

VOL.3 Issue 1

TXBAPTIST

MAGAZINE

**FOREVER
LOVED,
FOREVER
YOUNG:**

AN ADOPTION STORY



**THE NEW
TEXAS BAPTISTS
READY. RESET. GO.**

TEXAS BAPTISTS IS RELOCATING



We have selected a new location for our offices. We will be moving to Rambler Park, located off of the 75 Central and Walnut Hill intersection in Dallas by Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital. The majority of BGCT ministries will relocate to this location by September 2015.

A building in downtown Waco has been identified for housing the Texas Baptist Historical Collection. Construction on the interior will begin soon.

The Christian Life Commission has relocated to Austin and begun work with the new Texas Legislative Session.

We hope to co-locate our warehouse with the WMU of Texas offices to best suit the WMU ministry needs.

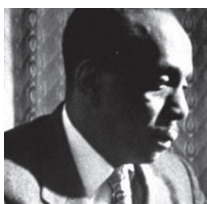
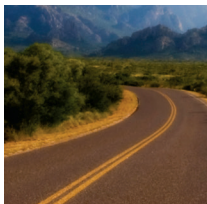
Baptist Church Loan Corporation has found alternate office spaces in the Dallas area but will continue a presence in the BGCT offices.



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THE NEW TEXAS BAPTISTS



BY: DAVID HARDAGE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At Texas Baptists, we're resetting for our future as we continue to be people who are fully committed and invested in both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

The restructuring is based on the new philosophy of how Texas Baptists will work for and with churches, institutions and mission organizations. This article highlights some of the key changes. The BGCT has two priorities in serving churches around the state:

1. To help the local church be and do church in the community and world; and
2. To collectively do what no single church can do alone.

The first priority, helping the local church, means the relationship between the church and the BGCT needs to be nurtured – or perhaps in some cases, started. In order to collaborate with someone, each partner must know the other well and share a common goal and purpose.

In order to enhance our relationships, we are setting a goal to have a personal touch with every church at least one time a year through our Area Representatives, Church Starters and other BGCT staff. As we begin to know one another better, our collaborative, God-directed work will enhance

its reach around the state and world creating a vast network of connected churches working together to spread the love of Christ.

To fuel the co-laboring, we are establishing a new Cooperative Program Office that will be dedicated to speaking about and teaching the power of cooperation. CP has long been and continues to be the lifeblood of Baptist work. This new office will work with churches to promote missions giving among the congregation as well as speak to church leadership on the importance and benefits of being linked together through a unified missions funding stream.

The second priority for the BGCT is to gather churches together to go beyond the scope of an individual church. Two great examples of this are 1) the work of the Christian Life Commission in Austin, which ensures that the voice of Texas Baptists is heard, and 2) the support and collaborative work with institutions around the state that have a powerful

impact on Texas, the nation and the world.

To better meet these goals, we have decided to reset the convention to be strategic, better focused and more agile as we continually improve our ministries and tactics to best suit the church which is ministering in an ever-changing environment and reaching out to an ever-increasing lost world.

So, how are we reestablishing ourselves to better accomplish these tasks and better work with churches?

First, we are realigning under six main ministry teams, which are:

- The Great Commission
- Missions
- Cultural Connections
- The Christian Life Commission
- Connections
- Collegiate Ministries

Creating a Great Commission Team will put our Evangelism and Discipleship teams together to better address the

discipleship process and evangelism training for churches. We are in the discipleship business. A new and key focus of this team will be creating a new church revitalization effort geared toward helping churches that have experienced a downturn in attendance due to any number of reasons. This new approach will holistically examine the church, its community, and the local and state trends to provide insight and guidance into building a strong, vibrant community of believers. Combined with these efforts are aspects associated with raising up believers, building disciples, and praising and worshipping our God, which includes age-specific ministry assistants and a refocused music and worship center.

Missions is the heartbeat of Texas Baptists and this team represents our commitment to Acts 1:8. The idea of being on mission in every aspect of our lives is exemplified in this team and its focus to help churches reach their communities. It specializes in and works with associations and churches for community impact through urban,





rural, city, state, regional, national and international mission trips. River Ministry, Mexico Missions, Disaster Response and BOUNCE student disaster recovery mission trips are included in this renovated Missions Team. The goal is to energize and equip your entire church to be on mission where you live and wherever else God is calling you.

The Connections Team will lead the way in establishing relationships with church ministers and church laity as we forge new ground in reaching an ever-changing and lost society. The Area Representatives reside in this team and are your church's connection to the vast ministries within the BGCT. Each of them is uniquely focused on relating to pastors and church leaders to hear and understand the need and connect them to the best person to assist. Other aspects of this team geared toward meeting the needs of the church and church staff are interim, bivocational, ministerial counseling ministries and church starting.

