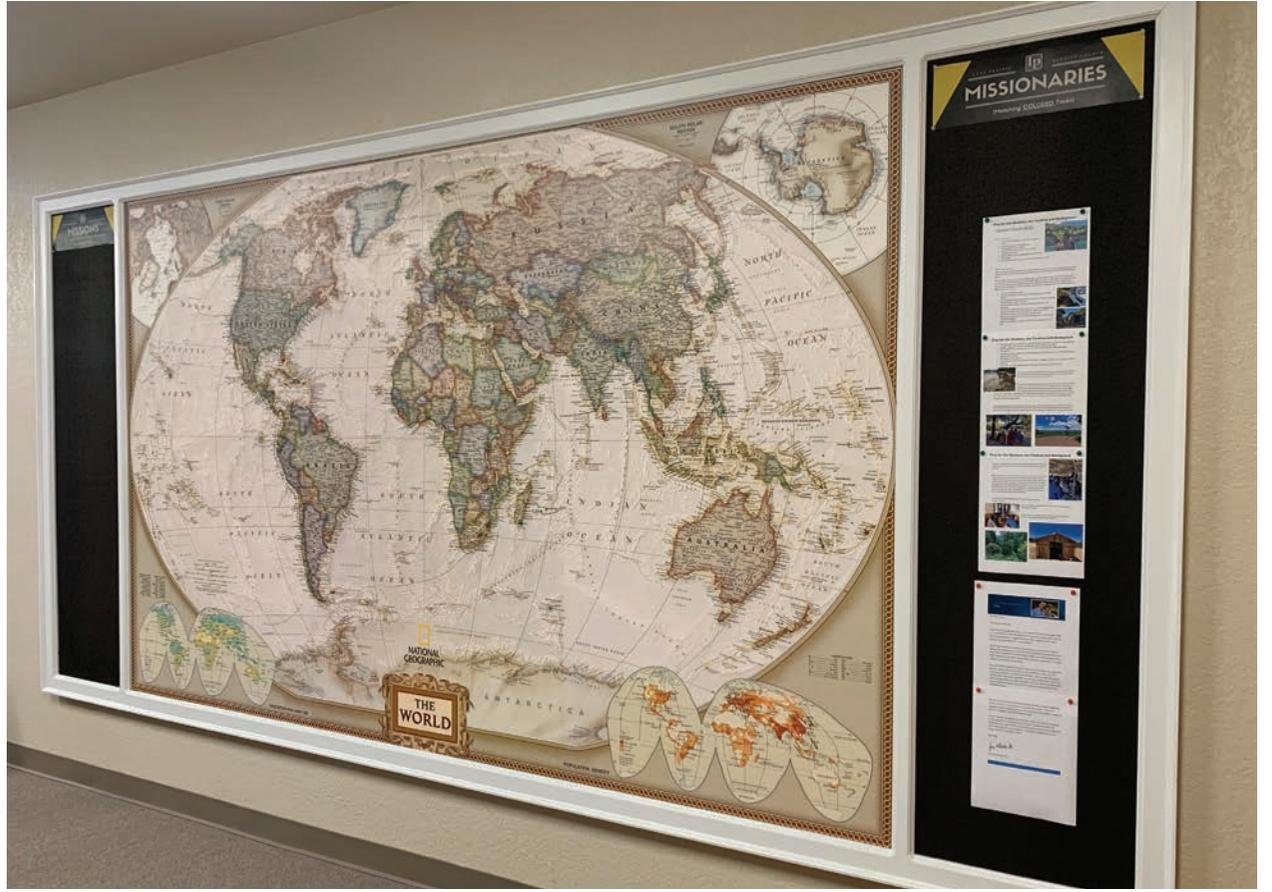
So far, the church is supporting—largely through Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering giving and through regular contacts—David and Kristin Washer, IMB workers in Madagascar. The Washers were members of Lane Prairie while they were students at Southwestern, and they were instrumental in "talking up missions," Queen said.

