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TEXAN MAGAZINE

MARRIAGE HEROES

Veterans and newlyweds celebrate God's blessing





Changes to TEXAN Magazine

For the past three years, the TEXAN has produced an online magazine, delivering breaking news and inspiring stories twice per month. Of course, even in this short timeframe digital media and online reading habits have changed dramatically. An increased pace of life and the prevalence of social media now lead many readers to prefer individual stories over a collection of stories.

We here at the TEXAN are always seeking to deliver stories

to our readers in creative and compelling ways. The digital magazine has served this purpose, and as we look to the future, we're adapting our approach to meet the needs of an ever-changing technological landscape.

So, this issue of TEXAN Magazine will be our last digital magazine ... at least for now. This doesn't mean we'll be producing fewer stories. We're simply shifting our delivery system from the online magazine to our soon-to-be refreshed website. This will make our stories and online content more versatile for getting you the latest news on the go.

We will continue to send regular emails with our most recent news stories. If you don't receive these emails, we'd love to send them to you for free. See below how you can sign up to receive these emails as well as our monthly print edition of the Southern Baptist TEXAN newspaper.

For all of us here at the TEXAN, thank you for reading our stories and providing sharing them with friends and family. And as always, if you ever have stories you think might be valuable for Southern Baptists in Texas, please send them along.



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11 \$1 million set aside for returning IMB workers to plant, revitalize churches in Houston

International Mission Board missionaries returning from the mission field as part of a voluntary staff reduction could find immediate opportunities to reach ethnic people groups in America's most diverse megacity—Houston. The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's executive board will consider in its November meeting a recommendation to set aside \$1 million to facilitate returning missionaries as church planters or church revitalizers for the convention's Reach Houston initiative.

12 Faith, religious liberty among presidential forum topics



Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano hosted a presidential candidate forum, Oct. 18, that drew about 6,000 people to hear from six GOP presidential candidates. Candidates shared their views on faith, religious liberty, the right to life and more.

TEXAN MAGAZINE

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COLUMN: Blockbuster Churches in a Netflix World

19 SBTC evangelism director Nathan Lorick looks at the shortsighted business decisions of former video rental market giant Blockbuster and compares it to churches who have been so focused on the present that they stopped dreaming about the future. He explains how an intentional evangelism strategy can help revitalize dying churches.

+ SEMINARIES

TEXT-DRIVEN PREACHING DRIVES NEW SCHOOL OF PREACHING AT SOUTHWESTERN



Asked by a trustee whether he favored the lateral move from dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to lead the newly announced School of Preaching, David Allen quoted John Wayne in answering confidently, "You better know it."

"I'm convinced God has given me the lineup of lights in the harbor to know that the Lord wants me to do this," he told a trustee committee, seizing the opportunity to advance the kingdom of God, further the ministry of Southwestern Seminary, and satisfy the desires of the school's president and provost.

The new School of Preaching will be launched in August 2016 to offer studies in preaching in classroom, seminar, workshop and conference settings. Allen, as the founding dean, defines text-driven preaching as "expository preaching in its purest form, where the structure, substance and spirit of the text drive the structure, substance and spirit of the sermon."

Joining him as the school's faculty to provide more than 217 years of combined experience with expertise ranging from linguistics and rhetoric to history and evangelistic preaching, are Vern Charette, Barry McCarty, Matthew McKellar, Steven Smith, Denny Autrey and Kyle Walker.

Allen, who has served in multiple senior and interim pastorates throughout Texas, says this creates "such a dynamic that when we stand in the classroom to talk about preaching, we are not dealing with this from an ivory tower; we are people coming from the angle of practical experience, and that makes a world of difference in the teaching of preaching."

Degrees available through the school include the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.), and Master of Theology (Th.M.). In addition, the school will also offer the certificate of preaching that will supplement the Master of Divinity programs of the School of Theology and Roy Fish School of Evangelism and Missions.

"We're coming into the life of the convention at a time when the conservative reformation has accomplished its task, but the next stage is to bring out the meaning of that in the preaching in churches," stated Craig Blaising, executive vice president and provost. "We have the battle for the inerrant Bible being taught in the seminaries, but now is the issue of preaching the Word. It has to be preached, and this is the place to [learn how to] do it."

Read the story [here](#).

TRUSTEES: NOBTS APPROVES 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees approved a five-year strategic plan for the seminary and voted to establish a new extension center in Columbus, Ga., during their fall meeting, Oct. 14. Seminary President Chuck Kelley also shared news of the record enrollment of 3,952 students.

In his report to trustees, Kelley recounted the ways in which God provided for the seminary following Hurricane Katrina. In the 10 years after the storm NOBTS has witnessed the restoration of the campus and the launch of numerous new programs and scholarship initiatives, he said. For Kelley, the most exciting post-Katrina news came at the end of this summer when he learned of the record-setting enrollment of students during the 2014-2015 school year.

Kelley said the Katrina experience helped the seminary learn to be a more resilient institution. Defining resilience as "the ability to continue when normal dramatically changes," Kelley listed four keys to NOBTS resiliency: a comprehensive curriculum (featuring both traditional and distinctive programs); multiple delivery systems (main campus, extension, online, mentoring, travel courses); enhanced fundraising efforts; and a faculty focused on innovation (developing new skills and new ways to teach).

Read the story [here](#).

TRUSTEES: GOD'S HAND ON GOLDEN GATE

The board of trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, meeting Oct. 12-13 in Phoenix, expressed appreciation for the seminary's faculty, staff and students for their "efforts, endurance, prayers and amazing positive approach to the entire transition project." After adopting the resolution of appreciation, trustees erupted in spontaneous applause for the efforts of seminary personnel during the relocation effort.

"They have displayed a remarkable spirit during this transition," vice chairman Larry Felkins said, "while moving one of the 10 largest seminaries in the world 400 miles across the state."

Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Seminary, reported on the institution's progress and overall health during and despite the transition. A highlight was the news that the number of those enrolled in the seminary's core programs—777 students—has remained the same since the announcement of the seminary's move to Ontario, Calif.

"While we have worked hard to manage the transition, I cannot explain these results by those efforts," he said, "except to say it is God's hand on Golden Gate Seminary."

Read the story [here](#).

'WE CANNOT BE SILENT,' MOHLER SAYS IN NEW BOOK

In the span of three months in the summer of 2015, three headlines marked historic events that generations of Americans past could never have imagined. First it was former "world's greatest athlete" Bruce Jenner debuting his gender transition on the cover of *Vanity Fair*. Next the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states. Within a few weeks Americans witnessed the horrors of abortion in a series of undercover videos purporting to show Planned Parenthood profiting from the sale of aborted baby parts and organs.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, issues a call for faithful, biblical witness in his latest book, *We Cannot Be Silent*, that he says is ever more urgent in the wake of these landmark events. The book examines the rise of the homosexual movement, the path to same-sex marriage, the emergence of transgenderism, and the sexual revolution's imperilment to religious liberty.

"I am confronted daily with Christians who are asking one of the most basic questions and that is, 'How did this happen?'" Mohler said in an interview, noting he wrote the book to provide clear answers. "I think Christians are living with a kind of moral emergency they sense and see about them. And it's not just what they see on the headlines and on the Twitter feeds. It's what they hear from their kids, and it's what they see in their own neighborhood, and it's what they might see in their own church."

[Read the story here.](#)



+ I M B

JOINING SBC DRAWS FOCUS IN 2015

Becoming part of the Southern Baptist family, both as a church and as an individual, has been on display in 2015.

In his address to the Executive Committee during its February meeting, SBC President Ronnie Floyd challenged the convention to invite other churches "to come into our family and cooperate with us to finish the task of advancing the gospel to every person in the world."

A few months later, Pastor James MacDonald announced at the SBC Pastors' Conference in Columbus, Ohio, that Harvest Bible Chapel in Chicago had made the commitment to become a cooperating church with the SBC.

In his remarks to the Executive Committee, Floyd observed that there are thousands of churches across the U.S. that affirm the doctrines articulated in *The Baptist Faith and Message*, admire the SBC's methods of doing missions across the world, and would



be willing to help finance that work.

"What if we begin to call forth churches aggressively and outwardly, 'Come and be a part of who we are and cooperate in reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ?'" Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in Springdale, Ark., asked.

"I believe there are churches all over America who have an interest in becoming a part of our network of churches called Southern Baptists," he said.

[Read the story here.](#)

+ B A P T I S T N E W S

KAN.-NEB. BAPTISTS INCREASE CP TO SBC CAUSES

Messengers to the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists increased the percentage of Cooperative Program receipts they will forward to Southern Baptist Convention missions and ministries and affirmed both biblical marriage and the sanctity of life during the convention's annual meeting Oct. 12-13 at Blue Valley Baptist Church in Overland Park, Kan.

Messengers increased the percentage of CP receipts to be forwarded to SBC missions and ministries 0.5 percent to 24 percent. The convention will retain 76 percent of CP receipts for Kansas-Nebraska ministries. The budget includes no shared ministry expenses.

[Read the story here.](#)

TENN. ASSOCIATION DISFELLOWSHIPS CHURCH WITH FEMALE PASTOR

A Middle Tennessee Baptist association has voted to withdraw fellowship from a congregation that called a woman as pastor. At issue: the association's requirement that cooperating churches adhere to the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

The Lawrence County Association of Baptists, located 85 miles southwest of Nashville, voted 73-4 during its annual meeting Oct. 12 that Greater Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg "be removed from the list of participating churches ... effective immediately," according to a copy of the recommendation provided to Baptist Press by the association.

After Greater Tabernacle called Shonda Reynolds Christian as pastor in June, "we asked them to reconsider," Lawrence Association director of missions Mike Kemper told BP. "They took two weeks, and they called us back and said, 'We have decided to keep our woman pastor.' So really, they made their own decision about that, knowing the consequences and knowing what would come."

[Read the story here.](#)

+ MEDIA

WOODLAWN OPENS IN TOP 10 AT BOX OFFICE

The faith-based drama *Woodlawn*, promoted as a potential catalyst for revival and spiritual awakening, opened in the top 10 at theaters Oct. 16-18, Box Office Mojo reported.

Woodlawn opened in the eighth spot Oct. 16, earning \$1.485 million in 1,553 theaters, and finished the weekend at number nine, earning a total of \$4.1 million, according to Box Office Mojo.

Based on the true story of a high school football team in the midst of racial integration 40 years ago in Birmingham, Ala., the film follows the journey of African-American Tony Nathan as a star running back for the Woodlawn High School Colonels in 1973 after court-ordered desegregation. Amid racial hatred, cross burnings, and riots, spiritual revival transforms the team so profoundly that it affects the team's coach, school and community.

Read the story [here](#).



PLAYBOY'S NUDITY PURGE ADDRESSED

Playboy's decision to remove nude photos from the U.S. print edition of its magazine, pornography opponents say, in no way suggests the company is moving away from the objectification and exploitation of women.

"This decision was not a moral one, it was purely business," said Charles Beeghley, a Missouri pastor whose proposal to the Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee this summer resulted in the convention's statement "on pornography and sexual purity."

Beeghley, pastor of Blue Summit Baptist Church in Kansas City, told Baptist Press in written comments, "The content may not have nude women, but it will still see women as objects of sex as well as sexual desire."

In announcing the move away from full nudity, Playboy Enterprises CEO Scott Flanders told *The New York Times* naked pictures in a magazine are "just passé at this juncture" because on the Internet "you're now one click away from every sex act imaginable for free."

Read the story [here](#).