Some of the greatest mission fields in Texas are the state's numerous college campuses. Collegiate Ministries will continue its work ministering to and reaching these young people as they mature into the adults God wants them to be. The number of young, commissioned missionaries doing work around the world will continue through Go Now Missions. Shaping and forming Christians to reach their college

campuses for Christ will also continue through the vast network of Baptist Student Ministries around the state.

The Christian Life Commission has completed its move to Austin and is retaining its focus on public policy issues, ethical living, the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering and community ministries. Regarding public policy, this team works with lawmakers to make sure the Christian voice is heard as they draft the laws of Texas. Some current issues and opinions we are addressing are payday lending, human trafficking, religious liberty, public education, predatory gambling, and the hunger and poverty needs of our state. Through the CLC, we, as the 2.2 million Texas Baptists, are working to give a voice for those who have no lobbyist in Austin. Also, through ethical living we can encourage and lead the state in doing what is right, good, Christian and biblical.

Continuing the charge in understanding and addressing the needs of the changing demographics in our state is our Office of Cultural Connections. Hispanic Ministries, African American Ministries and Intercultural Ministries are together identifying and enacting ways of doing ministry among the various ethnic groups in Texas, all while pioneering new, integrated ministries as cultures continue to blend.

As you may have noticed, we are experimenting with regional offices that will help coordinate the efforts among

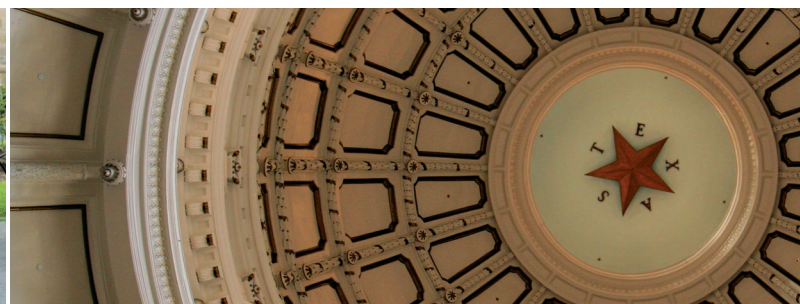
Baptist churches, associations and institutions to help maximize collaboration and community change. The first area to test this is San Antonio, due to the rapid change in that city and the South Texas area. This section of the state is home to 26 Baptist Student Ministries, 13 of which are in San Antonio, eight human care institutions, six schools and universities, as well as three camps, 16 Associations and thousands of churches. As we evaluate this location and the collective efforts, we will begin looking at replicating this initiative in other key areas around the state.

Other regional locations, in addition to the Area Representatives and Church Starters, are the Christian Life Commission in Austin and the Historical Collection moving to Waco by this summer. While these ministries have a distinct focus, like everyone else with the BGCT they are your representatives and are here to help you and your church in any way.

In addition to this experiment, we are excited to partner with Matryoshka Haus – a successful London-based ministry founded by former BSM director and church planter Shannon Hopkins – to design creative solutions for social change. Through this partnership we will explore new opportunities for engaging churches, communities and emerging generations, as believers and non-believers collaborate to see the power of God at work their community.

While some reporting structure has changed, the new reset of the organization has a zero net effect on the approved 2015 annual budget. We are still working for you and with you in evangelism, discipleship, missions, church starting, church strengthening, and reaching our collective communities and world.

Amidst this new structure, we are positioning ourselves for flexibility to enable continual and strategic adjustments in what we do and how we serve the local church in a changing world. We will constantly adjust for the future to meet the needs of the church and the state.





READY. RESET. GO.

Texas is changing, so are we, and we're excited. This new alignment positions the Convention to better respond to emerging needs in your church, community, across the state and around the world. Let's journey together as we live out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Go to texasbaptists.org for more details about Convention ministries and structure. Questions or comments? Let us know by emailing leah.allen@texasbaptists.org.

Great Commission Team

EVANGELISM

- Church Evangelism
- Hispanic Evangelism
- Youth Evangelism

DISCIPLESHIP

- Adult Discipleship
- Youth Discipleship
- Children/Preschool Discipleship
- Music and Worship

"WE'RE PUTTING OUR WHOLE DISCIPLE-MAKING PROCESS TOGETHER TO SEE WHAT SYNERGY IS POSSIBLE."

texasbaptists.org/greatcommission

Missions Team

- Urban Missions
- River Ministry/Mexico Missions
- Multi-Housing/House Congregations
- Texas Missionaries
- Disaster Recovery Missions

"MISSIONS IS THE HEARTBEAT OF TEXAS BAPTISTS, AND THE MISSIONS TEAM IS EVIDENCE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ACTS 1:8 MANDATE."

