

September 15, 2015 • ISSUE 55

TEXAN MAGAZINE

REACH TEXAS



+ 'PRAY FOR POLICE' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES IN HOUSTON

+ SWBTS OFFERS REVIVAL PREACHERS



What we owe Caesar

In a conversation about Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who made news for going to jail rather than issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, a friend asked me, “What do we owe Caesar?” I gave a hasty answer, but the question has stuck in my head. Here’s an effort to answer more thoroughly.

We owe Caesar respect. This is biblical as stated in 1 Peter 2:17. In this description and the one in Romans 13, we have governmental leaders praised as those who punish evil and praise what is good. The implication is that respect, honor and subjection are in service of order, lawfulness and justice.

We therefore owe Caesar obedience, to a point. Because we do not owe any man power over our consciences, there is a limit to what we may be compelled to do. Peter and John specified limits on obedience to even legitimate authority in Act 4, placing the rule of God above the rule of those he places in authority. But God’s servants did not claim the right to steal or destroy based on their submission to Christ.

We owe Caesar taxes. This was part of Jesus’ two-fold message in Mark 12:17—it is right to pay taxes, but the sovereignty of God is over all things. He does not say what a fair tax is, nor does he question whether those taxes are being used for wicked purposes. I assume Roman taxes were used as least partly for things we would not call righteous.

The larger question is, “Who is Caesar in 21st-century America?” Of

course, the people rule in some very real ways, though often indirectly. You could say our elected officials, who represent us day to day, stand in the role of Caesar as they make laws, define public good and levy taxes. I’d even give a nod to law itself as having a Caesarean role in our lives. Law has some claim on representing the definition of good and evil as determined indirectly by the people who vote.

Where in this scheme can we fit what is arguably judicial overreach? The Kim Davis case raises some questions not yet answered in the aftermath of the Obergefell case, in which the Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage legal in the entire nation. This overturning of state law from coast to coast was not a legislative action, at least not officially, but it is misunderstood as having the status of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a law enacted by a legislature. Justice Kennedy acknowledged this shortcoming when he said that the court needed to act because those wishing to marry outside the recognized definition of marriage had exhausted legislative remedies. Understand that to mean that they could not win elections quickly enough or in enough places to get what they thought to be their inherent rights, so the court needed to accomplish what neither the U.S. Congress nor more than a dozen state legislatures would do. If the people are Caesar, and if elected representatives and even legislation have some claim to the title—the Obergefell decision can claim no such legitimacy.

So back to Kim Davis. The governor of Kentucky does not consider her claim of religious freedom legitimate, and several smart Christian people have said that she should either obey the law or resign. Maybe so, but some questions seem pertinent before we throw her to the tender mercies of the “Love Wins” mob.

Was President Obama equally wrong and should Attorney General Eric Holder have been arrested for declaring that the Justice Department would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act in 2011 because the president believed it to be discriminatory? DOMA was a law, by the way, not the interpretation of a law. Is Kim Davis more of a scofflaw than Eric Holder because she’s a county official or because she is conservative?

Did Gavin Newsome, the mayor of San Francisco, go to jail for ordering clerks to ignore California law and issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples? Should he have?

I confess; I disagree with the Obama-Holder position on DOMA. I considered it nonfeasance. I also believe Gavin Newsome committed a malfeasance when he disdained his state’s law. I’m more sympathetic with Kim Davis’ stand. I recognize the hypocrisy of this sentiment.

So let’s start the discussion over. Who makes law, the courts or the elected legislature? Is nonfeasance, even malfeasance, a crime, without regard to the actor? Is the conscience of a conservative as sacrosanct as that of a liberal? Once we agree on the rules, we can have a little talk about these things.



COVER STORY | PAGE 06

Nearly 27 million people inhabit the state of Texas—an ever-increasing number representing nations and people from around the globe. Statistically, in order to keep pace with the 12 percent population growth experienced since 2010, as many as 30 rural and 1,000 urban churches must be planted each year. While messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention have designated the largest portion of their in-state budget to evangelism and missions, giving \$4.5 million to those specific gospel tasks in 2015, they desire to do more.



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TEXAN Magazine is e-published twice monthly by the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, 4500 State Highway 360, Grapevine, TX 76099-1988.
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05 SWBTS emphasizes Texas churches in upcoming 'Revive this Nation' effort

While the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays stand between fall and spring, the time is now to prepare for March 2016's Revive this Nation—a nationwide revival effort led by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.



10 IMB to reduce personnel by 600-800, reset the organization

International Mission Board President David Platt, along with other senior IMB leadership, presented a plan to address significant revenue shortfalls and “complete a reset of the organization” during a town hall meeting with missionaries and staff, Aug. 27. The plan includes reducing missionary and staff personnel by 600-800 and restructuring its Support Services and Mobilization divisions.

