

Baptist Progress

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THE INFORMING AND EQUIPPING MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS | MARCH 2021 | VOL. 108 | NO. 03

INSIDE

Kilgore churches merge

By **PAUL GAUNTT**

Baptist Progress Correspondent

When two churches merge, one of the foremost questions the people contemplate is, “What shall we call ourselves?”

Sometimes the perfect name for a church is found right on the street sign. At first, John Gradberg, the pastor of the merger, was a little skeptical, but the more the name on the street sign resonated in the heads and hearts of the people located on the corner of U.S. Highway 135 and Goforth, the more the name “Go Forth” stuck.

After a one-week postponement of the celebration of the merger between Stone Ridge Baptist Church and Victory Road Baptist Church, both of Kilgore, due to the greatest blizzard to hit the states in 125 years, the new congregation celebrated the merger at 10:30 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 21, 2021.

Victory Road was an ABA (American Baptist Association) church, and Stone Ridge was a BMA church. Both churches saw the benefit of working together to carry out their part of the Great Commission.

John Gradberg has been pastor of Stone Ridge for 15 years. The church grew to the point they were able to put him on full time three years ago. He and his wife, Mickie, are natives of Gary. They have two grown children, Sarah and John. John and his wife live in Longview. Gradberg has been pastor at Bethel, Port Acres in Port Arthur; First, Itasca; First of Cockrell Hill, Dallas, and his home church, First, Gary.

Jerome and Emma Denmon were part of the Victory Road group. Jerome shared his thoughts concerning the merger.

“If this was not a God thing, then I don’t know what a God thing is,” he said. “We had the building space, but we needed people.”

In a separate conversation, Dale Easterling, who came from Stone Ridge, offered his take on the merger.

“I was a part of Stone Ridge from day one,” he said. “I was there when Bro. Derl Lee started the church, and was there through Bro. E.L. Jones’ ministry. We had entered into prayer asking God for a larger auditorium. This was God’s plan for us to have it.”

From the first hymn that was sung until the dismissal prayer, the spirit of the services was indicative of how God’s will was worked out as the two churches came together. John Gradberg, pastor, gave several words of encouragement and instruction to the church.



▲ Pastor John Gradberg



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MAKING PROGRESS

Time is running out to register for next Ministry Connection Workshop; Zoom and Facebook options added

By **JERRY FULTON**

Time is running out to register for the next Ministry Connection Workshop, *Gospel Impact Through Community Involvement*, at CrossRoads Church in Rowlett March 23, 2021. Please register now at <https://baptistprogress.org/ministry-connection-workshop-form> or call me at 972-923-0756.

We have made the decision to also offer the workshop via Zoom and it will appear live on the *Baptist Progress* Facebook page for those who cannot attend in person. For Zoom instructions, please email editor@baptistprogress.org, at least one day prior to the workshop.

During the workshop, Pastor Jason Collins will show you how to connect your church with your community in a way that expands the Kingdom of God. Jason and CrossRoads have enjoyed great success in this area. The workshop will begin at 10 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. Lunch will be provided for a cost of \$10. It will be conducted at CrossRoads Church, 7900 Chiesa Road in Rowlett. Again, to register, go to <https://baptistprogress.org/ministry-connection-workshop-form> or call 972-923-0756.

If you plan to attend in person, the cost of lunch is \$10. There is no cost if you will be joining the workshop by Zoom or Facebook.

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR NEW WEBSITES?

Baptist Progress and BMA of Texas have debuted brand

new websites (baptistprogress.org and bmatexas.org). On the *Baptist Progress* website, you will find resources, advertising information, subscription information, our publishing schedule and archives. The BMA of Texas website includes a calendar of events, information about the various ministries of the BMA of Texas, personnel and position ads, a link to give your offerings online, a list of and maps to BMA churches and other BMA links.



▲ Jerry Fulton

UPDATED UTO TOTAL

Another contribution to the United Thanksgiving Offering has been received since our last issue. Little Mound, Big Sandy gave \$835 bringing the grand total to \$74,792.49.

2021 BMA OF TEXAS MEETING DATE CHANGED

Please remember the 2021 BMA of Texas Meeting has been rescheduled to be a one-day only meeting Nov. 4. The meeting will be held at New Harmony, Tyler. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

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Baptist Progress

LEAVE IT TO CLEAVER



I'm glad I'm a BMA Baptist

By **TONY CLEAVER, D.Min.**

The last words my father-in-law spoke to me were these, "I'm glad I'm a BMA Baptist." Of all the words he could have used, of all the words that might have crossed his mind, of all the words he might have considered necessary, those are the words that he was able to speak in that private moment. I believe they are significant. They were significant to him because it took great effort to speak the words. The words are significant to me as a hearer because of the great exhortation to pay heed to them. They are significant to our denomination because of the great expectancy that challenges us to continue the journey.