texasbaptists.org/missions

Cultural Connections

- Hispanic Ministries
- African American Ministries
- Intercultural Ministries

"THE DIVERSITY OF OUR FELLOW TEXAS BAPTISTS IS A STRENGTH THAT WILL CARRY THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST TO ALL NATIONS – HERE IN TEXAS AND AROUND THE WORLD."

texasbaptists.org/culturalconnections

Christian Life Commission

- Ethics and Justice
- Public Policy
- Hunger and Care Ministries

"THE WORK OF THE CLC REPRESENTS OUR FOREMOST COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT COMMANDMENT, ADVOCATING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT, GOOD, BIBLICAL AND CHRISTIAN."

texasbaptists.org/clc

Connections Team

- Pastor/Church Staff
- Area Representatives
- Church Starting
- Bivocational Ministry
- Counseling
- Western Heritage
- Interim Ministry
- Church Architecture

"CONNECTIONS IS THE GATEWAY TO TEXAS BAPTISTS RESOURCES. WE'RE EXCITED TO CONTACT EVERY CHURCH WITHIN THE YEAR THROUGH OUR AREA REPRESENTATIVES, CHURCH STARTERS AND OTHER CONVENTION STAFF."

texasbaptists.org/connections

Collegiate Ministries Team

BAPTIST STUDENT MINISTRIES

- 115 Campuses
- 2 Regional Coordinators
- 46 Directors
- 12 Associate Directors
- 11 Others

GO NOW MISSIONS

- 463 Student Missionaries

SERVING IN

- 26 Texas Cities
- 18 States
- 28 Countries

"WE CONSIDER THE COLLEGE CAMPUS A CAPTIVE MISSION FIELD, AND WE'LL CONTINUE MINISTERING TO AND COMMISSIONING FORTH COLLEGE STUDENTS ACROSS THE STATE AND WORLD."

texasbaptists.org/collegiateministry



Years ago, a U.S. government official wrote an article entitled "Seven Words to Live By." Some years later, I came across a revision of that article by a Baptist pastor, Dr. Edgar M. Arendall, and decided I liked his list better! Towards the end of 2014 and at the beginning of 2015, I shared during our Monday staff chapel services a "word a week" to live by this year. Here's the list—and I hope it's helpful to you as 2015 unfolds.

-David Hardage, Executive Director

BELIEVE

The answers to life's questions begin with our beliefs, and for us it all starts with God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

LOVE

Love the Lord as an act of surrender and love one another through acts of service.

HOPE

As long as there is God, there is hope—and God is always there.

FORGIVE

This is a great message of our faith, but only if it's a great practice of our faith.

GIVE

This will be a great year if all of us give generously of our time, talent, testimony, and treasure.

LEARN

Three areas to focus our learning are: practically, intellectually, and, of course, spiritually.

WORK

For the followers of Christ, our work is better described as service.



A portrait of David Handage, a middle-aged man with short grey hair, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and red tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

David Handage

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

I am a strong believer in endowments. Not everyone is, and I understand, to a degree, the reasoning behind the negative feelings regarding endowment giving. However, I do want to take this opportunity and this means to encourage my fellow Texas Baptists to consider a gift to a Baptist entity of their choice for endowment.

Here is an example of the power of endowments. If you were able to leave your church a gift of \$1,000 to endow the work and ministry of Vacation Bible School, the process would work something like this: Your gift would be placed in an interest-earning account and every year would produce an amount (say \$50.00) for VBS materials. This would be the case every year until the Lord comes. And, as time goes along, your \$1,000 investment would grow and every year produce a few more dollars towards VBS. After 20 years, you would have given more than \$1,000 for the purpose of supporting VBS and there would now be more than

\$1,000 in the investment account. (I use VBS as an example because my wife, Kathleen, was saved through VBS.)

Now, just imagine if every Texas Baptist would prayerfully consider leaving at least a "tithe" of whatever it is God has blessed them with to a Baptist cause they believe in at the time of their death. Of course, one does not have to wait *until* then to begin endowment giving, but at least *by* then, if you know what I mean!

The amount of permanent monies available every year for ministry and Kingdom causes would be extraordinary. On the flip side, imagine how much of God's resources we have allowed to go to other causes, or even the state, because we didn't do some advanced planning.

I would encourage you to look around your community and state, and genuinely consider what the Lord might have you do to help an organization or an institution on a permanent basis.

One thing Texas Baptists do and do well is support our institutions. I can't encourage you strongly enough to consider using what the Lord has given you to bless one of our great Texas Baptist institutions.

And, please remember, I'm not asking you to do anything Kathleen and I have not already done. We believe in being good stewards in life and at death.

Of course, as a Convention we are able to help you think and pray through this idea and process. Our Texas Baptist Missions Foundation, led by Bill Arnold, is more than willing and able to assist. I hope you'll contact them at 214.828.5343.