12 Pray for Police campaign launched in Houston following deputy's murder

Dozens of law enforcement officers, clergy, and local and state representatives gathered Sept. 8 at the Houston Police Officers Union headquarters to launch an unconventional campaign—Pray for Police—that they hope will heal the city and unite the nation in support of those sworn to protect and serve.

14 COLUMN: Always

David Allen, dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, explains one of his favorite—and one of the most important—words in the Bible: always. According to Allen, “So much Christian theology, promise, and hope radiates from this single word.”

+ TEXAS

HYMN SING CONTEST SET FOR OCT. 17 IN FORT WORTH

An opportunity awaits students who attend high school, college or graduate school, as well as young adults (age 37 and under) who have a love of singing

Christian hymns. The first annual Texas Hymn Sing event will be held at Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth, Oct. 17. Prizes will be awarded to first, second and third place, with the grand prize for first place winners set at \$1,000. There is no entry fee for the contest.

Contestants will choose songs from a pre-approved selection and sing before a live audience. Judging criteria and other information, including rules, can be found at texashymnsing.net.

Email [here](#).

+ NATION

SCOTUS URGED BY FEDERAL JUDGES TO REVIEW ABORTION MANDATE

Five judges on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals have sharply criticized the court decision that ruled against GuideStone Financial Resources earlier this summer.



A three-judge panel of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver ruled against GuideStone and GuideStone participants Truett-McConnell College and Reaching Souls International in July.

In a rare move, the entire 10th Circuit, on its own initiative, took a vote on whether to reconsider the panel decision. When the vote narrowly fell short, five of the 19 judges issued a dissenting opinion. Their opinion, released Sept. 3, explains why the panel decision was "a dangerous approach to religious liberty" that is so "clearly and gravely wrong" that it "will not long survive."

Judges registering the dissent were Paul Kelly, Harris Hartz, Timothy Tymkovich, Neil Gorsuch and Jerome Holmes.

Read the story [here](#).

JUDGE ORDERS JAILED CLERK RELEASED

As supporters rallied outside a Kentucky jail to show support for Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis, Sept. 8, the judge who put her behind bars ordered her released.

U.S. District Judge David Bunning lifted the contempt order he issued against Davis four days ago, after she refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. While Davis has been behind bars, five of her deputy clerks agreed to issue the licenses, which were modified to remove the head clerk's name. Davis told the judge it would violate her belief in the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman to have her name attached to licenses issued to homosexual couples.

Read the story [here](#).

**100-PLUS TURN TO CHRIST AT COLLEGE BIBLE CONFERENCE**

More than 100 students made professions of faith in Christ during Cedarville University's annual Fall Bible Conference. Another 90-plus students responded to a call to full-time ministry.

"We praise God that each of these students responded in faith, moving forward toward what they felt God wanted them to do," said Thomas White, president of Cedarville in southwest Ohio. "It was an amazing week, and we are praying that it is only the beginning of even more spiritual awakening."

This year's speaker, Clayton King, founder of Clayton King Ministries and teaching pastor at NewSpring Church

in Anderson, S.C., spoke to 3,400-plus students, faculty and staff during the Aug. 17-20 conference.

King shared the story of loss in his own life, including the deaths of his mother and father. He spoke about weakness and brokenness and how God uses those times as a way to worship Him and as a way to heal.

"Hard times don't make us happy," King said early in the week. "They keep us humble and make us holy."

Those words—and others sown by King in his series of messages—fell on fertile ground at Cedarville, which has been endorsed by the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio since 2002.

Read the story [here](#).

SECOND SCHOOL LEAVES CCCU

Oklahoma Wesleyan University has become the second institution to withdraw from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities after two member schools changed their hiring policies to include same-sex couples.

"We believe in missional clarity and view the defense of the biblical definition of marriage as an issue of critical importance," said Everett Piper, president of the Bartlesville, Okla., school. "The CCCU's reluctance to make a swift decision sends a message of confusion rather than conviction."

Oklahoma Wesleyan's Aug. 31 withdrawal comes six weeks after Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and Goshen College changed their hiring policies. EMU is a founding member of the CCCU, and its president, Loren Swartzendruber, sits on the CCCU board.

Read the story [here](#).

+ BAPTIST

MIDWESTERN RECEIVES \$7M GIFT TOWARD STUDENT CENTER

In what President Jason Allen called an answer to prayer for one of the "most significant institutional needs" since Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's inception in 1957, the school has received a \$7 million pledge from an Oklahoma family for a new student center.

Allen said he could not adequately express gratitude to God for his providence in uniting the seminary with Harold and Patricia Mathena of Oklahoma City who have pledged \$7 million to Midwestern Seminary as a lead gift toward an approximately \$14 million student center.

"This gift is an answer to over two years of prayer on my part and, in a very real way, to Southern Baptists' prayers since 1957 when, in our seminary's founding documents, the Board of Trustees expressed their desire to build a facility for student and family life as soon as possible," Allen said.

Read the story [here](#).