Any good leader is concerned for the organization. My father-in-law was always concerned for his denomination. He wanted the best that human beings could give through the grace of God. He raised himself in his wheelchair, and in his old normal preaching voice, told me those great words, "I'm glad I'm a BMA Baptist." The look in his eyes and the grip of his hand let me know that these were his life-held, soul-felt, Christ-blessed convictions. The words were of great significance because of the great effort of the life that produced them.

It seemed to me at the time I heard these words they were significant because he wanted me to live by them in my own life. The tradition of carrying on and passing the torch seemed to have taken place at that time. Upon his deathbed (in 2001), I asked God to send me a double portion of the spirit that had been upon my father-in-law. I intently said aloud the request to place on me the spirit that God had so greatly used over his 60-plus years of ministry. I could not help but ask for that blessing to be mine because of the significant exhortation, "I'm glad I'm a BMA Baptist."

The men who were a part of my father-in-law's celebratory funeral service repeatedly spoke of his contribution to our denomination. Certainly, men of his caliber and conviction had given the BMA a good birth. Certainly, men of his stature and standard had nurtured it through infancy. Now the task for all of us is to continue a journey with great joy and expectancy for the glad and bright future of our denomination.

The principles of being a BMA Baptist are unique. The heritage of being a BMA Baptist is magnificent. The blessings of God on the denomination are staggering as we count what we have accomplished through His grace. Each denominational leader, from pastor to local association to national department, can speak right now

to recount the magnificence of God's blessings on our work. The challenge for us who inherit great traditions is to continue with them, embrace them, and uphold the life-principles that are proven.

O Lord God, thank you for the words of Gerald Kellar, "I'm glad I'm a BMA Baptist." May I whisper it as my prayer. May I make it my mindset. May I follow it as my guide. I ask you to use these words—"I'm glad I'm a BMA Baptist"—to bring honor to Your Kingdom. I ask you to use these words to remind all of us to earnestly contend for the faith that You have given to the saints. Through the sufferings of the wounded Healer, through the death of the One who lives forever, through the watch of the empowering Ruler of the universe, through the Spirit of Jesus, through Him who holds the Baptist Missionary Association in His hands. Amen.

Tony Cleaver is the director of distance learning and a professor of Biblical studies at Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary in Jacksonville, Texas. He is an author and writer of the popular newspaper column, Leave It to Cleaver. He may be contacted at tony.cleaver@bmatx.edu.



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- A federal income tax deduction the year of the gift
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charles@bmaamerica.org or call 501-472-2183



BAPTIST MISSIONARY BMLA LOAN ASSOCIATION

Questions churches should ask before beginning the loan process

By **JERRY FULTON**

So, God is blessing your church with growth and you need room, your building is in desperate need of renovations or your church was planted a few years ago and you have found an existing building you would love to make your permanent home. You believe it is time to begin seeking a loan to finance your congregation's dream. Praise the Lord! The Baptist Missionary Loan Association (BMLA) is here for you, but before you begin the loan process, consider the following questions:

1. Can you afford a loan? Look at your church's budget, compare your average monthly income and expenses and determine if your offerings will provide the funds you need to make payments each month? Does your church own land or other assets that can be used as collateral? Has your church embarked on a capital campaign? Do you have any cash on hand? Be sure to know what you can afford before moving forward on a new building project or purchase.

2. Do you really need the extra space? A pastor should lead his congregation in building programs or purchases only when he and other church leadership are certain there is a true need for additional space. Sure, pastors envision what can be and what they want their church to become, but is now the time to make the move to build or purchase? Would two morning services be the wiser option for the time being? Would staying where you are a little longer be the smarter move? Be sure!

3. Is the leadership of your church stable? Just as you want to be certain your lender will still be there for you in a few years, we at the Baptist Missionary Loan Association also want to be sure that the same is true about your church. If your church has or you know it will be undergoing a major transition in leadership within the next couple years, you might consider waiting before you begin the loan process.

Since not all pastors are familiar with the loan process, the Baptist Missionary Loan Association is here to help you every step of the way. Contact us at 972-923-0758, or for more information, visit our website, bmla.org.

Jerry Fulton is the director of the Baptist Missionary Loan Association. Contact him P.O. Box 73, Waxahachie, Texas 75168, 972-923-0758 or jerry@bmatexas.org. For more information, visit www.bmla.org.



BMA TEXAS

MISSIONS

Your Church's Mission Movement in Texas



A word from your Missions Office

By **HEITH MITCHELL**

Jesus instructed us to, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus not only taught this truth but he modeled it perfectly. The people around Him didn't always want to love their neighbors. They looked for a loophole. Jesus was asked, "Who is our neighbor?" You likely know the story Jesus used to teach a Jewish audience that a Samaritan was a good neighbor.