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BRIDGE OF SPIES SOLID, RAISES MANY ETHICAL QUESTIONS

ENTERTAINMENT RATING: ★★☆☆☆

FAMILY FRIENDLY RATING: ★★★★★

I suspect that in the near future, Ethics 101 classes on college campuses across the nation will watch Steven Spielberg's new film *Bridge of Spies*, with law school classes also giving it a view.

No doubt, it will spark some heated discussions.

Bridge of Spies retells the true story of a 1950s-era Russian spy named Rudolf Abel who is caught by the FBI trying to steal secrets related to America's atomic bomb. The Justice Department wants to put him on trial, but first it must find an attorney who is willing to take the case—and one who will do a capable job with the world watching every court move. American justice itself, we are told, is on trial.

Enter James B. Donovan (Tom Hanks), an attorney who begrudgingly takes the case and then becomes consumed with seeing his client found not guilty. Donovan, though, apparently is the only person in America who wants to see Abel freed, and for that, he is hated. Train riders scowl at him. Police officers confront him. Even his young son asks probing questions.

"You're not a Communist, so why are you defending him?" his son asks.

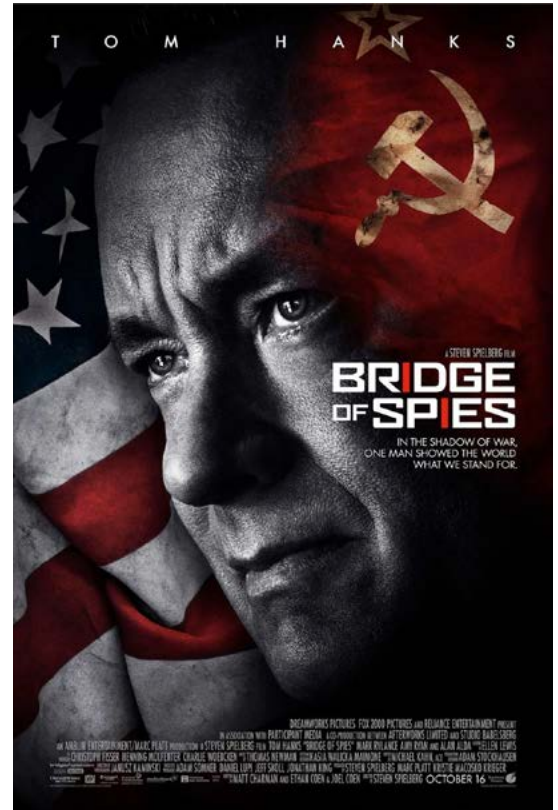
It's a good question, and one that I believe has a biblical response. In fact, *Bridge of Spies*—in showcasing the ins and outs of the U.S. justice system—does a fine job of mirroring a biblical worldview. How? By demonstrating God's

desire for truth and justice; by underscoring our goal of prosecuting the guilty and defending the innocent.

Our court system has many weaknesses, but it just may be the best system this side of eternity. In the case of *Bridge of Spies*, an unpopular man is defended in court by one of the nation's best attorneys, bringing to mind John Adams' famous defense of the British soldiers accused of murder at the Boston Massacre.

It's tragic when a guilty person walks free, but it's just as dreadful when an innocent man is found guilty. The Bible is replete with examples of both, and our goal always should be to chase the truth, no matter what public opinion says.

We now know that Abel was guilty, but that's only in hindsight. Furthermore, even if Abel was guilty, what should be the punishment? In the movie, the Justice Department called for the death penalty, while Donovan argued for prison. Donovan's position was simple: The United States was doing the very same thing to the Soviets, trying to steal their secrets. If the Soviets catch one of our guys, wouldn't it be nice to have someone to trade? If we put Abel to death, the Soviets likely will answer by killing our guy, too.



Abel's life was spared, and Donovan turned out to be right when an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Soviet territory and a U.S. pilot was captured.

Bridge of Spies has no sexuality and about 16 instances of coarse language, including two instances of the f-word and three instances of God's name being paired with d---.

Post-movie discussion topics: *the ethics of spying; defense attorneys and defending the guilty; the limits of the death penalty.*



THE MARTIAN (PG-13)

What would happen if NASA sent a manned mission to Mars and accidentally left an astronaut on the planet? That's the fascinating plot behind this film, which tells the story of a crew of astronauts exploring the red planet when a major dust storm hits. All of them will be killed if they don't get in their ship and take off

soon, and one of them—Mark (Matt Damon)—gets hit by debris and is thought dead. The ship launches without Mark, but NASA discovers days later he is still alive. So the agency launches a rescue mission that will take months. *The Martian* is an incredibly pro-life film—why would NASA rescue one person millions of miles away if human life isn't precious?—but this isn't

a film for kids. It has about 30 examples of coarse language, including two f-words and God's name being abused, and also has one example of Damon's character nude from behind.

Post-movie discussion topics: the magnificence of God's creation; the preciousness of life.



GOOSEBUMPS (PG)

Just in time for Halloween, this Jack Black-headlined film is based on the popular books by the same name and tells the story of a teen boy and his mom who move to a new town, next door to a teen girl named Hannah and her reclusive, odd father (Black). One night when Zach hears screams from

the home, he assumes Hannah is in danger and enters her home, unwelcome, to investigate. Hannah is fine, but while in the home Zach finds dozens of manuscripts on a bookshelf and opens one of them, which turns out to be a magical book that instantly releases the Abominable Snowman. All of the books, in fact, are like this, and pretty soon,

monsters are on the loose. This is a fun slapstick-type movie for older teens but definitely not for younger kids or ones who might have nightmares. It's mostly language-free.

Post-movie discussion topics: our desire to be frightened; when is it OK to be entertained by evil-looking images?



HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 2 (PG)

This follow-up to the animated monster comedy *Hotel Transylvania* picks up where that 2012 film left off, only this time Count Dracula's daughter (Mavis) and son-in-law (Jonathan) have had a baby, Dennis. Count Dracula is ecstatic, until he realizes that his new grandson may not even be a vampire.