It is my personal belief that we, all of us as Texas Baptists, need to take steps to make sure our ministry, churches, institutions and organizations are financially secure. Please pray about this matter and then be obedient to how God directs. He will and you'll know!

God bless Texas Baptists.



LIFE CHANGE AND CHANGED LIVES



BY: KALIE LOWRIE
NEW MEDIA MANAGER

Monday night is the best part of Billy McCormick's week because it is the night

his small group meets for fellowship and Bible study.

On any given night, when he walks through the door of Eddie and Linda Dean's house, he feels at home. He is greeted with hugs, huge smiles, and sincere greetings inquiring about his life. This community has become a family to him by showing the love of Christ in a tangible way.

In 2013, when Billy walked in the Deans' home for the first time, his feelings were quite the opposite. The retired Army and Air Force cook with a gruff exterior was filled with dread and uncertainty. His girlfriend, Patty, invited him to her church small group held at the Deans' home and he had agreed to go with much trepidation.

"I was kind of apprehensive because every time I would go to church, I felt like the roof or the walls were going to cave in," he recalled.

The gracious and warm welcome Billy received from the small group members was surprising and he realized he actually felt comfortable. The next week when he returned, the love of those around him made him feel at home.

Two years earlier, Billy was at one of the darkest points in his life and decided he did not want to live any more. He took more pills than he could count and was ready to end his life.

"I woke up four hours later and thought, 'I am not even supposed to be awake,'" he said.

Billy did not know how or why he was still alive, but God had a plan for his life. He started dating Patty about a year later, and when she invited him to her small group he agreed to try it out. His life was forever changed.

The group, comprised of church members from Fielder Church in Arlington, began as a ministry for church greeters who, due to their volunteering schedule, did not have a Bible study to attend on Sunday mornings. Keith Lowry, Texas Baptists adult Sunday School consultant and senior adult/single adult/family ministry specialist, serves as the leader and has been amazed at the community that has developed over the past three years as the group has joined together for Bible study, meals, fellowship and relationship-building.

"The environment is so relaxed and it is a great experience to see people bring their friends - to see lives changed," Keith said. "You can see a difference in relationship level as we go deeper."

Ron Hart is one of the group's newest members. A diabetic with heart disease, Ron knew eight months ago that something else was wrong. He began seeking out a doctor to help diagnose his medical condition, but also realized he was missing something spiritually. He had heard of small groups at Fielder Church and, after looking on their website, soon called a number and was in touch with Keith.

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“Keith turned around and invited me – a stranger – to the next gathering. I showed up and the group was warm and considerate. They were there for me and for each other,” he said.

A few weeks after he started attending the small group, Ron was diagnosed with bladder cancer. After undergoing an intensive surgery and considering his additional medical issues, Ron realized it was truly a miracle that he survived. He feels confident that God led him to this group of believers so he could receive the support he needed during such a difficult time.

“It seems like every time we get together to pray, it works,” Ron said. “I went for 40 years without thinking about God very much ... It’s just been the last couple of years that I’ve really wanted to get back with God. I have a lot to make up for, but He kept me alive.”

On the Fielder Church website, the vision statement is clearly outlined: “It’s about life change through Jesus Christ.” One of the cornerstones of this vision is “Life change is sustained through relational small groups” – which is something Ron, Billy and many other small group participants have come to experience.

On June 7, 2014, Billy and Patty stood in the Deans’ living room for their wedding ceremony. Keith officiated and their friends from small group and family gathered together to experience the union that would not have been possible without God’s hand. Walking side by side through life’s ups and downs, this group is living out the Gospel and experiencing eternal life change.



A photograph of a man with short dark hair, smiling, holding a young girl with brown hair. The girl is whispering into the man's ear with her hands cupped around her mouth. They are outdoors with a blurred background of green trees and a wooden fence.

FOREVER LOVED, FOREVER YOUNG: AN ADOPTION STORY



BY: LEAH ALLEN
NEWS/PR MANAGER



It was December 8, 2008—the day to finally meet Sam. After years of waiting, Ashli and Kyle Young found themselves in Russia, face to face with the 3-year-old child they would soon adopt and call their own.

“It was weird,” Ashli said of that first interaction. “People talk about instantly connecting with their child. I didn’t experience that. He was just a kid with a personality I didn’t know.”

Five years earlier, the couple began the adoption process after doctors said they had less than a one percent chance of getting pregnant. They wanted children and, through prayer, came to realize that God’s way of building their family was going to be through adoption.

In the anxious period of waiting for the call that a child was available, the Youngs battled through learning experiences in their marriage as well as a surprising pregnancy that led to a miscarriage. In the meantime, friends were having children, and patience was difficult to maintain.

“Even though I didn’t like God’s timing, I had to trust that it was His timing,” Ashli admitted.