Emmanuel Baptist Church in Garland just loved their neighbors well. This BMA church started back in the 1960s near downtown Garland. This church saw healthy missional ministry for many years. They have struggled for a few years now. Their neighborhood transitioned in ways they didn't realize. In the last 5 years, they have gone into their neighborhood to learn that it now speaks Spanish. They began to pray for these neighbors and for laborers who could reach them. Last year, they were able to start a Spanish speaking church. They just chose to end their services and leave their building to the Spanish church. This church is reaching the neighborhood and BMA of Texas Missions is helping.

Go Forth Baptist Church in Kilgore is loving their neighbors well. They are sharing Jesus and seeing salvation and life transformation stories. They recently outgrew their building and merged with another church assuming a bigger facility. The question of what to do with the old Stone Ridge building came up. Obviously, they could have sold it and funded future expansion. They chose instead to love their Spanish-speaking neighbors. There is currently no Spanish-speaking Baptist church in Kilgore. Go Forth is starting one out of their old property and BMA Texas Missions is helping.

I would love to come and share Texas Missions with your church or association. I have open dates and look forward to hearing from you. We also have resources we can share with you. Let us know.

SPENCER SIMPSON—REDEEMER'S LOVE MISSION, HOUSTON **SPNCRSMPSN@GMAIL.COM**

Thank you for your continued support and prayers. The Lord has continued to bless us as a church as 2021 has gotten underway, and we are excited to see how He continues to use us in southwest Houston to advance His Kingdom.

Prayer Needs:

One of the greatest needs in our community is godly families. In particular, godly men who would be responsible fathers and husbands. Please pray that the Lord would continue to build relationships with families and men in our community. We truly believe that southwest Houston could look totally different in generations to come as the gospel impacts families here, and we want BMA of Texas churches like ours to be a driving force behind that.



▲ **Spencer Simpson**

WESLEY BURKE— **REDEMPTION BAPTIST MISSION,** **NACOGDOCHES** **WESLEYDAVIDBURKE@GMAIL.COM**

Prayer Needs:

Pray God would grow our church through authentic conversion.



▲ **Wesley Burke**

CESAR LEAL— **NEW MISSION IN SAN ANTONIO** **CESARLEAL2002@YAHOO.COM**

I am very grateful to God for his multiple blessings, in health, and providing for my material needs of my family. Pray for the progress of my personal and legal documents in this country.

ROBERTO MARCELLETTI— **ANTHONY DRIVE MISSION, ENNIS** **ROBBYYPATTY@HOTMAIL.COM**

We are trusting that the Lord will guide us in this process of carrying the gospel and that people will approach Christ in repentance and faith.



▲ **Roberto Marcelletti**

JAIME HENRIQUEZ— **FUENTE DE VIDA ETERNA MISSION,** **HOUSTON** **DAIRYJENY@YAHOO.COM**

I am glad to be part of the family of the BMA of Texas. The Lord is working among our people, saving souls and discipling them. God continues to transform life in our congregation.

Prayer Needs:

Pray that the Lord will provide our own building for our church.



▲ **Jamie Henriquez**

MIKE WATT & TREVOR COWAN— **CROSS—WORK MISSION, TAHOKA** **MIKE.WATT@CROSSWORKCHURCH.ORG**

Pray for us this coming month as we gear up for Easter! We want to meet needs and share Jesus.



▲ **Mike Watt**

After School Bible Club Marriage Conference



NEPTALY MOLINA— **IGLESIA BAPTISTA MISSION, NACOGDOCHES** **NRMOLINA23@GMAIL.COM**

Biblical Passage: Philippians 3:10-14; 2 Timothy 4:7,8

Romans 1:16-17 is a message consistent with the time in which we are living. I see in Paul's courage in preaching the gospel. I see in Paul the courage not to be ashamed to lose that redemptive message. This text appeals to me and also moves me to preach the gospel. It motivates me and challenges me not to be ashamed of my task that I have to fulfill.



▲ **Neptaly Molina**

ROBERT LEE— **HARMONY BAPTIST CHURCH** **IN NORMANGEE REPLANT** **BRO.ROBERT.F.LEE@GMAIL.COM**

God has been good to us even in the midst of an ice storm. We were given a great opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ to our community by simply opening our doors and offering for others to come in out of the cold. I firmly believe the gesture, as well as other ways we were able to show the love of Christ this month, were noticed and reflected Christ's love for the folks around Normangee.

Prayer Needs:

Pray for God's guidance as we fill new roles and begin to lay the framework for areas of ministry not currently in place.