That's because Mavis, who is a vampire, is married to a human. According to monster lore, baby vampires always sprout their fangs by the time they're age 5, and so far, Dennis is fang-less. Enter great-grandfather Dracula, who desperately tries to get Dennis to grow the necessary teeth. *Hotel Transylvania 2* is incredibly funny at times, but not every family will want their kids to watch vampires and

Frankenstein, no matter how harmless-looking and cute. Call me old-fashioned, but I'd just rather my children (who copy everything) not repeat lines like "blood is spilling from your brain." **Post-movie discussion topics:** is it OK to laugh at monsters?; loving people despite their differences.

*With information from Common Sense Media

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Oct. 16-18

Source: BoxOfficeMojo.com

Movie	Weekend Gross	Weeks in Theater
1. Goosebumps (PG)	\$23,500,000	1
2. The Martian (PG-13)	\$21,500,000	3
3. Bridge of Spies (PG-13)	\$15,380,000	1
4. Crimson Peak (R)	\$12,850,000	1
5. Hotel Transylvania 2 (PG)	\$12,250,000	4
6. Pan (PG)	\$5,860,000	2
7. The Intern (PG-13)	\$5,405,000	4
8. Sicario (R)	\$4,500,000	5
9. Woodlawn (PG)	\$4,100,000	1
10. Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials (PG-13)	\$2,750,000	5



MARRIAGE HEROES

Veterans and newlyweds celebrate God's blessing

Story by Jane Rodgers | Photos by Adam Tarleton

FORT WORTH

The two largest Sunday school departments at Fort Worth's Travis Avenue Baptist Church are the young marrieds and the senior adults. On Oct. 11, the two groups came together as the younger couples hosted an event honoring the church's more than 70 couples and 30 widows or widowers married at least 50 years.

The celebration was so meaningful that Fieldon Williams arrived sporting two black eyes and staples in his forehead from a fall that had

sent him to the emergency room days earlier. Williams and his wife Colleen, married 55 years, joined fellow church members for wedding cake, punch, nuts, mints, conversation and fellowship. Several couples brought wedding albums for guests to peruse.

"We've got everything you need to have a southern wedding," associate pastor Bernie Hargis joked to those assembled. Hargis served as the event's emcee, opening the program with prayer and recognition of the 180 church members who

“YOU HAVE QUALITIES IN YOUR MARRIAGES THAT WE NOTICE AND WE ADMIRE. YOU POSSESS A CALM DURING THE STORMS OF LIFE. YOU HAVE COUNTED IT ALL JOY. YOU HAVE A QUIET CONFIDENCE. IT’S NOT EMOTIONLESS. IT’S NOT STOIC. BUT IT’S A QUIET PRESENCE. THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT BEING SUREFOOTED IN THE PSALMS. YOU HAVE SEEN GOD WORK SO MANY TIMES IN PLENTY AND IN YOUR STRUGGLES.”

—RAY RALEY

had persevered in marriage. He then introduced a video by senior pastor Michael Dean, who was out of town and unable to attend.

Offering congratulations to those who had been married a half-century, Dean said, “You are our heroes. The rest of us look to you as an example of what God intends for marriage to be. In our culture today, marriage is not held in high esteem. Many are trying to redefine marriage. But you can see in this room the evidence of God’s blessing on his good and perfect design of a man and woman for a lifetime for his glory.”

Applause resounded as Hargis next recognized couples in the room who had been married 50-54, 55-59, 60-64 and 65-69 years or more, including Volera Kirkpatrick, a widow who had been married 70 years.

Kristin and Matt Sessoms, wed seven years, expressed

appreciation to these marriage veterans. Sessoms, a marriage and family counselor, commended the “longevity of commitment” of those honored. Noting that the “average marriage for couples our age is about two years,” Sessoms explained that his work involved helping couples establish a “foundation for longevity.” Sessoms praised the older couples, saying, “You are testifying to us that commitment does work and following God’s plan does matter.”

Ray and Janis Raley, a couple married 30 years who joined the church as newlyweds, also addressed the crowd.

“Many of the couples we are honoring today are among the very earliest investors in our marriage, and they continue to do so today,” Janis said.

“You have qualities in your marriages that we notice



WHAT IS YOUR SECRET TO A LONG MARRIAGE?

When asked the secret of staying married 67 years, Ed York laughed and replied, “Saying yes.” York married his wife, Laura Gene, a Fort Worth native, after his infantry service in France and Germany during World War II. The two held hands as they told their story to the TEXAN.

“Ed came home on a furlough after the war was over,” Laura Gene York recalled. “And then we were engaged. He went back for two years during the German occupation. We got married after he came back. We were 23.”

“There is a little story about us getting married,” Ed York said. “When I went back to occupied Germany, they passed a law allowing fiancées to come over and marry us. They would marry us, give us a week’s honeymoon in Switzerland and have our home and servants waiting for us. And she refused to come.”

“I wanted to be married at Travis Avenue where all my friends were and where we grew up,” Laura Gene explained. The couple met at the church when Ed moved to the area at age seven. The Yorks raised their family in the church, and some of the couple’s grandchildren still attend Travis Avenue.

“When you get married, you get married for life,” Ed added. “Just talk” when the ups and downs of life hit, he advised.

“Continue talking to the Lord. Attend church. Be with other Christian people,” Laura added. “And keep holding hands.”



WHAT IS YOUR SECRET TO A LONG MARRIAGE?

Larry and Susan Foxworth came to Travis Avenue 44 years ago as a young married couple with a baby after Larry's graduation from Texas A&M. "We're youngsters," joked Larry. "We've only been married 47 years."

Susan offered the following secret to marriage longevity: "Don't forget the qualities and characteristics that attracted you to that person in the first place. Those very same qualities and characteristics will drive you crazy after the first year or two because this is the difference in you. You've got to remember that this is what attracted you to him or her in the first place. Understand this is how God made them and appreciate that. You can get past a lot of humps that way."