When the call came through from Buckner International that it was time to meet their son, the commitment to follow through with adopting a child seemed intimidating. The couple, however, chose to trust that God’s hand was in the process, and brought Sam home to Texas where their lives would never be the same.

Sam adjusted easily. Within four months, he was speaking English. As he began kindergarten, though, evidence of his past struggles began to take effect, and learning difficulties made school more of a challenge than for the average student.

Kyle and Ashli decided to take action and figure out what worked best for their son. They found therapists who could help cope with his feelings, doctors who understood international challenges, and teachers who taught with patience.

In June 2014, the Youngs felt God’s calling to expand their family once more and adopt a girl domestically. Kayli, at age seven, had lived in seven different households and, because of that, had few reasons to trust that Kyle and Ashli were going to keep their commitment of forever to her.

Kayli quickly began demonstrating behavioral issues at home and in school almost on a daily basis, something that the Youngs expected because of her difficult past and making adjustments to a new family.

“To deal with somebody who hurts because of somebody else’s choice can take an emotional toll,” Ashli said while fighting back tears. “But I want my kids to feel the safest they can feel.”

Day-to-day life can be challenging for the Young family. Ashli said she focuses on rejoicing in the little victories, such as Sam not having to call from the nurse’s office and Kayli not having to make a mark on the behavior chart.

Through the process of waiting for the calls, meeting their son and daughter for the first time, and now getting to raise their children, Kyle and Ashli have learned to lean on one another, to trust in God's provision, and to count on the support of family and friends.

Though they first saw adoption as God's way of building their family, they now also see it as a calling to choose to love someone who has been rejected, much like God's love for the Church.

Ashli said she looks at the challenges, such as dealing with learning difficulties and behavioral issues, as a chance to fight for children who did not have someone fighting for them for a long time.

Many people fear adoption will interfere with their lives, but the Youngs can attest to the process being a far greater blessing than an interference. Just knowing they can provide a safe place for children who would otherwise be without a family makes it a call worth surrendering to.

"We love our kids, and adoption fits us," Ashli said. "We're the right four people in this house at this time. Our hope is that our house will always be a safe place for kids."

Everyone can have a part in adoption even when they are unable to take in a child, Ashli said. The Youngs rely a lot on their friends and family who can provide emotional support and would struggle deeply without it.

When considering adoption or ways to help provide support to a family who has adopted, Ashli said the first step is to pray and say, "God, press on my heart what I can do," and He will lead the way.

Though Sam and Kayli share different DNA, Kyle and Ashli have chosen to love them as their very own. The children will be forever loved and, as their family motto states, they will be "Forever Young."

For more of the Youngs' story, insight on how to begin the adoption process, and ideas on how your church can minister to adoptive families, visit texasbaptists.org/adoption.





**YOUR NEIGHBORS. YOUR COMMUNITY.
YOUR STATE. PRAYED FOR BY NAME.**

What if we prayed for every household by name?

Visit pray4everyhome.com or call **214.828.5234** for more information on how to register your church and begin intentionally praying for the Gospel to spread in your community.

Acts 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

JESUS AND THE DISINHERITED – A BROAD CHALLENGE



BY: FERRELL FOSTER
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It can be hard for those of us who have so much prosperity and privilege to grasp the biblical concept of God's priority for the poor and disadvantaged, but it is there from front to back in the Bible. Those who suffer grasp this truth much more quickly; it thus inspires them and gives them hope.

Howard Thurman wrote a book in 1949 that helped many people reorient their thinking about God and hurting people, and Thurman thus supplied an important theological backbone for the American civil rights movement. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Thurman said "the religion of Jesus" is crucial to "people who stand with their backs to the wall."

The author identifies Jesus clearly as one of those with his back to the wall.

- First, Jesus was a Jew, which means his identity came from the "sense of community which Israel held with God."
- Second, Jesus was a poor Jew, as indicated by his parents' offering of two turtledoves, which shows they were not able to offer a lamb as sacrifice.
- Third, Jesus was a member of a minority group in the sense that Roman politics dominated the region.

In these aspects, Jesus was like many Jews. But Thurman notes that the "thing which makes him most significant is not the way in which he resembled his fellows, but the way in which he differed from all the rest of them." Still, that uniqueness "should not blind us to the significance of the environmental factors and the social and religious heritage of Jesus in determining the revolutionary character of his insights."

Thurman paints a picture of Jesus as one whom a politically and racially oppressed people could hear and follow, even after centuries. Thus Thurman helped make Jesus a relevant savior to be worshipped and emulated today. This was critical to African American Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century.

Thurman did not ignore the "theological and metaphysical interpretation of the Christian doctrine of salvation," but he said, "the underprivileged everywhere have long since abandoned any hope that this type of salvation deals with the crucial issues by which their days are turned into despair without consolation."