▲ **Robert Lee**

A word from your missionaries

TIMOTHY ALBA—NEW MISSION IN SEAGOVILLE **TIMALBA1986@GMAIL.COM**

I have learned that running a race can be difficult. Paul used this analogy to explain to the Corinthians that running well will end in reward. However, this race feels more like a marathon than a one time event. I tend to over plan and get lost in my directions at times. I need to slow down and bring things back into perspective when making plans and reaching goals. I also need to not get so down on myself when plans don't get accomplished. I know that God is at work and I am where I need to be, but I know that I want to move things faster than I should. I pray that God gives me patience and I learn to celebrate the small victories God gives me each day.



▲ **Timothy Alba**

Prayer Needs:

Pray that God gives me wisdom each day. There are situations that I am not always equipped to handle, but I know God is in control and teaching me each day. I pray that I stay on course and remember why I went on mission to begin with.

ISAIAS ROJAS OSECHAS—CHURCH PLANT **IN SPRING** **ISAIAS.ROJA5299@GMAIL.COM**

Prayer Needs:

Pray that we achieve the our goal of starting 10-12 family groups. Also, pray for our vision, purpose and mission as we work with our great BMA family.



▲ **Isaias Rojas Osechas**

BMA TEXAS MISSIONS continued on p. 12

JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE



▲ Mike Smith, president of Jacksonville College, has been teaching the January Bible Study Book in churches since 1980. He usually teaches 15-20 churches a year and three to five associations. Tabernacle Baptist Church in Redtown, outside of Elkhart, has invited Dr. Smith to come for 26 straight years. In the picture is Pastor Charles Plye, Dr. Smith and Joe and Evelyn Danner, lay leaders who have been at every study. The study this year was 1, 2 and 3 John.



▲ First place—Fabiola Hernandez



▲ Second place—Ashley Muldowney



▲ Third place—Shelbi Fitzgerald

Black History Month Art Contest at Jacksonville College

Martin Luther King Jr. was the theme and inspiration where seven entries were received and voted on by the college faculty.



Jacksonville College seeks applicants for office of president

Jacksonville College, a vibrant, faith-based, liberal arts institution is accepting applications for the office of president. Applicants must have an earned doctorate degree, with education or related disciplines preferred.

This confident, well-spoken leader must be a conservative, growing Christian with deep experience in institutional development, fundraising and administration. Pastoral ministry-related experience is a plus.

For consideration, please send: A cover letter, a personal resume which includes family information, your history of work experience, your personal testimony of faith and contact information for three references.

Please email your application to: dpage@hillcrestbc.com.

**Apply by April 10, 2021
for full consideration.**

Jacksonville College was founded in 1899, and is affiliated with the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.



An expression of everlasting love

Many of our friends choose to honor or remember a family member, a friend or an associate with a gift for the children of the Baptist Home. Texas Baptist Home for Children, in turn, notifies the appropriate person. Listed in capital letters are those honored or remembered from Feb. 1-28, 2021.

ENDOWMENT:

E. ANN PACE: KARL AND MARTHA PACE
MYRA STOKES: BILL STOKES

HONORARIUMS:

ALL MY FAMILY: EARLENE CRENSHAW
ALL FOSTER PARENTS AND KIDS: EARLENE CRENSHAW
JACKSON AND RILEY KUNASEK: WAYNE AND LINDA BEASON
RANDY ODOM: JIMMY WOODSON
KARL PACE: KELLY PENICK
MS CLAUDIE THOMPSON: JERRY NULL
RYAN WILSON'S BIRTHDAY: CHARLEY AND IRIS WILSON
CONNER WRIGHT: SUZANNE WIEMER

MEMORIALS:

WALTER BECKER: DENNIS AND ILONA MYRICE
PAULA JEANNETTE BLACKBURAN: LARRY AND CAROL BROCK
LARRY AND ROSELEN BOBO: JAMES BOBO
KEN BRAY: JED AND GLENICE WHITAKER
RAY BEASLEY: PATRICIA CHAPPELL
MARY BULLOCK CALDWELL: CHARLES AND CHARLOTTE JOHNSON
PAULINE CALHOUN: LC & JEANETTA WHITEHEAD
R D "BUCK" CROSS: CHARLES AND CHARLOTTE JOHNSON, JED AND GLENICE WHITAKER
EMILY HYMER CULPEPPER: BRENDA RAY, LARRY AND CAROL BROCK, JAMES AND DEBBIE MURPHY
JIM DANIELS: JED AND GLENICE WHITAKER
NORMAN DAVIS: MT PISGAH BAPTIST CHURCH
SONNY AND JANIE DUNAVANT: MARGARET AND JAMES WOLF
TOMMY GREENE: CHARLES AND CHARLOTTE JOHNSON, BRENDA RAY
DELLA IRBY GOODE: BRENDA CALDWELL
TONY GRIGSBY: PATRICIA CHAPPELL
BILLIE GRIMES: JOHN HENRY GRIMES
HOMER GROOMS: AUDRA EASTER
LAWRENCE "RANDY" HALL: BRENDA CALDWELL
SYLVIA HASTINGS: TOMMIE WORTHY
DONNA HAZZARD: ROSE HILL, MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
SHIRLEY HOLT: RICHARD AND SUE PRIDGEN
ROY HELPINSTALE: DUANE AND CHARLOTTE TURNER
BOBBY LYNDON ISHMAEL: ALICE PERMENTER
HALEY RENAE JOHNSON: LEORA JOHNSON, DONNA JOHNSON
JOE MAX JOHNSON: LEORA JOHNSON
DURWOOD KING: GENEVA KING
PHILIP KING: GENEVA KING
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DAVID LOHMAN: SANDRA LOHMAN
MIKE MURPHY LOTT: ALICE PERMENTER
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CHARLES MITCHELL: GAY MITCHELL
SHIRLEY MURRELL: LC AND JEANETTA WHITEHEAD
LOVITA LOU OUIMET: JAMES OUIMET
BILLY PAGE: JAMES AND PAMELA MOORE
DANNY PATTERSON: RICHARD AND BOBBIE MAUK, CHARLES AND CHARLOTTE JOHNSON
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JOHN WOLCOTT: GAY MITCHELL
DOROTHY B WRIGHT: OLIVAS FAMILY