"To have somebody with flesh and blood whose family is going to be on the field was really good, and it really pumped our people up for missions," Queen said. "In fact, we've got several lay people who talk to Washer weekly. They're contacting him, and our staff keeps in contact with him."

Lane Prairie, a 150-year-old congregation, had a chance to contribute to a specific need in Madagascar recently.

"Someone went to a village the other day and the whole village was dead from starvation," Clements said. Lane Prairie immediately sent \$5,000 through the IMB and planned to send more. "He can feed a whole village for a month with \$5,000," Clements said of Washer.

Clements expressed a desire to challenge other churches to send \$1,000 through the IMB in care of David Washer to prevent people from starving in Madagascar. He noted that in three months, the Washers shared the gospel more than 1,000 times and saw 84 professions of faith, which is "pretty phenomenal in that area."



A world map in the worship center reminds members of Lane Prairie Baptist Church in Joshua of the Great Commission weekly as they work to send missionaries through the International Mission Board. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CHURCH

"We're so proud of them," Clements said.

Kerns said the church aims to send "as many as the Lord will give us as quickly as the Lord will give them to us." To aid that goal, Lane Prairie launched a mentoring program a year ago to train students in a local church context.

"Seminary can teach you a lot of things in a classroom, but there's only so much it can teach you in a classroom," Kerns told the TEXAN. "We can talk about how to run a deacons meeting in a seminary classroom, but then you get into a deacons meeting and realize it's a whole different ballgame."

In addition to strong Cooperative Program giving, Lane Prairie is identifying seminary students who are called to missions or the local church, and they're adopting six students per semester as interns.

"They come to our church, and we train them how to preach a sermon, how to teach a Sunday School class, how to serve the Lord," Clements said. "We invest in them. We give them \$800 a month toward their tuition or housing or whatever they need."

To reach the local community, Lane Prairie hosts Operation Backpack each August, inviting students to receive school supplies, clothing and shoes. The year before COVID-19 was their biggest yet with nearly 600 children receiving supplies. The church also led Good News Clubs in four of the five local elementary schools before the pandemic.

At Thanksgiving, the church gives out baskets of meal supplies for families in need, and each time, they tell about Jesus.

"We've seen people saved through every single one of those ministries," Fuchs, the executive pastor, said. "As we do every single one of these, the gospel is at the forefront."

Clements, whose father was pastor of First Baptist Church in Brownsville years ago and who has three

brothers who are pastors, is battling blood cancer, which returned after nine years in remission.

"Pastor Jerry is fighting the good fight and running the race with endurance, even in this season of life," Tony Wolfe, church health and

leadership senior strategist with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, said. "He is faithful. He is leading well. He is reproducing. He is an inspiration. He is the SBTC."

Clements told the TEXAN, "God gets all the glory." ✝

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Misiones y mentoría entre las prioridades de Lane Prairie

Por Erin Roach
Corresponsal del TEXAN

JOSHUA Un mapa del mundo en su lugar de adoración les recuerda semanalmente la Gran Comisión a los miembros de la Iglesia Bautista Lane Prairie en Joshua, Texas; y están trabajando para ver alfileres que marcan al menos 10 ubicaciones de misioneros enviados desde su iglesia a través de la agencia misionera internacional “International Mission Board” (IMB).

Con ese fin, la iglesia contrató recientemente a Travis Kerns como pastor asociado de misiones y mentoría. Kerns sirvió como misionero de Send City en la ciudad de Salt Lake con la Junta de Misiones de América del Norte durante seis años antes de mudarse a Fort Worth y trabajar como profesor asociado de apologética y religiones del mundo en el Seminario Teológico Bautista Southwestern.

Matt Queen, decano asociado de la escuela de evangelismo y misiones del Southwestern, es miembro de Lane Prairie, y con el pastor Jerry Clements y el pastor ejecutivo Ricky Fuchs, los cuatro se toman en serio la idea de llevar el evangelio a los confines de la tierra mientras compartían una reciente conferencia telefónica de Zoom con el TEXAN.