To his wife's wisdom, Larry added, "There will be bumps in the road; there always are. But you've got to know that it is God's will that you work through it because you know that on the other side, it's going to be better. That is how he is going to bless you."

and we admire. You possess a calm during the storms of life," Ray added. "You have counted it all joy. You have a quiet confidence. It's not emotionless. It's not stoic. But it's a quiet presence. The Bible talks about being surefooted in the Psalms. You have seen God work so many times in plenty and in your struggles."

Ray also praised the couples for their commitment to serving in the community and fellowshiping with one another.

"You pray for each other. You hold confidences very dear and hold them fast. ... You guys just love being together. It's wonderful. You invest in the lives of those coming behind you."

A time of intergenerational fellowship around the roomful of tables followed as younger couples asked questions of older couples. The conversations were both heartfelt and deep as one generation passed its wisdom to the next. The evening concluded with prayer and a group photo of all those in attendance married 50 or more years.

Michael and Meredith Hughens, members of the Travis Avenue newlywed class, handed out nametags. When asked what they hoped to gain from visiting with the older couples, Meredith replied, "There's endless kinds of wisdom to learn from these folks. We've made it a year, and I feel we have learned a lot in a year. I can't imagine how much you learn in 50-plus years."

Referencing Psalm 71:18, Wes Black, minister to senior adults, summed up the goals of the celebration: "Scott Floyd, our church counselor, and I are looking for ways our older adults can pass along their faith to the next generation, and this is one way to facilitate that."

If the smiles and laughter around Travis Avenue's Great Room are any indication, the celebration of marriage provided just that.



\$1 million set aside for returning IMB workers to plant, revitalize churches in Houston

By Keith Collier

GRAPEVINE

International Mission Board missionaries returning from the mission field as part of a voluntary staff reduction could find immediate opportunities to reach ethnic people groups in America's most diverse megacity—Houston. The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's executive board will consider in its November meeting a recommendation to set aside \$1 million to facilitate returning missionaries as church planters or church revitalizers for the convention's Reach Houston initiative.

"Reach Houston is a SBTC plan to increase church planting and revitalization in the Greater Houston area," Executive Director Jim Richards said.

"With Houston being the most ethnically diverse city in the United States, there is a need for language and cultural skills possessed by IMB personnel who have already served among the various people groups of the world. Secondly, the burgeoning population calls for all types of churches to be planted as well as revitalization of existing churches in multi-ethnic neighborhoods by intentionally helping churches to become multi-ethnic congregations."



Richards estimates the \$1 million could support as many as 25 church planters and church revitalizers. The administrative committee of the convention's executive board will present the proposal, which would be taken out of reserve funds, for approval during its fall meeting, Nov. 11.

"The missionaries coming off the field as a result of the IMB's VRI (Voluntary Retirement Incentive) bring huge ministry opportunities to stateside churches and communities. While the SBC family of churches pray for those who will be in transition, we also believe that it's important for the SBC family to consider ways they can open ministry opportunities for them," said Robert Welch Jr., chairman of the administrative committee and pastor of Rock Hill Baptist Church in Brownsboro, Texas.

"Houston is a very diverse city with many of the world's people groups residing the city. IMB missionaries are some of the most highly trained and highly cultured leaders that we have in the SBC.

We believe that by providing these missionaries with opportunities for church planting and revitalization in Houston, we could see a ministry surge that could have transformational kingdom impact throughout Houston."

SBTC is currently seeking a Reach Houston coordinator to live in the city and direct church planting and revitalization efforts. During the search, former SBTC missions director Terry Coy will serve as interim coordinator.

"Although we know the adjustment for many returning missionaries could be difficult, we are excited that God is going to use this time to join some of the returning missionaries with SBTC's focus on reaching Houston," said Coy, who grew up in Chile as a child to Southern Baptist missionaries.

"The revitalization and church planting needs in the Houston area are great. We are asking the Lord to call the right people with the right experience to join with us in this kingdom adventure. Look forward to great things!"



Faith, religious liberty among presidential forum topics

By Sharayah Colter

If most evangelical Christians are avoiding the polls and allowing leaders to be elected by non-believers, “is it any wonder we have a federal government that is assaulting life?” asked Sen. Ted Cruz during a presidential candidate forum at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, Oct. 18.

“There are 90 million evangelical Christians in America,” Cruz said during the event that drew about 6,000 people to hear from Cruz and five other presidential candidates. “In the 2012 election, 54 million evangelicals didn’t vote; it’s a majority of evangelical Christians.”

Prestonwood pastor Jack Graham said the forum, co-hosted by his church and the Faith & Freedom Coalition, was designed to encourage evangelical Christians to vote and do so as informed citizens. Candidates attending the event included Cruz, former business CEO Carly Fiorina, former Sen. Rick Santorum, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, neurosurgeon Ben Carson and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

A range of topics was discussed during the four-hour forum. Among them were the candidates' faith, sanctity of life and religious liberty issues. Each candidate had time to speak to the crowd before sitting down with Graham for one-on-one interviews.

The candidates were never on stage at the same time, but they did make reference to one another in their comments to the crowd as well as to those running for office from the Democratic Party (all of whom were also invited to the forum).

HUCKABEE

Huckabee noted, "I haven't come here to fight the other Republicans running for office. Most are friends, and I like them.

"Every single one of them on that stage I believe will be a better president than any of the people that were on the stage this week [referencing candidates at the first Democratic debate, hosted by CNN and Facebook]. It's not my goal here to stay to fight them but rather to fight for you."

In committing to fight for "you," Huckabee went on to make it clear that "you" includes unborn Americans.

"How can we ask God to bless a nation that for 42 years has ended the lives of 60 million unborn children?" he said. "This is not just a social aberration—this is uncivilized savagery for which we must repent. We must do more than be sorry about it—we must change it."