I'm just sayin'

By **JASON CURRY**

In 1919, the Waxahachie Rotary Club along with the city, and chamber of commerce, worked together to do something quite wonderful for the kids living in the orphanage. They invited and arranged for a grand dinner to be laid out at the Rogers Hotel in Waxahachie.

T.C. Melton said, "Every child was given special attention and ate to their hearts content." In June of 1924, Georgia Dorsey Edwards who grew up in the orphanage describes the boys needing a place to sleep so a group along with the Rotary Club constructed a sleeping porch and bought beds and mattresses.

She said, "I remember how we worked hemming sheets and making pillowcases."

We have endured a lot over the years but are proud of where we are today. We were started as an orphanage, have transitioned to group homes or cottages and are now exclusively a child placing agency with foster homes on campus, and are hopeful about the future and the changes that will come.

What that means today is our organization does not house children like we did as an orphanage. We recruit and equip foster and adoptive parents to care for children that CPS places in our care. Our numbers raise and fall year to year and month to month, but it is not about how many kids we care for it is about providing the best quality care we can.

The days of the past remind us how far we have come, but also stands as a standard we never wish to forget. Children in our care need an opportunity to make a future and TBHC is still a place of hope for them and a place making a difference in lives. God bless you for helping kids know they matter!

Jason Curry is the president of the Texas Baptist Home for Children. Contact him 629 Farley St, Waxahachie, Texas 75165, 972-937-1321 or jcurry@tbhc.org. For more information, visit www.tbhc.org.





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CHURCH HEALTH

Values: aspirational or actual?

By **LARRY BARKER**

There is a time to step back refocus, retool and reevaluate. It is wise to revisit your core values, mission, vision and strategies every two to three years. What are your core values and are you practicing them? It is easy to state your core values, but do your actions back up your verbiage? Aspirational values (what we say we believe) are different from our actual values (how we actually live). Values are why you do what you do and can be determined by taking a closer look at your schedule and how you actually invest your time.

It is very important to begin this enlightening journey with core values because it demonstrates what you believe about the scriptures, your doctrine, the Great Commission, eternity and your worldview. Core values are more than what you believe because they determine the direction of your life and how you behave. Values enable you to have a vision for a preferred future that is driven upon the word of God and directed by the voice of God. Values move you beyond doing church weekly to becoming focused more on being the church daily.

In *Values Driven Leadership*, Aubrey Malphurs states that core values will drive you towards some kind of mission, so make sure it is the right one. They determine the bottom line and they communicate what really matters. Core values drive a stake in the ground as non-negotiable on where you stand and what you believe. They enable you to develop God-directed strategy and intentionality. They help you determine who you really are and move you past realization to activation in your church. They shape your life and ministry.

If you say you value lost souls who are dying and headed to eternity without Christ then you actively build bridges to them and strive to engage them by connecting with them. This core value reminds your church that you are not a fortress where you pull up the drawbridge and isolate. One church has stated this value well: “We are building bridges; not walls!” The big difference between aspirational values and actual values is the action you take to carry them out. Core values determine why your church does what it does!

Aubrey Malphurs defines core values as constant (slow to change), passionate (fully persuaded), biblical (never contradict God’s word), core beliefs (deeply rooted in who you are), and they drive the ministry to where God desires for your church to go. You must be vision-focused but you must also be values-driven. Values are the engine that get you to His destination and His preferred future in advancing His kingdom. When your church is not moving toward it’s preferred, articulated mission it is a values issue not a mission issue!