It is here that those of us who are prosperous and privileged are brought up short. Our lives can be tough at times, but they are not filled with the "despair without consolation" associated with poverty and oppression. There is a deep pain and understanding of reality that is experienced by the hurting people of this world that is hard to comprehend from a place of privilege.



Jesus offers all people salvation that lasts an eternity, but Thurman notes that the religion of Jesus offers a “technique of survival for the oppressed” in life now. This technique is exhibited in the pages of Scripture. “Wherever his spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.”

In other words, suffering tends to produce fear, deception, and hatred among those who suffer. These three “hounds of hell” can only be tamed by love.

Thurman, while giving an accurate description of the issues faced by those with their backs to the wall, did not let the disinherited off of the ethical hook, so to speak. Despite there being reasons for fear, deception, and hate in a context in which physical safety is threatened, they are not to be given free reign; they are to be confronted and challenged in the life of the disinherited.

This great African American pastor and author brings out

the importance of respect or reverence for personality. “The religion of Jesus says to the disinherited: ‘Love your enemy. Take the initiative in seeking ways by which you can have the experience of a common sharing of mutual worth and value. It may be hazardous, but you must do it.’”

Thurman deeply identifies with the lives of the oppressed. He challenges those of us who are not pushed down socially and economically, but he also challenges those who are suffering. It is a two-sided challenge rooted in the life and teachings of our Savior.

Every society in every time faces some significant tension between people of prosperity and privilege and those of suffering and oppression. Jesus clearly identifies with the second group, and that identity should call all of us who experience prosperity and privilege to step out of our comfort and, with Jesus, share in the suffering of others. And, for those who suffer, Jesus offers a way forward – not just toward heaven someday, but toward justice today.

Love enables us all to follow Jesus in that way – His Way.



UN MODELO DE IGLESIAS QUE DIOS ESTA USANDO EN LA ACTUALIDAD



BY: MARIO GONZALEZ
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En el Nuevo Testamento encontramos una variedad de modelos de iglesias. Así, reconocemos la primera iglesia establecida en la Biblia, que es el modelo de la iglesia de Jerusalén; esta era lo que hoy llamaríamos una mega-iglesia. También podemos encontrar el modelo de la iglesia de Antioquia, la cual se menciona en Hechos capítulo 11, donde por primera vez se les reconoce a los seguidores de Cristo como cristianos. Además de estas, se mencionan otros modelos como los de Éfeso, Galacia, etc.

Sin embargo, uno de los modelos que nos complace observar que Dios está levantado actualmente, es el modelo de las iglesias en casas, las cuales, han existido a lo largo de la historia de la humanidad; pero en estos últimos tiempos podemos notar el incremento numérico y explosivo de este tipo de congregaciones.

Los nombres dados al movimiento de iglesias en casas pueden variar según la región en donde se inician. Algunos les llaman iglesias sencillas, o tal vez orgánicas, debido a la forma natural, sin muchas complicaciones de programas en la que se basan para trabajar. Podemos encontrar en la internet una gran variedad de nombres que identifican a estas clases de grupos congregándose con el propósito de ser una iglesia.

Por lo general son grupos pequeños que se reúnen en una casa habitación o en un complejo de apartamentos o lugares de viviendas múltiples y aún en cárceles o prisiones. Su misión no es la de construir un edificio o depender de un templo

para realizar sus actividades; tampoco buscan establecer programas tradicionalmente diseñados para iglesias grandes. En lugar de ello prefieren enfocarse en la comunidad saliendo a buscar a los perdidos, con el propósito de encontrar y adiestrar nuevos discípulos seguidores de Jesús.

El proceso de discipulado no es solamente transmitir conocimientos bíblicos sino que se espera que discípulo experimente una transformación de vida. Para lograr este objetivo, se requiere de un trabajo en el que hay un constante monitoreo, supervisión o procesos que requieren de un mentor o coach. Durante el recorrido de este proceso, los nuevos creyentes son animados a participar en la adoración, el estudio bíblico (que por lo general es interactivo), y de poner en práctica las funciones de la iglesia.

Los miembros de estas pequeñas congregaciones se involucran en el evangelismo personal, y hacen un compromiso de crecer en Cristo a través del discipulado. Algunos de estos grupos son parte de una gran congregación en la que se les ha otorgado trabajar como unidades celulares de la congregación central, mientras que otros son grupos que se reúnen con la firme intención de ser iglesias autónomas y sencillas.