HEROES HONORED FOR SERVICE; 53 PROFESS FAITH

First Baptist Church of Bossier City, La., hosted "Honor our Heroes Sunday," a special day devoted to doing just that: honoring the first responders and military service personnel in and around the city.

The church formally invited all police officers, firefighters and paramedics from the city as well as individuals in active military service, particularly those stationed at nearby Barksdale Air Force Base. Hundreds accepted the invitation, and roughly 5,000 people attended the church's two worship services that day, which featured a gospel presentation and a live interview with Taya Kyle, wife of "American Sniper" Chris Kyle, Aug. 30. By the end of the event, 53 people had prayed to receive Christ.

Pastor Brad Jurkovich said the current cultural climate prompted the church to host the event. With nationally covered police shootings to the on-duty deaths of three Louisiana officers in the last month alone, Jurkovich saw the need to set aside a day to honor local first responders and military service personnel.

"We just wanted to be a blessing to them. That was our first goal," he said. "Second, we wanted to share the gospel with as many people as we could."

The church offered two worship services instead of its usual one offered each Sunday. The church also held a free breakfast to those who attended the first service and a free lunch to those who attended the second.

Read the story [here](#).

NATIONAL CP YTD 1.13% OVER PROJECTION

Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee are \$174,276,734.99, or 1.13 percent above the year-to-date budgeted goal, and are 1.42 percent ahead of contributions received during the same time frame last year, a news release from SBC Executive Committee President Frank S. Page reported. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution, according to the 2014-15 SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

As of August 31, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget represent 101.13 percent of the \$172,333,333.33 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$2,434,843.37 more than the \$171,841,891.62 received through the end of August 2014.

Read the story [here](#).

PASTOR APPRECIATION OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

As a way of encouraging more churches to participate in pastor appreciation month in October, NAMB is partnering with worship leaders Shane and Shane to provide a worship event for a selected church that best demonstrates the spirit of pastor appreciation. The recipient church will have

the opportunity to host the free event as an additional thank-you for its pastor.

Church members can post photos on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook with the hashtag #LiftMyPastor showing how they lift their pastor with one of NAMB's resources found at sendnetwork.com/pastors-appreciation. Posts should include details of why and how the church body chose to lift its pastor.

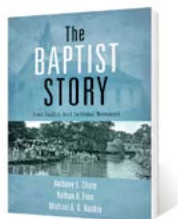
Each social media post that uses the hashtag #LiftMyPastor will be entered for the chance to bring Shane and Shane to the church for a worship night. Visit facebook.com/NAMB.SBC for details and more about entering your church's example of pastor appreciation.

Read the story [here](#).

Get free resources [here](#).

+ BAPTIST

NEW BOOK SHOWCASES BAPTIST HISTORY



Three Baptist history scholars were not completely satisfied with the textbook options in their field, so they decided to write their own.

In *The Baptist Story*, Michael Haykin, Nathan Finn and Anthony Chute sought to produce a more narrative story that spans four centuries of Baptist history of this diverse group but is accessible for students and laypeople.

"It seems most Baptist history books are written primarily for the professor instead of the student," said Chute, professor of church history at California Baptist University. "Our book communicates to the

student the material they need to know in a way that is informative and interesting."

Finn, dean of the School of Theology and Missions at Union University, noted the idea for a new Baptist history book emerged several years ago. Nothing came of it until B&H Academic asked Finn, Chute, and Haykin, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, to author the book.

"There has not been a true Baptist history textbook written by Southern Baptists with a primarily, though not exclusively, Southern Baptist readership in mind for nearly 30 years," Finn said. "While several fine textbooks have been published, most are not written from a convictionally evangelical perspective, or they only cover Baptists in a particular region."

Read the story [here](#).

NGU LEADERS ASKED TO ADDRESS PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE

North Greenville University officials have been asked to appear before the South Carolina Baptist Convention Executive Board Oct. 15 to explain the university's actions surrounding the departure of its former president, Jimmy Epting, in January.

Dwight Easler, SCBC Executive Board chairman, has asked the university's board chairperson and vice chairperson, along with the interim president, to attend the fall meeting of the Executive Board in order to "give explanation of actions taken, and future actions to be taken to improve accountability and processes."



In a Sept. 3 letter to Executive Board members, Easler said he and Richard Harris, interim SCBC executive director-treasurer, met for two hours with NGU leaders Aug. 31 and asked

them to "address ... the many rumors about what has transpired at NGU."

The university announced in January that Epting would take a sabbatical for the remainder of the school year and would retire at the end of the semester. A video titled "Epting Exposed" surfaced on YouTube on Aug. 27, raising questions about the circumstances that led to Epting's departure. It is unclear who posted the video.

Read the story [here](#).

GREAT COMMISSION RESEARCH NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING COMING TO SWBTS

The Great Commission Research Network (formerly known as the American Society for Church Growth) will hold its annual conference on Oct. 1-2, 2015, at Southwestern Baptist Seminary in

Fort Worth. Speakers will include Jim Tomberlin, John Mark Yeats, Gary McIntosh, Charles Arn, Nelson Searcy, Nathan Lorick, Bill Day and Art McPhee.