“Queremos ser una iglesia que gira alrededor de la Gran Comisión. Ese es nuestro deseo, y eso significa que no sólo compartimos el evangelio en Jerusalén, sino también en Judea, Samaria y en los confines del mundo”, dijo Clements, quien cumplirá 22 años como pastor de la Iglesia Bautista (IB) Lane Prairie en febrero.

Hasta ahora, la iglesia está apoyando a David y Kristin Washer, quienes son misioneros de la IMB.

Esto es posible en gran parte a través del Programa Cooperativo y la Ofrenda de Navidad “Lottie Moon” y a través de contactos regulares. Los Washers eran miembros de Lane Prairie mientras eran estudiantes en el Southwestern, y fueron fundamentales para promover las misiones en medio de la congregación, dijo Queen.

“Tener a alguien de carne y hueso cuya familia va a estar en el campo misionero fue realmente bueno, y realmente animó a nuestra gente a darle prioridad a las misiones”, dijo Queen. “De hecho, tenemos varios laicos que hablan con Washer semanalmente. Se están comunicando con él y nuestro personal se mantiene en contacto con él”.

Lane Prairie, una congregación de 150 años, tuvo la oportunidad de contribuir a una necesidad específica en Madagascar recientemente.

“Alguien fue a un pueblo el otro día y todo el pueblo estaba muriendo de hambre”, dijo Clements. La IB de Lane Prairie envió inmediatamente \$5,000 a través de la IMB y planeó enviar más. “Pudo alimentar a toda una aldea durante un mes con \$5,000”, dijo Clements sobre Washer.

Clements expresó su deseo de desafiar a otras iglesias a enviar \$1,000 a través de la IMB al cuidado de David Washer para evitar que la gente muera de hambre en Madagascar. Señaló que en tres meses, los Washer compartieron el evangelio más de 1,000 veces y vieron 84 profesiones de fe, lo cual es “bastante fenomenal en esa área”.

“Estamos muy orgullosos de ellos”, dijo Clements.

Kerns dijo que la iglesia tiene como objetivo enviar “tantos como el Señor nos dé tan pronto como el Señor nos los dé”. Para ayudar a ese objetivo, Lane Prairie lanzó hace un año, un programa de mentores para capacitar a los estudiantes en el contexto de una iglesia local.

“El Seminario puede enseñarte muchas cosas en un salón de clases, sin embargo, no todo se aprende



To minister to homebound seniors during COVID-19, members of Lane Prairie Baptist Church in Joshua lined up in cars to receive Cracker Barrel meals which they in turn delivered to homes.



Operation Backpack looked different at Lane Prairie Baptist Church in Joshua this year. Families drove up and received school supplies, clothing and shoes along with a gospel witness.

en un salón de clases”, dijo Kerns al TEXAN. “Podemos hablar sobre cómo llevar a cabo una reunión de diáconos en un aula del seminario, pero cuando asistimos a una reunión de diáconos, nos damos cuenta de que es algo que puede verse totalmente diferente”.

Además de realizar sólidas donaciones al Programa Cooperativo, la Iglesia Lane Prairie está identificando a los estudiantes del seminario que son llamados a las misiones o la iglesia local, y están adoptando a seis estudiantes por semestre como practicantes.

“Vienen a nuestra iglesia y los capacitamos sobre cómo predicar un sermón, cómo enseñar una clase de escuela dominical, cómo servir al Señor”, dijo Clements. “Invertimos en ellos. Les damos \$800 al mes para su matrícula, alojamiento o lo que necesiten”.

Para llegar a la comunidad local, Lane Prairie organiza “Operación Mochila” cada agosto, invitando a los estudiantes a recibir útiles escolares, ropa y zapatos. El año anterior a COVID-19 fue el evento más grande hasta el momento, con casi 600 niños recibiendo suministros. La iglesia también dirigió Clubes de Buenas Nuevas en cuatro de las cinco escuelas primarias locales antes de la pandemia.