Los bautistas hispanos de Texas tenemos la oportunidad de trabajar juntos en este esfuerzo de no solamente alcanzar almas para Cristo, sino el poder hacer discípulos para El. Por este motivo, en la convención General de Texas estamos buscando iglesias que les gustaría considerar el modelo de las iglesias en casas para alcanzar a su comunidad. Nos gustaría que contacte a nuestra oficina, ya que ofrecemos orientación informativa y entrenamiento en cómo seguir algunos pasos para la iniciación de estas nuevas obras,

Es muy importante hacer ver que actualmente ya contamos con más de 400 iglesias en Texas que comparten este modelo. En varias ocasiones, algunas de estas iglesias se han fusionado para establecerse como una iglesia de sostenimiento propio, mientras que otras han continuado en una forma sencilla y orgánica hasta la fecha.

Visite texasbaptists.org/organicchurch.





SIEMPRE AMADOS UNA HISTORIA DE ADOPCIÓN

Era el 8 de diciembre del 2008 - el día de finalmente conocer a Sam. Después de años de espera, Ashli y Kyle Young se encontraron en Rusia cara a cara con un niño de 3 años al cual pronto adoptarían y harían suyo.

"Fue un poco raro," dijo Ashli de esa primera interacción. "La gente habla de inmediatamente conectar con sus hijos. Yo no experimenté eso. Simplemente era un niño que no conocía."

Cinco años antes, la pareja comenzó el proceso de adopción luego de que los médicos dijeron que tenían menos de un por ciento de posibilidad de tener hijos biológicos. Querían niños y, a través de la oración, se dieron cuenta de que Dios edificaría su familia a través de la adopción.

En el tiempo ansioso de esperar la llamada de que un niño estaba disponible, los Young lucharon a través de experiencias difíciles en su matrimonio y un embarazo sorpresa que resultó en un aborto espontáneo. Mientras tanto, sus amigos estaban teniendo bebés, y se hacía difícil ser pacientes.

"Aunque no me gustó el tiempo de Dios, tenía que confiar en que fue a su tiempo," Ashli admitió.

Cuando la llamada de Buckner Internacional llegó para dejarles saber que era hora de conocer a su hijo, el compromiso de continuar con la adopción de un niño parecía intimidante. La pareja, sin embargo, eligió confiar en que la mano de Dios estaba en el proceso y que El trajo a Sam a Texas, donde sus vidas nunca serían igual.

Sam se ajustó fácilmente. Dentro de un plazo de cuatro meses, ya estaba hablando inglés. Una vez que comenzó el Kindergarten, todo lo que experimentó como bebé comenzó a hacerse evidente, y las dificultades en aprender hicieron que la escuela le fuera un reto más difícil que para la mayoría de los estudiantes.

Kyle y Ashli decidieron tomar cartas en el asunto y averiguar lo que iba a funcionar mejor para su hijo. Encontraron terapeutas que podrían ayudar a Sam a enfrentar sus sentimientos, doctores que entendían los desafíos internacionales y maestros que enseñaban con paciencia.

En junio del 2014, los Young sintieron que Dios les estaba llamando a ampliar su familia una vez más y adoptar una niña. Kayli, a los siete años, había vivido en siete diferentes hogares

y, debido a eso, tenía pocas razones para confiar en que Kyle y Ashli iban a mantener su compromiso con ella siempre.

Kayli pronto comenzó a demostrar problemas de comportamiento en el hogar y en la escuela casi a diario, algo que los Young esperaban debido a su pasado difícil y el ajustarse a una nueva familia.

"Tratar con alguien que sufre debido a la decisión de alguien más puede ser emocionalmente fuerte," dijo Ashli mientras luchaba con las lágrimas. "Quiero que mis hijos se sientan lo más seguros posible."

Día a día la vida puede ser un desafío para la familia Young. Ashli dice que se enfoca en gozar las pequeñas victorias, tales como no recibir una llamada de Sam desde la oficina de la enfermera o Kayli recibir una marca en la escuela por mal comportamiento.

A través del proceso de espera por las llamadas, la satisfacción de conocer a sus hijos por primera vez, y ahora poder criarlos, Kyle y Ashli han aprendido a apoyarse el uno al otro, confiar en la promesa de Dios, y contar con el apoyo de familia y amigos.

Aunque al principio vieron la adopción como la manera en que Dios edificaría su familia, ahora también la ven como un llamado a escoger amar a alguien que ha sido rechazado, así como Cristo amó a la Iglesia.

Ashli dijo que ella ve los retos de tratar con problemas de aprendizaje y comportamiento como una oportunidad de abogar por niños que no tuvieron quien abogara por ellos por mucho tiempo.

Muchas personas temen que la adopción interfiera con sus vidas, pero los Young pueden dar testimonio de que el proceso fue mucho más una bendición que una interferencia. Solo saber que proveer un lugar seguro para niños, que de otra manera no tendrían una familia, hace que esto sea un llamado al cual vale la pena rendirse.

"Amamos a nuestros niños, y la adopción es una buena opción para nosotros", dijo Ashli. "Somos las cuatro personas que se supone que estén en esta casa en este momento. Nuestra esperanza es que nuestra casa siempre sea un lugar seguro para niños".