CRUZ

Cruz, R.-Texas, garnered the most vocal and enthusiastic support with his home-state crowd. He spoke of the encouraging signs he sees of an American awakening.

He discussed his record on standing up to Washington and defending the values upon which the nation was founded. He painted a grim picture



of the current state of affairs for America both domestically and internationally.

"As these threats grow darker and darker and darker, they are waking people up here and all across the country," Cruz said. "I believe 2016 will be an election like 1980, and it took Jimmy Carter to give us Ronald Reagan."

FIORINA

Fiorina, the lone woman running for president in the Republican field, said, "I very much hope I can earn your support and your votes and continue to have your prayers."

Aiming some of her comments at Hillary Clinton, Fiorina added, "but I will never ask for your votes or support because I'm a woman, although I am proud to be a woman. I will ask for your votes and your support because I believe I'm the most qualified candidate to win this job and the most qualified candidate to do the job."

Fiorina also discussed the importance of her faith. "I have been tested," she said.

"My faith has been tested. I have battled breast cancer. I have buried a child. And through it all, the love of my family and personal relationship with Jesus Christ has seen me through. And on this journey, my family and my faith will see me through as well."



CARSON

Carson acknowledged he is often criticized for having a perceived "soft demeanor." As a young man, he said, he realized

he had a hot temper that was going to land him in jail, reform school or the grave. After his temper nearly led him to take the life of another person, Carson sat down in a bathroom and began searching



the Scriptures. Verse after verse seemed to be written just about him and how his temper was an indication of foolishness and selfishness.

“I stayed in that bathroom for three hours and came to an understanding during that time that to lash out at somebody—to punch somebody in the face was not a sign of strength, but weakness ... That was the last day I had an angry outburst. Some say, ‘You just learned how to hide it.’ Not true—when God fixes a problem, he doesn’t just do a paint job—he fixes it from the inside,” he said.

“That’s why I have this calm demeanor that people mistake as softness. It’s not softness; it’s just the ability to look at things from lots of perspectives and not get angry about it.”

As a neurosurgeon who has performed surgery on babies inside of a mother’s womb, Carson discussed abortion. He noted he could never be convinced that a baby was merely a clump of cells. Addressing a variety of other issues, Carson also focused on foreign affairs., saying he would seek not only to name America’s enemies but to destroy them before they destroy America.

SANTORUM

Former Sen. Santorum of Pennsylvania shared with the crowd something he thought might come as a surprise to many of them.



“Now some of you may know I’m a Catholic—but I’m an evangelical Catholic,” Santorum said, saying that he believed it was his “Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” who has upheld him and delivered to him political victories in standing for things like faith, life and traditional marriage.

Santorum spoke about reforming government programs so that strong families are encouraged instead of providing incentives for fathers to not marry the mother of their children. He also spoke about fighting America’s enemies.

“Seven months ago I was in ISIS Magazine,” Santorum said. “ISIS knows who I am, Iran knows

who I am, and when I get sworn in ... the enemies of the world will know who they have to deal with.”

BUSH

Last to speak was Bush, who said he stands for creating a culture of life. He pointed to his fight for life in the 2005 case of Terri Schiavo



and to Florida’s defunding of Planned Parenthood during his service as the state’s governor.

“I’m proud of what I did,” Bush said. “Always err on side of life.”

Bush also discussed his religious beliefs.

“I read the Bible from cover to cover for the first time. I got halfway through Romans and realized Jesus was my Savior, and I accepted him as my Savior and from that moment on had a partnership with Jesus that gives me counsel,” he said.

Bush said he later decided to covert to his wife’s religion—Catholicism—and now enjoys attending mass.

“The blessed sacraments give me great serenity as well,” Bush said.

While some in running for office would wish to “push [Christians] out of the public square,” he said, the involvement of people of faith is crucial in restoring America to the values-based nation she was built to be.

“The ministry of this church and others is so important,” Bush said. “Why not do this in partnership? Hillary Clinton said people of faith just have to get over it—you can pray in your home and church pews but can’t act on your faith or consciousness. That’s wrong on every level. Who feeds the homeless? Who takes care of elder shut-ins? Is it the department of elder affairs? No. It is the faith community of people acting on their hearts.”

Video of the forum is available at prestonwood.org/north-texas-presidential-forum.

—With additional reporting by Tammi Reed Ledbetter



Quotes of Note from the North Texas Presidential Forum

By Tammi Reed Ledbetter

PLANO

Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, and the Faith & Freedom Coalition hosted six GOP presidential candidates, who shared their views on a variety of topics during the North Texas Presidential Forum at the megachurch, Oct. 18. Senior Pastor Jack Graham moderated the event, conducting individual interviews with Carly Fiorina, Ted Cruz, Rick Santorum, Mike Huckabee, Ben Carson and Jeb Bush.

The following are highlighted comments given by the candidates on key topics.

CONSERVATIVE VALUES/ REASONS FOR RUNNING

Fiorina: “We’re going to have to have that fight for what conservative values really mean.”

Cruz: “We all came out here this afternoon because we recognize that our country is in crisis. People are waking up. We are seeing an awakening—a spirit of revival across this country.”

Santorum: Santorum encourages voters to “go back and look at the record.” Find people who “stand by what they believe, hire people who share values.”



A packed audience listens to interviews of GOP presidential candidates during the North Texas Presidential Forum at Prestonwood Baptist Church, Oct. 18. PHOTO BY TAMMI LEDBETTER

Huckabee: Why run? Huckabee says 8 years ago, because of his children. Today, because he has 5 grandkids. Doesn’t want to leave them the charred remains of great country.

Carson: “I finally just said, ‘Lord, this is not on my bucket list, but if it’s really something you want me to do, I will.’” A lifetime of experiences is what prepares him to be president.