In Acts 2:42-47, the early church valued fellowship, discipleship, worship, serving and mission. They were focused



on these functions and valued them so highly that they saw them as imperative to the health of the church. These core values were not only discussed but they were practiced and demonstrated. It is very easy to get distracted by the form of worship (contemporary, traditional, etc.) more than making sure that worship (the function) actually occurs. Do you value worship enough to not allow anything to keep you from it?

Are you positive that you value what God values? Do the leaders and other members of the church have the same values? A great exercise would be for everyone to take a personal values audit (email us and we will send you one) and then compare your values with their values. Why are they different? How do you narrow the gap between them? What has not been communicated well on the core values of your church? If you define core values differently than the majority of the church it must be resolved as quickly as possible.

How do you and your church define success? Biblical success is obeying what God has asked you to do and doing it as well as you can. It is discovering God’s mission, vision and strategy for your church in your context. Then carrying it out with excellence as best as you possibly can. God measures success by how faithfully you follow Him, not by outward accomplishments. He looks at our hearts and motives making sure that our actions are true to His calling. Your mission is to make disciples but your purpose is to glorify God in all you do.

In 2 Timothy 4, Paul is handing off the ministry to his

young apprentice Timothy. In John MacArthur’s commentary he points to these characteristics as Paul’s core values. He does not focus on the visible success of Timothy’s ministry but on the excellence of his service. He does not focus on Timothy’s opportunities but on his commitment. He does not focus on personal prominences but on Timothy’s character. Paul expresses no concern for the young pastor’s acceptance or reputation but shows great concern for his faithfulness and goodness.

Paul did not emphasize the size, wealth or influence of the church at Ephesus but rather he valued their spiritual life and health under Timothy’s care. Paul did not concentrate on Timothy’s spiritual gifts, as important as those were, but instead on his spiritual vitality and spiritual service. Paul states what you should value in Philippians 3:8, “More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ.”

Larry Barker is the pastor of Cornerstone, Jacksonville. He also serves as the operations director for North American Missions. For more information or to contact him, visit www.bmamissions.org.



E.D. and Juanita Sarratt—77 years of wedded bliss

By **PAUL GAUNTT**

Baptist Progress Correspondent

According to Google search, fewer than 0.1 percent of married couples make it to their 70-year anniversary, but Elmer and Juanita Sarratt of Mesquite have shattered the three-score and 10 years as a married couple.

Vows were exchanged in the home of the officiating minister March 11, 1944. Elmer was 16 years old, and Juanita was just three days away from turning 16.

Mrs. Sarratt recalled the circumstances leading up to the wedding, saying that they were climbing the stairs of the courthouse when they met a man coming down the stairs.

“He asked us if we were about to be married and we said ‘yes, we were,’” she said. “The man, who happened to be a preacher said, ‘well, if you have your license, I can marry you right now, right here on the stairs.’ I told him, ‘No, I’ve got a new dress for the wedding and I’ll have to wear it.’”

She said the preacher’s name was Bro. Ramsey, and they decided to tap him to do the ceremony. She noted that both she and Elmer were not in church at the time. She was unsaved, and he was “backslidden.”

“We had no car, and had no way to get around in those days except for Elmer’s sister and her husband, who drove us to Bro. Ramsey’s house for the wedding, and anywhere else we needed to go,” she said.

In the early days of their marriage, Elmer worked as a carpenter and Juanita worked for Morton’s Potato Chip Company in Dallas. Their first dwelling was an upstairs apartment on Swiss Avenue.

Bro. Sarratt accepted Christ at age 8. It was in a BMA Church—Rockdale Baptist, near Sulphur Springs, where Sarratt was raised.

He said, “Bro. C.C. Phillips, who was a pastor in Dallas, was preaching the revival at our home church when I was saved, and I was baptized in a stock tank.”

After the Sarratts had been married nine years, she said they probably were not in church nine Sundays during that time. All the while, Elmer was fighting the call to preach. By this time, the couple had moved to Dallas. Elmer was reconnected with a childhood friend, Thomas Price, who was pastor of Hickory Tree Baptist Church in the Pleasant Grove area of east Dallas.

“Elmer seemed to be very critical of everything,” Mrs. Sarratt said, noting that in hindsight, it was obvious that it was because he was fighting the call to preach.

During a service at Hickory Tree, Juanita went down during the invitation and asked for prayer for herself and her husband. On their way home, he told her that he felt better after that service. But she didn’t. It was then she realized she was unsaved. She asked Jesus into her heart, while at home in their dwelling in Pleasant Grove—on Corvette Street.

“Once in a while, we still drive by that house,” she said. “I was saved in the bedroom, and the window is easily seen from the street.”

While leading the singing in a revival at Hickory Tree in 1953, Elmer surrendered his life to the ministry. It was the following year that he and Juanita went to his first pastorate, the Bible Baptist Church in Terrell, an independent church.

“The Lord blessed our ministry there in Terrell where we baptized 30 people,” he said.