"Our group believes in the biblical principles for church growth and effective disciple-making as described by Donald McGavran. We meet once each year as a group, and our members receive two issues of the Great Commission Research

VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS MARKET VOLATILITY

GuideStone Financial Resources has produced a video outlining the nation's current market volatility and responses that long-term investors should consider, including remaining calm in the face of daily news, keeping a long-term focus on investments and maintaining diversification in age- and risk-appropriate investments.

David S. Spika, CFA, global investment strategist for GuideStone Capital Management, LLC, narrates the video. Spika has been called on in recent days to discuss market volatility in a variety of news outlets, including cable business channel CNBC and industry news source InvestmentNews.

Spika noted in the video that stock market declines and rebounds are nearly impossible to time, even for professionals, and should never be the reason for long-term investment allocation changes.

"Here at GuideStone, we've been confident that market volatility would rise because the market was much too calm and investors were way too complacent," Spika explained on the video. "But we sure couldn't predict the timing of the next correction."

While headlines in the media may trigger memories of the 2008 market drop and recession, Spika said the reality is that markets are constantly going through periods of correction and rally.

Read the story [here](#).

Journal each year," said Mike Morris, president of the GCRN.

Topics of this year's conference are multisite churches, effective evangelism and the relevance of Donald McGavran's teachings in the 21st century. Each speaker's presentation will be followed by a question and answer session. To register for the conference, visit greatcommissionresearch.com.

Southwestern emphasizes Texas churches in upcoming 'Revive this Nation' effort

Through a grant-funded, half-century old revival program, churches can have revival meetings at minimal cost.

By Sharayah Colter

While the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays stand between fall and spring, the time is now to prepare for March 2016's Revive this Nation—a nationwide revival effort led by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

As in past years, Southwestern will send students and faculty to preach revivals and lead in community evangelism during the school's spring break week, March 13-17. Financial gifts to the seminary fund the program so that each preacher's round-trip travel expenses are covered. Churches need only provide a host home or other lodging, food to eat during the stay, and local transportation.

Churches can sign up to host a revival through the Feb. 1 deadline by visiting

WHERE WILL REVIVAL BEGIN?

JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR REVIVAL IN OUR NATION.
SWBTS.EDU/RTN

Revival begins in the church.
This March, Southwestern will send more than 100 students and professors to preach in churches across America and to evangelize the communities around them.

SOUTHWESTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

swbts.edu/rtn. Charles Patrick, vice president for strategic initiatives at Southwestern, said the participation of Texas churches in 2015 was "very encouraging."

"Roughly 20 percent of the churches who signed up for Revive This Nation were from Texas," Patrick said. "I'd like to see this trend continue if not increase. Having a Southwestern student preach a revival in Texas gives churches a chance to directly see their 'return on investment' to the Cooperative Program through

the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. Moreover, with Texas being the second most populous state in the U.S., it makes sense that Southwestern continue to send preachers to reach the lost in Texas."

Over this nationwide revival effort's 55-year history, more than 14,000 people have given their lives to Christ. Southwestern hopes to add to that number in 2016 when it sends out students willing to give up their spring break in exchange in order to preach the Word and reach the world.



REACH TEXAS

**REACH TEXAS MISSIONS
OFFERING EMPHASIS SLATED
FOR LATE SEPTEMBER;
\$1.3 MILLION-GOAL SET**



While most of America had a 2 percent change in population over the past five years, Texas has grown 12 percent since 2010, ushering in great ethnic and religious diversity and bringing a global mission field to our doorstep.

27,695,284

Population of Texas

16.3%

Texans who are foreign-born

34.6%

Texans who speak a language other than English at home

Houston

Has surpassed New York City as the most ethnically diverse city in America

Irving

Has the most ethnically diverse zip code in the nation.

450

Number of people groups in Texas

170

Number of mosques in Texas. The largest mosque in America will be completed in March 2016 southwest of Houston.

40

Number of Hindu temples in Texas

By Sharayah Colter

More than 27 million people inhabit the state of Texas—a growing number representing nations and people from around the globe. Statistically, in order to keep pace with the 12 percent population growth experienced since 2010, as many as 30 rural and 1,000 urban churches must be planted each year.

While messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention have designated the largest portion of their in-state budget to evangelism and missions, giving \$4.5 million to those specific gospel tasks in 2015, they desire to do more.

The annual Reach Texas Missions Offering provides the opportunity to do just that, inviting churches to band together to give another \$1 million-plus toward reaching the lost in Texas. Of money given through the September offering, 100 percent goes directly toward mission and evangelism efforts in the state.

SBTC Church Planting Lead Associate David Alexander says the yearly missions offering plays a crucial role in reaching the Lone Star State.

“More people groups live in Texas than anywhere else in North America,” Alexander says.