Bush: “There are things that are broken, but we have to fix them. To advocate ... so strong families are the most powerful political institutions in our

society and we solve problems locally.” The next president is “going to have to fight for religious freedom with his heart and soul.”

ROLE OF FAITH

Fiorina: “I’ve been tested. I’ve battled breast cancer, have buried a child. My personal relationship with Jesus Christ has seen me through. Here’s what I believe: People of faith make better leaders.”

Santorum: “Now some of you may know I’m a Catholic, but I’m an evangelical Catholic.”

Carson: Talked about realizing his options, as a hot-tempered young man, were jail, reform school or the grave. “God fixed my temper. That’s why I have this calm demeanor that people mistake as softness. It’s not softness. It’s just the ability to look at things from lots of perspectives and not get angry about it.”

Bush: Says he began reading the Bible cover to cover, and by the time he reached Romans “realized Jesus Christ was my Savior.”

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Cruz: “I believe 2016 is going to be a religious liberty election. This is an issue that really separates a number of the candidates running on the GOP side. Some say accept, surrender, move on.”

Carson: Talked about America as the most free nation in the world, “or it used to be,” he said.

Huckabee: “If you can put a county clerk in jail, who’s next? You know who’s next? You are,” Huckabee said to Graham. “And every other pastor...”

TERRORISM

Huckabee: “The only people who should be blamed for 9/11 are the monsters who trained and planned to kill Americans.”

Santorum: “Look around. ... There’s no doubt this world is getting much more hostile and violence is on the rise. Seven

months ago, I was in ISIS Magazine. ISIS knows who I am. Iran knows who I am. And when I am sworn in, ... the enemies of the world will know who they have to deal with.”

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Fiorina: The person occupying the office of president “must not be silent regarding persecuted Christians in the Middle East.”

Bush: “Who is going to take care of religious persecution but America?”

WAR ON WOMEN

Fiorina: “I will never ask for your vote or your support because I am a woman, although I am proud to be one.”

LEADERSHIP

Santorum: “What’s missing in today: someone who knows how to lead, not someone who knows how to go before cameras and scream and holler.”

Huckabee: “No greater preparation to run for public office than to be a pastor. ... Rather than being a disadvantage, it’s the biggest advantage. The next president needs to know he doesn’t know everything. The most dangerous man in the room is the man who doesn’t know what he doesn’t know. Knowledge can be Googled. Wisdom comes from above.”

Carson: “Some people think political leadership is for a

certain class, but I believe it’s for citizen statesmen.”

Bush: We need to require leadership—not by preying on people’s angst. We are on the verge of greatness, but a lot of tough work is ahead.

WELFARE

Santorum: “The Bible talks about helping the poor; it doesn’t give that role to government.” He believes Medicaid, food stamps, housing assistance, etc. are all “creating a problem by infusing themselves and creating a dependency.”

SANCTITY OF LIFE

Huckabee: “How can we ask God to bless a nation that for 42 years has ended the lives of 60 million unborn children? This is not just a social aberration. This is an uncivilized savagery of which we must repent.”

Carson: “Life begins at conception. There’s no way anybody’s ever going to convince me that is a mass of cells and isn’t a human being.”

ISRAEL

Huckabee: “The only ally we have that is reliable in that region is Israel. I’ve known Netanyahu for 20 years. They have always believed the USA would be one country that would have their back.”

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Austin residents called to “embrace Planned Parenthood”

City Council passes resolution championing the nation’s largest abortion provider

By Bonnie Pritchett

AUSTIN

The Austin City Council voted 9-2 to amend its federal legislative agenda to promote Planned Parenthood among other issues of concern for the city. The overwhelming show of support came despite the admission to council by a Planned Parenthood representative that the organization’s Texas facilities are under eight different investigations by state and federal authorities.

Council passed the resolution Oct. 15, and four days later Gov. Gregg Abbott, in a move illustrating the ideological divide between pro-life and pro-choice Texans, called for the end of Medicaid funding to Texas Planned Parenthood clinics.

“Texas has stepped forward and shown its unyielding commitment to both protecting life and providing women’s health services,” Abbott said in a press release.

By contrast, Austin’s resolution “supports any legislation that would maintain or expand funding for Planned Parenthood and opposes any legislation that would reduce funding for Planned Parenthood or endanger access to affordable health care.”



Three pro-life advocates spoke against the measure, including Texas Right to Life legislative director John Seago. He said the resolution was not about women’s health care.

“Austin City Council is always looking to make ideological points to show how committed they are to elective abortion,” Seago told the TEXAN.

The last “statement” cost the city \$480,000 in restitution for legal fees incurred by a pro-life pregnancy center in its fight against a 2011 city ordinance requiring all pro-life pregnancy centers post signs at their entrances stating what services, including abortion, are not provided by the facility.

In his address to council, Seago noted Austin has 66 “Federally Qualified Health Centers” that provide the same—and in some cases more—services as Planned Parenthood with the exception of

“Austin City Council is always looking to make ideological points to show how committed they are to elective abortion.”

—TEXAS RIGHT TO LIFE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR JOHN SEAGO

abortions. Planned Parenthood has three clinics in Austin.

A visibly angry Councilwoman Leslie Pool called the recent undercover video investigations of Planned Parenthood’s alleged sale of fetal body parts “misogynistic and unethical and immoral.”

“I invite all of Austin to be entirely behind this [resolution] and embrace Planned Parenthood in a very big way,” Pool said.

Joint worship service on Nov. 10 includes two distinct Baptist groups

by Tammi Reed Ledbetter

HOUSTON Two groups of Baptists meeting in Houston during the second week of November will come together for a joint worship service, Tuesday, Nov. 10. Champion Forest Baptist Church will host in their facilities the separate annual meetings of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) Nov. 9-10 and the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas (BMAT) Nov. 10-11.

Five years ago the two groups approved “a working ministry relationship,” noting their shared affirmation of a high view of Scripture and basic Baptist distinctives. That led to a common commitment to evangelize the

state and serve the Lord through cooperative ministries.