▲ A young Bro. and Mrs. Sarratt



▲ Bro. and Mrs. Sarratt today



▲ Bible Baptist Church, Terrell



▲ Rocky Hill, Huntington

SARRATS continued on p. 16

Kilgore churches merge cont.

“This is statically improbable for church mergers to survive. Normally, this merger would have fallen apart by now because too often there are too many chiefs.” Gradberg said. “But that’s not the case here. As of today, Victory Baptist Church no longer exists,” Gradberg said in his introductory remarks to his message. “And Stone Ridge, as we know it, is no longer in existence as of today—we are now the Go Forth Baptist Church.”

The pastor emphasized the fact that there are many concessions that must be made among two groups of people who come together in a merger.

A highlight of the day was the baptism of Alicia Haydock by her husband, Justin. It was the culmination of an amazing story of God’s redemption and restoration.

“Justin came to me one day and said, ‘pastor, I’m just going to confess to you right now, I’ve been living in sin,’” the pastor said.

Dumfounded because a pastor hardly ever hears such a blatant expression of confession, Gradberg calmly and compassionately asked, “Okay, tell me about it.”

Haydock said, after his first marriage failed, he remained single for one-and-one-half years. Then he connected with a young lady by way of a dating service on Facebook, and the two developed a bond over the internet. When they both eventually ended up in east Texas, their relationship continued to grow, and they lived together for almost two months.

They came to church and heard Gradberg preach sermons on “Being in God’s Will,” and messages about the consequences of living in sin.

“Those messages really impacted me,” Haydock said.

Miraculously, at virtually the same time, Alicia was at home listening to her music on Spotify, and a song by Casting Crowns, which she did not download, suddenly came on her system. The song addressed the same subject in which Justin and the pastor were engaged. She couldn’t shut it off. Not necessarily because it grabbed her attention—she literally couldn’t shut it off. The couple agreed that had to be the intervention of God.

After Justin asked the pastor what their options were, he promptly counseled them to separate—for one of them to move out, which would be an expression of repentance. They later decided it was time for a marriage ceremony.

“We were driving down the road one day when I proposed to Alicia, and told her that I loved her and knew that God had brought her to me for a reason,” Haydock said.

Rather than follow through with their original plans to marry in September, it was only a couple of weeks later (January 10) that the couple came to the church and joined—she came on her profession of faith and he publicly reaffirmed his salvation. The couple was not only received into the fellowship, but Gradberg performed the wedding in that same service. They had marriage license in hand.

“We had an entire church to stand up with us during our wedding,” Justin said with a smile.

On the day of the merger celebration, Feb. 21, Justin baptized his wife. He used the terms, “I baptize you, my sister—and wife, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Gradberg tells of another unusual circumstance whereby a young lady came to Christ as a result of Go Forth.

“Laura Welch, who is a paramedic, was saved a couple of months ago,” Gradberg said. “I was working for Rusk County Sheriff’s Office and got sent on a call for a man who was down in his house with a medical condition and the doors were locked.”

When Gradberg arrived, Laura was taking the air conditioner out of his window to crawl in to help him.

“The next week, we had a call with a mental subject who was out of control,” the pastor said, noting that when he went into the house to try to subdue him, (Laura) came in with me.”

The two became friends on Facebook and she started attending the church and soon was saved and baptized, and is a faithful member of the church.

The pastor’s Feb. 21 message was a challenge from Joel 1, highlighting the judgement of the Lord on His people through plagues, and how imperative it is for God’s people to seek an intimate, life changing relationship with the King of kings, saying God’s people need a spiritual passion, spiritual prayer and spiritual unction.

The American Baptist Association divided in 1950 over church polity and missions direction during their national meeting in Lakeland, Florida. The withdrawing group met at Temple, Little Rock, Arkansas a few weeks later and organized, naming itself the North American Baptist Association and later changed its name to Baptist Missionary Association of America in 1969. But in later years, both groups have participated in joint preacher’s conferences, and two churches in Amarillo, Journey Street (ABA) and Ridgecrest (BMA) merged in the late 1990s, thus setting a precedent. The newly merged Amarillo church was named Cornerstone Baptist Church. Even though the former Victory Baptist Church was a part of the ABA, Go Forth Baptist Church is only associated with the BMA.

American Baptist Association pastor, John Williams, who is an alumnus of Jacksonville College (1965-67) was pastor of Victory Road Baptist Church for 11 years, and looks back on his tenure with the church.

“People were saved and lives were changed,” Williams wrote in an e-mail. “As you enter this new era with a new name and under new leadership, I know you will continue to preach the gospel and be God’s Lighthouse in Kilgore—you will always be in my prayers. God bless you all.”