In fact, reports indicate that 16 percent of Texans are foreign born, and 35 percent speak a language besides English at home. More Muslims live in Texas than in any other state, worshipping in some 170 mosques—the largest one in the U.S. to be fully constructed by March 2016 near Houston. The 75038 zip code in Irving is the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the entire country.

The growth and diversification of Texas has brought the foreign mission field to North America, and the Reach Texas Offering helps fund Texans’ efforts on that field, Alexander says.

“One-hundred percent of the offering is used to help the SBTC churches reach international people groups, mobilize teams of people to creatively impact their communities and start new churches in Texas. The focus is resourcing SBTC churches in their missional kingdom work in Texas.”

Houston’s First Baptist Church Pastor Greg Matte, whose city is now more ethnically diverse than New York City, said in a video message to fellow Texans that, in essence, state missions is now world missions thanks to the influx of global peoples to Texas.

“God has brought the world to our city,” Matte said. “And we want to bring Jesus to our city.”

Houston church planter Chris Bradford says the Reach Texas Offering coupled with the way Southern Baptists of Texas give on a continual basis through the Cooperative Program makes an enormous impact in his church’s ability to minister in South Texas.

“[The SBTC] lovingly and gracefully came alongside me and helped me start this church and financially helped us get started,” said Bradford, who leads Pathway Church in Mont Belvieu. “To be honest with you, it’s churches just like you guys—the SBTC and churches that are alongside partnering with us—that have helped us come to the east side of Houston and reach people for Christ. And so, Pathway Church [has] been effectively doing that for the last year—leading people down the pathway to real life. That’s what we’re here for. So I want to thank you for giving to the Cooperative Program and the Reach Texas Mission Offering.”

This year, the week of prayer emphasis for the Reach Texas Offering runs Sept. 20-27. The goal for the offering is set at \$1.3 million, with videos, posters and bulletin inserts available online at sbtexas.com/reachtexas.

SHIFT WORKERS ARE CHURCH PLANT'S FOCUS

By Erin Roach

MONT BELVIEU

Chris Bradford grew up on the east side of Houston and always thought he was living in the ugliest part of Texas. He looked forward to the day when he could get out of town.

When he graduated from high school, he bolted away to college and then to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He served at a church in the Arlington area for about six years, “and then, against my will, I felt God speaking to me and calling me back to the Houston area,” Bradford said.

He moved back to serve on staff at the church he grew up in, and he and his wife Ashley ministered to young married couples.

“Over time God began to kind of show me the brokenness of the city ... specifically on the east side where it’s full of refineries and plant workers—shift workers,” said Bradford, who is featured in one of this year’s Reach Texas Missions Offering videos.

“I began to notice that my friends and my blood and people that I grew



up with were working in these refineries in shift work, and their shifts were completely different than their families’, and they began losing their wives,” he said. “I’d see them lose their wives and kids, and families be split apart because of just the culture here.”

God began to break Bradford’s heart for the people on the east side of Houston, the people he grew up with, and suddenly he found himself falling in love with the community.

Bradford came across a statistic that said more than 250 churches in the greater Houston area closed their doors in 2013 alone, even as the population grows by nearly 2,500 people per week.

Stepping out in faith, he and his wife started The Pathway Church in Mont Belvieu, near Baytown. The community they’re trying to reach is about 20 minutes from where he grew up—the place he had said he hated years ago.

“My wife and I just began to start sharing Jesus with people and telling people about the gospel,” Bradford said. “We started a Bible study in our house about a year ago with eight people—eight adults in our living room.”

Last Easter Sunday, more than 200 worshipped at The Pathway Church.

“We saw some people get saved. We’ve seen over 100 people accept Christ as a result of this ministry in the last year,” Bradford said. “It’s not anything that we’ve done specifically, special or out of the ordinary. It’s just being obedient to share the gospel with people.”

Bradford recalls meeting with Southern Baptists of Texas Convention leaders a year and a half ago, sharing his story and talking about the possibility of planting The Pathway Church.

“They lovingly and graciously came alongside me and helped me start this church and financially helped us get started,” Bradford said.

“To be honest with you, it’s churches just like you guys, the SBTC, and the churches that are alongside partnering with us that have helped us come to the east side of Houston and reach people for Christ,” he said on the video.

Because of gifts through Reach Texas, The Pathway Church has been reaching people in a downtrodden part of Houston, leading them down a pathway to abundant life.

“I want to thank you for giving to the Cooperative Program and the Reach Texas Missions Offering,” Bradford said.

PEARLAND CHURCH IS 'AMONG OUR PEOPLE'

By Erin Roach

PEARLAND

The church office of CityView Church in Pearland is a small room in an office building—minimal but strategic in its location and mighty in its usefulness for the kingdom.

“It’s all we need. In church planting, it’s more about being in the community and among our people,” Jason Crandall, lead pastor of CityView Church, said in a video for this year’s Reach Texas Missions Offering.

Crandall, a graduate of Liberty University and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, said one of the things he loves about church planting is getting to be in the community on a regular basis.