En el Día de Acción de Gracias, la iglesia reparte canastas de alimentos para las familias necesitadas, y cada vez, hablan de Jesús.

“Hemos visto gente ser salva a través de cada uno de esos ministerios”, dijo Fuchs, el pastor ejecutivo.

“**QUEREMOS SER UNA IGLESIA QUE GIRA ALREDEDOR DE LA GRAN COMISIÓN. ESE ES NUESTRO DESEO, Y ESO SIGNIFICA QUE NO SÓLO COMPARTIMOS EL EVANGELIO EN JERUSALÉN, SINO TAMBIÉN EN JUDEA, SAMARIA Y EN LOS CONFINES DEL MUNDO.**”

JERRY CLEMENTS

“Mientras hacemos cada uno de estos eventos, el evangelio va al frente y es nuestro norte”.

Clements, cuyo padre fue pastor de la Primera Iglesia Bautista en Brownsville hace años y que tiene tres hermanos que son pastores, está luchando contra el cáncer de sangre, que regresó después de nueve años en remisión.

“El pastor Jerry está peleando la buena batalla y corriendo la carrera con resistencia, incluso en esta etapa de la vida”, dijo Tony Wolfe, estratega principal de la salud y liderazgo de la iglesia para la Convención de los Bautistas del Sur de Texas. “Él es fiel. Está liderando bien. Se está reproduciendo. Él es una inspiración. Él es la SBTC”.

Clements le dijo al TEXAN: “Dios se lleva toda la gloria” 🙌

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Mataa and me: How a text message deepened my understanding of the plight of refugees

By Gail Davis
IMB writer

"Hello."

I woke to this message on my phone. The sender didn't give a name or any further message. I was reluctant to respond to a message from an unknown person.

I felt God saying, "Go ahead. Talk to this person."

I replied tentatively and said, "Hello."

Those two initial words began a growing understanding for me about the plight of refugees. I've been working with refugees and asylum-seekers for seven and a half years. I have heard stories, seen where they live, watched as they grew thinner with each week and regularly felt broken for them as the government refused to give them their official documents for refugee status.

The day I received this message, my eyes were opened to another kind of story.

After our initial hello, a 19-year-old Sudanese teenager named Mataa* began telling me his story of how he became a refugee and what it is like to live in the world's largest refugee camp, Kakuma, in Kenya.

"Back when I was in Sudan, we used to live a life with much happiness until war broke out in some parts of our country, which left a lot of people dead, including many children and women," Mataa wrote in the message.

His parents took him to a place they thought was safe, but everything went downhill from there.

"I lost my cousins and uncle there when we were attacked in the dawn by rebels," he said.

Early one morning, Mataa and others were looking after their goats when men started running toward them.

"We screamed and ran back to the village. A few minutes later they caught up with us. They began shooting guns at our village, so people started running, but most women and children did not make it. They were laying down dead," Mataa told me.

Mataa hid with a friend. His friend saw his mother carrying

his seven-month-old sister and ran to hug them. Mataa yelled at his friend and his friend's mother to duck. They didn't hear him.

His friend witnessed his mom being shot in the chest and she died on the spot. As she fell, she fell on her daughter and she also died. Mataa's friend was so stressed he got sick and died.

Later that evening, Mataa's father came and took him to hide in a forest with his mother. The fighting continued. Mataa and his fellow village members ran and hid in the bush.

"While I was still in the bush, I used to hear wounded people screaming for help and screaming out the names of people who had been killed with their bodies just lying there. That made me run deeper into the forest to go and look for whoever was alive," Mataa wrote.

"Days later, while I was in the forest, I found a hunter who said he would take me with him. He told me I should wait for him until he first got an animal to kill. I waited for him under that tree for four days, but he never returned."