Wes Pratt, pastor of the BMAT-affiliated Northside Baptist Church in Conroe, will deliver the message that evening after reports are presented by Jacksonville College President Mike Smith and Texas Baptist Home President Eddie Marsh, representing the two BMA institutions that SBTC funds. The worship team of the SBTC-affiliated West Conroe Baptist Church will lead music along with the choir from Jacksonville College.

With autonomous churches spread across the U.S. in 32 states, the Baptist Missionary Association was founded in 1900 by 45 churches that left the Baptist

General Convention of Texas over a perception that the board structure might override the sovereignty of local churches. Based in Waxahachie, BMA counts 452 Texas churches in its membership.

TEXAN executive editor Gary Ledbetter wrote nearly a decade ago of the “good unity story” that had emerged in the state through a burgeoning relationship between the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention formed in 1998.

“In Texas, we are once again finding ways to work together,” Ledbetter added, describing “biblical and godly” unity around “specific ministries with others who substantially agree regarding faith and practice.”



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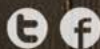
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Blockbuster Churches in a Netflix World

Fifteen years ago, we were living in a less technological society than we are now. Blockbuster, the video rental market leader, was booming with thousands of retail stores scattered across the nation. Millions of customers poured in week after week to rent the newest action thriller or comedy. Blockbuster was simply at the top of their game, or so they thought.

Behind the glare of the blue and yellow lights, something was happening that went largely unnoticed. A new company had formed with a new creative form of video rental that would push the limits of the norm. This company, known today as Netflix, had the right idea at the right time. However, for various reasons, the CEO of the new company wanted to partner with Blockbuster to create a new dynasty that was sure to take the video rental world to levels not seen before.

In 2000, the CEO of Netflix approached the CEO of Blockbuster and offered to sell the newly formed Netflix for a mere \$50 million. While that number sounds large to us, this is a small investment for a major retail business. It wasn't the money that caused the CEO of Blockbuster to decline the offer; instead it was because he missed the opportunity to see beyond the present market. Hindsight is 20/20. Today, Blockbuster is out of business, and Netflix is the largest video rental company—worth more than \$30 billion.

This is a modern picture of what many churches are going through.

At one time they were thriving and growing at rapid rates. Their ministries were effective in every way measurable. Things were as good as they could be. However, somewhere along the way, attendance began to drift off, giving became less dependable, and the influence of their ministries became unknown to those outside of the church. Simply put, churches were so focused on the present, they stopped dreaming about the future. They essentially became a Blockbuster church in a Netflix culture.

So what can be done about this if your church is in this stage? What is the key element to moving forward into a new season of growth and vitality? While there can be many answers, I want to narrow it down to one key element: re-launching evangelism in your church's strategy. Evangelism is the axis on which our church must turn in order to see it revitalized to life and growth. Nothing brings new life to a church more than seeing people experience new life in Christ.

So how do you bridge the desire for church revitalization and evangelism? I believe this is found in three simple answers.

First, you must create a culture of evangelism in your church. Church members must sense the need and urgency to reach people for Christ and recognize their responsibility in God's kingdom work to share the good news of Christ. Your church has to create strategies that are focused on reaching the lost with the gospel. When this happens, people begin to expect God to transform lives each

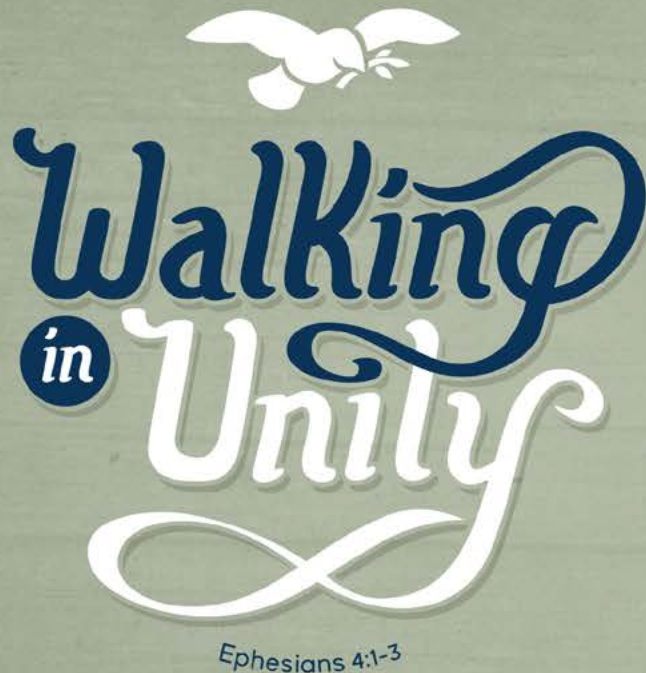
and every week. Creating a culture of evangelism in a church will simultaneously create a culture of newfound enthusiasm in a church.

Second, you must create opportunities to train people on how to share their faith and to engage in personal evangelism. People are eager to see God use them for his purposes. They genuinely want to see people come to faith in Jesus; many just haven't been disciplined in how to do it. When your church equips people with the necessary tools to share the gospel, God uses them to expand his kingdom. Once someone leads another to Christ, they develop a new excitement because they know they have been used by God!

Third, you must consistently dream about the future and try new tools for evangelism. In our day, we have more tools and gadgets to share the gospel than ever before. Churches should always evaluate what is out there to utilize as well as continue to be innovative in how they engage those without Christ.

The tragedy of Blockbuster is that they settled for being good in the present and missed the opportunity to be great in the future. Likewise, God has given us an incredible opportunity to shine his light brighter than ever before. I encourage you as a church to be forward thinking in how to engage your community with the gospel. After all, we're not a part of a video rental business; we are a part of a worldwide gospel revolution.

—Nathan Lorick serves as the SBTC evangelism director.



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