“We’ve got an office. It’s small, but it fits us well,” he said.

Another highlight, Crandall said, is worship on Sundays. CityView Church meets in an elementary school, and a team from the church shows up each Sunday at 7 a.m. to unload a truck and trailer of equipment.

“We load in every week, we set it up every week, we have worship every week, and then we tear it down every week,” Crandall said



“It’s a pretty amazing thing to set up and do worship. But the thing that we love most is that it’s not so much the place that we gather—it’s a people that’s being created.”

of the experience that is common to church plants without a dedicated building.

“It’s a pretty amazing thing to set up and do worship. But the thing that we love most is that it’s not so much the place that we gather—it’s a people that’s being created,” Crandall said.

The pastor said lives have been transformed by the gospel in Pearland, and he knows CityView couldn’t help lead people to Jesus without the support of “so many churches around the state through prayer (and) through several teams coming on mission with us.”

“We’re just so thankful for the financial support that we receive through Reach Texas and through the state convention. It’s an amazing blessing for CityView Church,” Crandall said.

Pearland is the most ethnically diverse suburb of the most ethnically diverse city in the country, he said, adding, “We feel like if we reach Pearland, then we have tentacles reaching out to the rest of the world.”



IMB to reduce personnel by 600-800, reset the organization

By Keith Collier

RICHMOND, Va.

International Mission Board President David Platt, along with other senior IMB leadership, presented a plan to address significant revenue shortfalls and “complete a reset of the organization” during a town hall meeting with missionaries and staff, Aug. 27. The plan includes reducing missionary and staff personnel by 600-800 and restructuring its Support Services and Mobilization divisions.

“Words can’t really describe how difficult a reality that is to communicate to our

IMB family. These aren’t just figures; these are faces,” Platt told members of the press in a conference call later in the day.

“These are brothers and sisters who have spent and are spending their lives in various capacities to spread the gospel among those who have never heard it.

With a desire to “move forward into the future with innovative vision, wise stewardship and high accountability,” Platt said IMB expenditures since 2010 have exceeded revenue by \$210 million. The 170-year-old missions agency has offset those imbalances with global property sales and reserve funds, but

leadership understands this cannot continue.

In response to a question from the TEXAN, Platt assured media members that IMB wants to walk in transparency before Southern Baptists through this process. In addition to continuing their practice of making all trustee meetings open to the public, Platt said, “meetings of any trustee standing committee and any trustee affinity group committee are also open to any member of the media on a background rules basis.

“I know the personnel and the trustees in the IMB, and we have policies in place just to say

we want to work with members of the media to enable them to do accurate, complete, well-balanced reporting.”

Despite slight increases in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering as well as Cooperative Program giving over the past four years, Platt said there remains an “inability to financially support our current mission force in the field.”

Platt noted that prior to his election as president in 2014, IMB recognized these trends in previous years and had already set a plan to reduce the missionary force from its height of 5,600 missionaries in 2009 to its present number of 4,800, with the ultimate goal of reaching 4,200 “through normal attrition and limited appointments.

“I want to be clear,” Platt said, “that my aim is in no way to question decisions by previous leadership across the IMB during these years. As I mentioned, previous leadership put in place a plan to slowly reduce our number of missionaries ... while using reserves and global property sales to keep as many missionaries as possible on the field.”

Platt said he praises God for that strategic vision, which has resulted in more unreached people groups responding to the gospel.

“What we’ve come to now is the realization that that plan is no longer viable in light of current realities,” Platt said. He described the numerous options they considered, saying, “We believe the only viable way forward for

us involves a significant reduction in our number of both staff and field personnel.”

Because personnel comprises approximately 80 percent of IMB’s budget, Platt said, “we won’t be able to get to short-term financial responsibility and long-term organizational stability without making a major adjustment in our number of personnel now.”

This year alone, IMB expects to receive \$21 million less than it budgeted.

IMB leadership has decided the best way to reduce staff is to begin with a voluntary retirement incentive that will be offered to all eligible staff and active career missionaries age 50 and older with five or more years of service (as of Dec. 31, 2015).

[IMB announced the details of the incentive on Sept. 10.](#)

“Whether to accept the incentive is a voluntary decision completely up to the discretion of eligible individuals,” Platt told missionaries and staff, who attended the town hall meeting either in person or through digital communication. “This offers personnel who may already be considering a transition in their lives an opportunity to make that transition.

“We want to be as generous as possible, and we want to honor every brother or sister for his or her service. We know that taking a voluntary retirement incentive does not mean stepping onto the sidelines of mission, but moving into a new phase of involvement in mission.”

IMB is sending approximately 300 new missionaries in 2015 and expects to send a comparable number in 2016.

As phase one of the plan (the voluntary retirement incentive) is being implemented, phase two of the plan will focus on concluding a reset of the organization. Platt said that phase would include consolidating support services, recalibrating mobilization, assessing global engagement and re-envisioning training.