"I used to sleep on the tree branch and drink water from the nearby water source. There was no food. The only food available was the tree leaves, which I ate ... Five days later, I gave up and left that place," Mataa told me.

He could still hear gunfire, so he decided to go to the Nile River where he met others who were in a similar plight. Mataa and the other refugees made their way to a village where they would later be taken to a refugee camp in Kenya.

I learned Mataa is a Christian and attends a church in the camp. He started attending primary school and learned some English. He would have been the first in his family to graduate, but the school began charging admission fees.

For a long time, he didn't know where his parents and siblings were.

"The saddest thing in my life is knowing that my mother brought me into this world, and I feel it is my obligation to give her a life she deserves along with women of her age by bringing peace to our country," Mataa said. "The only way of bringing peace to our country is through forgiving those who have killed our beloved people. The past is in the past."

Mataa's biggest dream is to become an ambassador for peace in his country.

Mataa* fled from Sudan to Kenya and now lives in a refugee settlement. IMB missionaries serve among refugees to provide physical, emotional and spiritual healing through Jesus Christ.



“

"THE SADDEST THING IN MY LIFE IS KNOWING THAT MY MOTHER BROUGHT ME INTO THIS WORLD, AND I FEEL IT IS MY OBLIGATION TO GIVE HER A LIFE SHE DESERVES ALONG WITH WOMEN OF HER AGE BY BRINGING PEACE TO OUR COUNTRY. THE ONLY WAY OF BRINGING PEACE TO OUR COUNTRY IS THROUGH FORGIVING THOSE WHO HAVE KILLED OUR BELOVED PEOPLE. THE PAST IS IN THE PAST."

”

Mataa

He has lived in the camp for six years.

I asked him, "That's a long time to be without your parents to love on and care for you. Who took their place in the camp?"

Mataa told me he lives with other boys in the camp.

"I am used to it now," Mataa told me. "But I have been lonely."

He learned his mother is in Sudan, and his father passed away in 2012 in the conflict.

Mataa experienced atrocities most people will never see or understand. He faced them with almost no adult help. Until recently, he wore the same clothes he'd had since age 13—nearly 20 now, he is significantly taller.

He's learned to live with other orphaned boys in the camp, who are often violent. Mataa sent me a picture of a young man who had stitches across his scalp because none of the boys wanted to cook, so they fought, and the young man was injured.

Just because a refugee makes it

to a refugee camp, does not mean life will be easy. Please pray for Mataa and other orphaned refugee children living in camps. Pray for enough food, a place to live, free education and a place of safety.

Mataa wants to return to Sudan. Most refugees I have spoken with want the same thing. Their host country is a temporary refuge. Mataa told me he wants to open an orphanage in Sudan.

Mataa told me he now has two moms, his mother in Sudan and me. We speak almost every day. We don't need to live close to someone to develop this kind of relationship. We need to be genuine in order to build relationships with refugees—relationships that feel like family involve trust.

There are refugees living in the U.S., many of whom are looking for a sympathetic ear to listen to their story. I'd challenge you to find a "Mataa"—to do life with. ☞