"Cada persona puede participar en la adopción, aún cuando no puedan adoptar a un niño," dijo Ashli. Los Young dependen mucho de sus amigos y familiares que pueden brindar apoyo emocional y lucharían mucho sin él.

Al considerar la adopción o formas de proveer apoyo a una familia que ha adoptado, Ashli dijo que el primer paso es orar y decir, "Dios, demuéstreme que puedo hacer," y El guiará el camino.

Aunque Sam y Kayli tienen A.D.N. diferentes, Kyle y Ashli han escogido amarlos como si fueran suyos. Los niños siempre serán amados.

Para obtener más de la historia de los Young, información de cómo comenzar el proceso de adopción, e ideas de cómo su iglesia puede ministrar a familias adoptivas, visite texasbaptists.org/adoption.

txb.life

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CALENDAR

APRIL

- 5** Easter
- 9** Engage, Amarillo
- 10-11** Bible Drill / Speakers' Tournament, various locations
- 13-14** Introduction to Interim Ministry, Granbury
- 17-18** WMU of Texas Annual Meeting, Woodway
- 20-24** Intentional Interim Ministry Training, Dallas
- 20-22** Texas Baptist Educator's Retreat, New Braunfels
- 24-25** Congreso, Waco
- 24-25** Bible Drill / Speakers' Tournament, various locations
- 27** Texas Baptists Golf Classic, TPC San Antonio
- 30** 4xFour Clinic, Georgetown

MAY

- 1-2** State Bible Drill / Speakers' Tournament, Dallas
- 10** Mother's Day Hunger Offering, Statewide
- 11-16** Bike Out Hunger - Texas, Boerne to Dallas
- 18-19** Executive Board, Dallas

JUNE

- 1-2** Introduction to Interim Ministry, San Antonio
- 7** Texas Baptists Legacy Award, Independence
- 8-12** Super Summer Session 1, Dallas Baptist University
- 8-13** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 1
- 15-19** Super Summer Session 2, Hardin-Simmons University
- 15-19** Super Summer Session 3, University of Mary-Hardin Baylor
- 15-20** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 2
- 15-20** Disaster Recovery Eagle Pass Rebuild, Eagle Pass
- 18-19** National Bible Drill / Speakers' Tournament, Kingsland, Georgia
- 19-20** Youth Evangelism Conference, Burleson
- 22-26** Camp Exalted, Denton
- 22-26** Super Summer Session 4, Howard Payne University
- 22-27** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 3
- 28-30** Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas, Austin
- 29- July 3** Super Summer Session 5, Houston Baptist University

JULY

- 3-5** Campamento East Texas, Lone Star
- 6-11** Disaster Recovery Mission Trip
- 6-11** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 4
- 7-9** African American Fellowship Conference
- 13-18** Disaster Recovery Family Mission Trip, Galveston
- 13-17** Super Summer Session 6, Hardin-Simmons University
- 13-18** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 5
- 20-25** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 6
- 27- Aug 1** BOUNCE Student Mission Trip 7

2015



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

One of the best ways of reaching children in your community is through Vacation Bible School (VBS). There are free resources as well as links and suggestions for your church program on this year's theme, "The Great Commission Express." The materials are created for early childhood and grade school children between 1st and 6th grades.

The resources include teaching guides, planning sheets, joint worship PowerPoint presentations and scripts, and other downloadable resources that focus on children's needs.

baptistwaypress.org/vbs

FINDING A MINISTER

It's the New Year and new opportunities seem to abound as we simply flip the calendar one more time. New opportunities for churches often mean new additions to the ministerial staff. Finding the right minister for your unique church can be daunting.

Texas Baptists is helping the process by hosting a Minister/Church Connection online tool. This resource creates a database of ministers looking for a church and churches looking for a minister.

Information is password protected for privacy reasons and to help the church narrow its search without being inundated with resumes of people who don't match what they are looking for. So visit texasbaptists.org/ministerconnection to help find your next minister or ministry opportunity.



EVANGELISM TRAINING

In today's society and the hustle and bustle of everyday life associated with it, there seem to be more distractions and obstacles than ever before to share the Gospel. Texas Baptists [un]Apologetic conferences around the state help identify the obstacles and ways of getting around and over them to present the hope of Christ in a confident and loving way.

texasapologetics.org

MISSION TRIPS AND PROJECTS

Texas Baptists have numerous opportunities to impact our state and world through active and intentional mission trips this spring and summer. We offer a variety of locations and age-specific opportunities to be on mission.

- BOUNCE student disaster recovery mission trips
- Spring Break mission trips for college students through BSM and Collegiate Ministries
- Disaster recovery mission trips for adults and entire families

texasbaptists.org/missions

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