During the phone press conference, the TEXAN asked if there were plans to coordinate with the North American Mission Board to place retiring IMB personnel into stateside SEND cities or other positions with UPG cross-cultural opportunities.

“We have had numerous conversations on a big picture level with the North American Mission Board about increased partnership on a variety of different levels, (but) not specifically about this,” Platt said.

“I trust in all kinds of ways that God will creatively and sovereignly lead and direct 600-800 people in the days to come. And because of our ongoing and growing partnership with NAMB, I’m certain there are possibilities that may unfold along those lines, (but) we don’t have a formal plan for integrating certain people into certain positions with NAMB.”

—with reporting by IMB staff.
Read the board’s full press release and FAQ [here](#).



Pray for Police campaign launched in Houston following deputy's murder

By Bonnie Pritchett

HOUSTON

Dozens of law enforcement officers, clergy, and local and state representatives gathered Sept. 8 at the Houston Police Officers Union headquarters to launch an unconventional campaign—Pray for Police—that they hope will heal the city and

unite the nation in support of those sworn to protect and serve.

The Pray for Police campaign runs 6 a.m. Sept. 9 through 6 a.m. Sept. 10 at the HPOU offices in downtown Houston. Police chaplains and volunteer clergy will be available for prayer during those hours while others distribute 30,000 blue wristbands with the slogan

Houston Police Department Senior Officer and Chaplain Monty Montgomery leads the gathering of law enforcement officers, elected officials, and clergy in prayer during a press conference to begin the Pray for Police campaign, Sept. 8.

PHOTO BY BONNIE PRITCHETT

Pray for Police and #P4P. The wristbands serve as a reminder to pray and as a sign of encouragement to police officers. Organizers hope the prayer support will continue far beyond Sept. 10 and Houston and Harris County.

The campaign has been endorsed by Houston's eight mayoral candidates and former President George H.W. Bush, a Houston resident.

In a letter addressed to Floyd Lewis, presiding bishop of the International Church Fellowship, who championed the "Thumbs Up! Domestic Soldiers" campaign, which predated the

Pray for Police movement, Bush said, “At a time when it seems to be fashionable to attack the motives and character of the men and women who comprise our law enforcement agencies across America, I think the work you and your colleagues are doing may be more important than ever.”

The call to prayer comes in the turbulent wake of the murder of Harris County Sheriff Deputy Darren Goforth who was shot and killed Aug. 28 at a gas station while filling his patrol car. The man charged in the shooting, Shannon Miles, appeared to have targeted the uniformed deputy simply because he was an officer, shooting him 15 times in the back.

The incident shocked and galvanized this Southeast Texas region of 4.3 million residents, prompting marches and prayer vigils at the site of the shooting and an outpouring of sympathy that drew more than 11,000 people to Goforth’s funeral at Second Baptist Church in Houston last week. His murder was the most recent and brutal manifestation of tensions between some citizens and law enforcement nationwide. Pray for Police campaign organizers admitted the call for prayer flows from the recognition that the problem and the solution transcend human comprehension.

Drawing from 2 Chronicles 7:14, Monty Montgomery, Houston Police Department senior police officer and chaplain, opened the press conference with prayer surrounded by law

“EVERY SINGLE DAY THEY DON’T KNOW IF THEY’RE GOING TO BE ABLE TO COME HOME TO THEIR FAMILIES OR NOT. EVERY CAR THEY PULL OVER, EVERY DOOR THEY APPROACH, THEY KNOW THAT MAY BE THE LAST PERSON THEY SEE ON THIS EARTH. SO WE NEED TO PRAY FOR THEM. THEY DESERVE OUR PRAYERS.”

—DEVON ANDERSON, HARRIS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

enforcement officers, clergy and elected officials—some with hands raised and all with somber faces.

Montgomery, who also pastors a local church in Houston, told the TEXAN Goforth’s murder has impacted the way many officers do their jobs.

“Goforth was doing something we all do every day. It changes the focus of our officers,” Montgomery said. “We are reacting to calls differently than we did before.”

Officers recognize the inherent danger associated with their work, but the blatant and seemingly unprovoked shooting of Goforth raises fears not for themselves but their families should they be killed in the line of duty Montgomery said.

“Every single day they don’t know if they’re going to be able to come home to their families or not,” Devon Anderson, Harris County District Attorney, said

during the press conference. “Every car they pull over, every door they approach, they know that may be the last person they see on this earth. So we need to pray for them. They deserve our prayers.

Anderson said she will lead the prosecution against Miles, who has been charged with capital murder.

Mayor Annise Parker spoke of the funerals she has attended during her 18 years of City of Houston public service. “Never again” was Mayor Annise Parker’s commitment following every meeting with the families of police, firefighters and other public employees killed in the line of duty. But, sadly, there was always another funeral.

Echoing the hope that the Pray for Police campaign take on a life of its own, Parker said, “Let it start here. Let it start now. Let it start in Houston.”