**Name changed for security*

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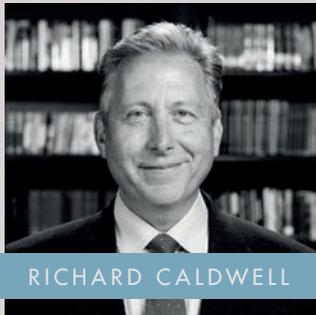
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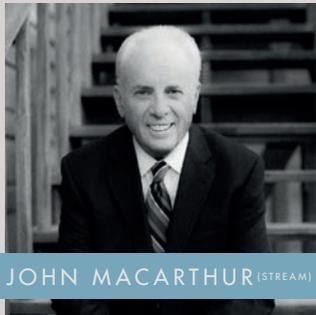
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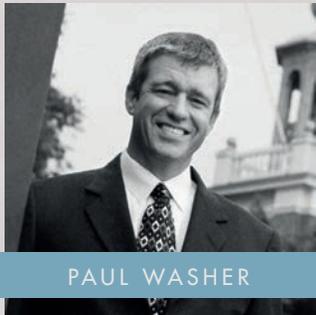
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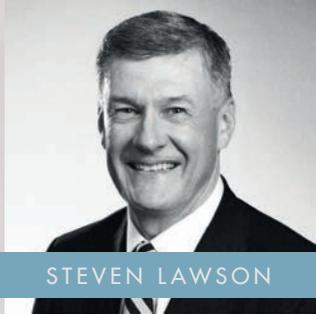
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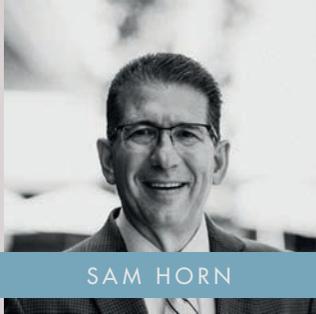
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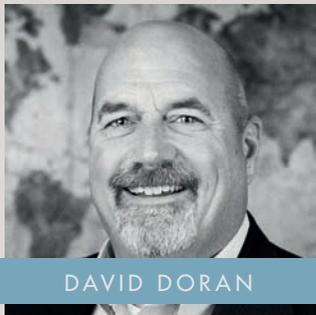
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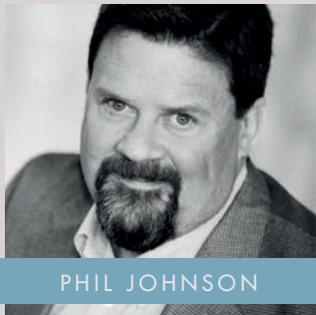
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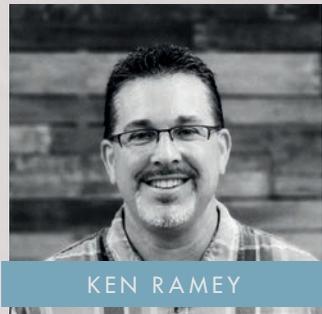
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Abortion providers buckling under COVID-19 economic strains

By Diana Chandler
Baptist Press

MINNEAPOLIS Independent abortion clinics that combine to provide nearly 60 percent of abortions in the U.S. are struggling to remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report from an abortion advocacy group.

The development should be celebrated, according to a Southern Baptist ethicist. But Elizabeth Graham, vice president of operations and life initiatives for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, encouraged Christians to continue to advocate for life even if abortion clinics close.

“Every time a life is rescued from abortion is cause for celebration by Christians. But that shouldn’t be limited to those of us who are pro-life, instead it should be for everyone,” Graham said. “To do that, though, we must continue to foster a culture of life that protects the preborn and cares for the vulnerable in every situation.”

The Abortion Care Network, an abortion advocacy group, did not report the number of abortions performed in independent clinics in any specific year, only a percentage. But the Guttmacher Institute reported that about 862,320 abortions were performed in clinics of all kinds offering abortions in the U.S. in 2017, the latest year of available statistics. Planned Parenthood clinics

perform 37 percent of abortions in the U.S.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis have put a truly unprecedented strain on independent abortion clinics in the U.S.,” the Abortion Care Network report said. “Although independent abortion care providers represent about 25 percent of the facilities offering abortion care, they provide 58 percent of all abortion procedures nationwide.”

Without the financial support of the Planned Parenthood network, which qualifies for various grants, at least 14 independent clinics closed just this year during the added financial constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the report, nearly 340 independent clinics remained in the U.S. as of November, compared to 510 in 2015 when the group began tracking the data. More than 40 independent clinics have closed in the past two years.

Planned Parenthood and its affiliates performed 345,672 abortions in 2018, according to Planned Parenthood’s 2019 annual report.

Independent abortion clinics still operate in at least 37 states and Washington, D.C., the ACN said. States without ACN-member clinics are Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Missouri, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont and Wyoming. ❏

SBTC consultant Rod Masteller dies after contracting COVID-19

By TEXAN staff

DALLAS Rod Masteller, 75, a retired pastor from Shreveport, Louisiana, passed away in Dallas, Texas, Dec. 13, due to complications from COVID-19.

Masteller was a pastor for nearly 50 years, leading congregations in Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana, and he served in denominational roles at the state and national levels, most recently as a consultant for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Rodney Gage, pastor of ReThink Life Church, Orlando, Florida, said that family was near and dear to his father-in-law.

“He loved his daughters, his sons-in-law and his grandchildren,” Gage said. “He had saved for years to fulfill his dream to take his entire family on an all-expense paid trip to Israel. He wanted it to serve as a legacy trip to mark our lives forever by walking where Jesus walked. He fulfilled that dream in November of 2019. It was truly the trip of a lifetime we will never forget.”

After retiring to Frisco, Texas, he served the SBTC, 2018-20, and was an interim pastor for multi-



Rod and Linda Masteller

ple congregations in the state.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Linda Jines Masteller, four daughters, and 11 grandchildren.

Gage said the family has set up “The Making of a Legacy Project” to honor his father-in-law’s emphasis on mentoring the next generation. He said in lieu of flowers, donations can be made online by accessing www.rethinklife.com/legacy, which also shares more about the vision for this memorial initiative.

A private service was streamed Dec. 17. ❏

—Drawn from a story by the Louisiana Baptist Message, baptistmessage.com

Faith-based crime series 'Vindication' films second season

By Jane Rodgers | Managing Editor

BURLESON

If not for the COVID-19 pandemic, a second season of "Vindication" might never have been made.

The successful faith-based police series, an outreach of Burleson's Retta Baptist Church, began streaming for free on Amazon Prime in August 2019 after its first episode appeared as a stand-alone on the subscription service Pure Flix in March 2017 and on Prime the following March.

The 10-episode first season, which follows the saga of Detective Gary Travis in the fictional city of East Bank, Texas, can still be rented on Amazon and is available on Pure Flix.

Pure Flix's licensing commitment to the series helped facilitate financing for season 2, writer, director and producer Jarod O'Flaherty told the TEXAN, adding that news broke of the acquisition of Pure Flix's streaming video on demand service by Sony's AFFIRM Entertainment during season 2's fall filming.

"We now know 'Vindication' is going to be on a subsidiary of Sony," O'Flaherty said. "We are excited about the future." The purchase is subject to regulatory approval, AFFIRM announced Nov. 12.

Season 2 will air in two parts in 2021, with the first half of the 10-episode split season premiering later this spring, when filming is scheduled for the second half. The first five episodes were shot in June and November and are now being edited by O'Flaherty and musically scored by composer Connor Watkins.

Fans of season 1 will be glad to learn that the principal actors have returned for the second season, including Texans Todd Terry as Travis and Peggy Schott as his wife, Becky. Emma Elle Roberts returns as their daughter, Katie, while Venus Monique will reprise her role as Kris Tanner, Travis' protégé in the East Bank police department.

Some things have changed in East Bank. Without giving away any spoilers, Travis, who was a nominal Christian in season 1, has grown in his faith.

"We now get to see how Travis confronts his job as a believer," O'Flaherty said, adding that scripts concern current social issues and that increasing the tension is the rumor that the East Bank police chief will soon retire.

"There will be cliff hangers," O'Flaherty promised.

One subject missing from much of season 2 will be COVID-19. The series continues in a post-pandemic world, O'Flaherty said, explaining that audiences don't wish to be reminded of COVID-19 when they turn on the TV for entertainment.

While the coronavirus may be missing as a subject matter, it did affect filming.