Charles McClelland, Jr., HPD police chief, said, “This showing here today reaffirms in my mind the commitment and the support of this community. And I know the silent majority has always been in the corner of law enforcement.”

“This is uniting our community,” said Harris County Sheriff Ron Hickman. “We have a ground swell of support unlike anything I’ve seen in decades. It’s so assuring and reaffirming to be supported by our local communities.”

McClelland and Hickman spoke of their faith when addressing reporters. Each noted they keep a Bible in their offices. Hickman said, “In the past few weeks it’s gotten a little use.”



Always

I love the word “always.” It is one of the most important words in the Bible—“always.” So much Christian theology, promise, and hope radiates from this single word. Paul was fond of using “always” in describing so many aspects of the Christian life.

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, he wrote how Christians should be “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15 is the great resurrection chapter in the NT. Because of Christ’s resurrection, we too shall one day rise from the dead. This is our hope: a settled certainty and confident expectation based on the promises of God. Because of this guaranteed future, we are to be “always abounding” in the Lord’s work. Why? “Because your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

In Ephesians 6:18, Paul used “always” again, this time in the context of prayer: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” Prayer is every Christian’s gift. God invites us to his throne. Though we cannot always be in the actual posture or practice of prayer, we can always be in the spirit of prayer.

In Philippians 4:4 Paul’s “always” surfaces again, this time telling us that we should “Rejoice

in the Lord always....” Only Jesus can bring a radiant noonday out of every midnight. Christ vetoes all hopeless sorrow. Did you know that “gloom” and “gleam” are the same words etymologically? Jesus makes them the same words spiritually! In his eternal grammar, gloom becomes gleam. “Rejoice always!”

In 2 Corinthians 5:6, Paul reminds us that “We are always confident . . . for we walk by faith not by sight.” Amidst the many vicissitudes of life, we Christians know our home is not this world; yet we have confidence and courage to walk by faith and not by sight. One day we shall see him face to face and our faith will become sight!

Paul was not the only one who made use of “always.” Jesus reserved this word for a very crucial moment. Just before his ascension, after he gave his marching orders to the church, he made a promise to us in Matthew 28:20: “Lo, I am with you always....” I’m so grateful for my Lord’s “always” here. He promises never to leave me nor forsake me. No matter what, he is with me “always.” Always we fail in ourselves; but always in him we are more than conquerors. Christ’s “always” changes everything!

In Worcester Cathedral in England, there is a monument with no name which bears the inscription of a single lonely word in Latin: “Miserrimus;” translation—“most miserable.” It is the tomb of Thomas Morris, one of the Canons of the Cathedral, who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new king, William the Third. He had clung to the forlorn hope that the Stuarts would yet again be restored to the throne. His hope extinguished, he asked that the confession of his defeated loyalty, and nothing else, should be inscribed on his gravestone. Buried near the southwest corner of the cathedral, in the cloister but not inside, lies the body of a man “most miserable.”

Jesus Christ only occupied a tomb for three days. The grave could not hold the Prince of Life. Up from the grave he arose! Because of his resurrection, our King reigns forever! Long live the King! “Always”!

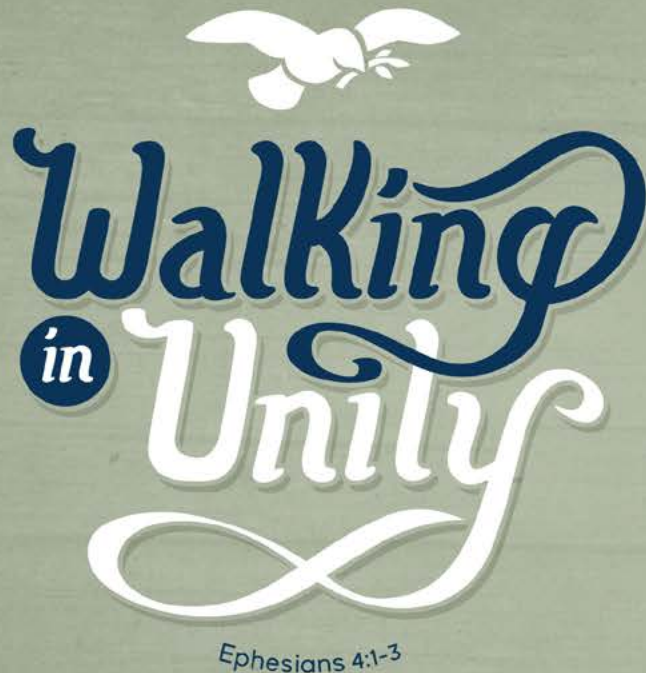
*Some material adapted from A. Smellie, *Out of the Desert a Gift*.

—David L. Allen is dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. This article first appeared on his [blog](#).

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November 8-10, 2015 Champion Forest Baptist Church

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Monday, November 9

Reach Houston Dinner

Monday, November 9

President's Luncheon

Tuesday, November 10

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