O'Flaherty gauged the "COVID sensitivity level" of cast and crew when hiring for season 2. During filming, crew members wore masks and, while actors removed them for the cameras, they wore them during rehearsals. Special rooms were provided for social distancing and pre-packaged meals replaced buffet-style serving lines.

The very proximity of the cast and crew, who worked closely together for nine days of filming in June and then a 12-day shoot in November, allowed for little opportunity to go anywhere else and become exposed to the coronavirus.

"Both times we got through the shooting without any outbreaks," O'Flaherty said.

Some new cast members received positive COVID test results before filming began and their roles had to be quickly recast, but those actors never made it to set.

And had it not been for the coronavirus, the second season might never have been.

After season 1 aired in 2019, ending a two-three year "all-encompassing" project for O'Flaherty, he promised his wife and three daughters that he would step away from independent films. Within a few weeks, he landed a job in corporate IT. Life projects—like building a new house closer to the church—had been put on hold. The girls, now teenagers, were ready for braces and cars.

As stable as the corporate job was, O'Flaherty "began to get the

itch," and made plans for two more episodes of "Vindication," which could be shot during his vacation time.

Then COVID hit and shutdowns began. O'Flaherty was furloughed from work. With the unexpected time off and a donor providing financing, O'Flaherty arranged for the June filming. The opportunity arose to expand those two episodes into a full second season.

"The funding and partnerships came together," O'Flaherty said, declining to give specifics. "Had I not been furloughed, no way would I have walked away from my comfortable corporate job. But in the pandemic, it made sense."

The season 2 project has also employed more than 100 cast and crew.

Schott and Terry, both Christians, expressed enthusiasm about reprising their roles as Becky and Gary Travis during interviews with the TEXAN.

Schott called the opportunity "a blessing," adding that she sees Becky as "prayerfully and patiently encouraging her husband toward faith without being pushy or judgmental." Schott said that she hoped Becky, "who has her flaws, but has a heart for Christ, can be a good example to viewers."

Terry admitted that he has a "better handle" on Gary Travis this season, noting that in season 1, "Travis' arc as a character is kind of a slow burn as far as coming to Christ." In the season 2, the detective remains "a guy that still comes with his own set of problems and challenges." New family members will be introduced in the season, and this will make for some "interesting drama," Terry said.

"Vindication" remains very much a family and a church family affair,



“FOR A SMALL TEXAS BAPTIST CHURCH THAT RUNS ABOUT 200 ON A GOOD SUNDAY TO HAVE A MINISTRY THAT REACHES THAT FAR AND WIDE, CAN ONLY BE ATTRIBUTED TO GOD.”

Jarod O'Flaherty

O'Flaherty confirmed. His wife provides meal service and Retta Baptist members help, not only supporting the filming efforts, but also acting as extras.

Retta facilities are "base camp" for filming, the administrative headquarters and the location of some shoots, most of which occurred in and around Burleson.

The show's success is unquestionable. Season 1 has aired in more than 30 countries in Europe and the Middle East and has been dubbed in at least six languages, O'Flaherty said. In addition to Pure Flix and Prime, the series can also be seen on Redeem TV and the Inspiration Network and is available on DVD.

"For a small Texas Baptist church that runs about 200 on a good Sunday to have a ministry that reaches that far and wide, can only be attributed to God," O'Flaherty said. ✝

FROM THE SET

A. Actor Todd Terry as Det. Gary Travis in the crime drama "Vindication" films a season 2 outdoor scene. Most shooting was done in and around Burleson.

B. An interior shoot of the fictional Travis family home shows actors and masked crew. Todd Terry's Gary Travis character has grown in his faith since season 1.

C. Actors Peggy Schott and Todd Terry, who play Peggy and Gary Travis in "Vindication" were excited about reprising their season 1 roles in the faith-based police procedural show.

D. Masked crews and cameramen became commonplace as "Vindication" followed rigorous COVID-19 protocols on set.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RETTA VISION