Popular evangelist, David Ring, was scheduled to preach the celebration service on Feb. 14. When the service was postponed, Ring, who had totaled his car upon coming into town, was stranded in Kilgore for the week, and had agreed to remain to preach the service Feb. 21. But he was taken ill and had to be flown home on Saturday, the day before the rescheduled service.

For further information concerning the Go Forth Baptist Church (BMA) of Kilgore, you may visit the church’s Facebook site by just typing “Go Forth Baptist Church” in the search box. You may view the Feb. 21 service in its entirety on the Facebook site. Visit the church website at goforthbaptist.com.



BMA of America



Should we still pray for our political leaders?

By JOHN M. ADAMS, D.Min.

Our Heavenly Father hasn't promised that every political leader will become pure and righteous if we pray, but He still commands us to pray for our leaders and those of other nations as well. The Bible says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men. For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

You might say the world is still rocked by conflicts and corruption and lawlessness but let me ask you a question. How much worse would the world be if God's people didn't pray? What if we simply gave up and allowed the devil to carry on his schemes without interference? We may never know what impact our prayers are having—but God is still at work in response to the prayers of Christians.

Lloyd Ogilvie said, "I've never witnessed such intense hatred and vitriol in Washington D.C. The disdain between the Democratic and Republican parties has plunged to new depths. The drive to rule is tearing our country apart."

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Pray for our leaders, for wisdom and guidance in the days to come. Pray for both parties, that they will put aside their animosity and partisan politics for the sake of the unity of our great nation. Pray that the hostility will cease, and that peacemakers from both sides of the aisle will provide the courageous leadership so desperately needed.

Billy Graham said, "When Benjamin Franklin emerged from the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia after helping forge the U.S. Constitution, he was asked what sort of government the delegates had created. His reply was, 'A republic, if you can keep it.'"

Our nation was born in a quest for religious liberty and founded on Christian moral and spiritual principles. John Adams, an original signer of the Declaration of Independence and our second president, wrote a profound letter to the Massachusetts Militia in the fall of 1798, saying, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men. For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."



What a difficult and different approach to governmental authority. Even if we disagree, we are to pray for those who rule the daily affairs of our lives.

The early church had been accused of action against the decrees of Caesar and having another king, Jesus Himself (Acts 17:7). Their enemies effectively accused them of dissatisfaction with the ruling parties. Paul encouraged these early believers to look to God as the One who had placed these men in authority.

Pray that they would have wisdom. This was Solomon's prayer as he ruled the nation of Israel—that he would have "an understanding mind to govern the people" (1 Kings 3:9). Pray that our leaders would have wisdom to know right and the strength to do it.

Pray that they would have discernment. This is the ability to know right from wrong; to know God's leading as opposed to the leading of the enemy (1 Kings 3:9). Pray that God would protect them from lies and deception.

Pray that they would be instruments of God. This was Paul's instruction in Romans 13:4; that rulers, authorities, and governing bodies were actually "servants of God." Pray that our leaders would lead a society marked by tranquility, godliness and dignity.

Oh, how we need all Christians to rise up in prayer. God can and will hear us as we pray!

Dr. John M. Adams is the executive director of BMAA Moral Action. Contact him at Moral Action - BMA of America . P.O. Box 305 . Mantachie, Mississippi 38855 or visit www.macbma.net for more information.



Chaplain Grizzle receives award and promoted to major

By SCOTT CARSON

BMAA Chaplaincy Director

Christopher Grizzle and family recently returned from an overseas assignment to Germany and is now assigned to Fort Polk, Louisiana. As Chaplain Grizzle wrapped up his duties in Europe, his command presented him with a Meritorious Service Medal in recognition for his effective ministry and noteworthy contributions to the mission of his unit. Having relocated to Fort Polk, Chris received an additional, and very significant career honor as he was promoted to the Field Grade Officer level of Major.

As a Major, Chaplain Grizzle will assume a greater level of responsibility and, for his first duty as such, he has been appointed as the Fort Polk Religious Support Office Resource Manager. His duties include the proper accounting of the Chaplain's Office financial affairs and the resourcing of every religious activity in their sphere of responsibility. This is a very technical job that requires attention to detail while working with the various ministries to meet their fiscal requirements. Keep the Grizzle's in your prayers. Congratulations Chaplain (Major) and Mrs. Chris Grizzle!



▲ BMAA Army Chaplain, Chris Grizzle is awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (Chris and Denise Grizzle)



▲ Chris Grizzle's wife, Denise, pins onto him a gold oak leaf that represents the rank of Major



▲ Present Chris' promotion (l to r): John Mark (husband of Ramona Volkots, Chris Grizzle's mother), Ramona Volkots (mother to Chris Grizzle), Chris, Denise Grizzle (wife), sister Tessi Center, and her husband Rick Center. Flowers represent family and dear friends who could not attend due to COVID and military missions

EIM's Shepherd Bags Ministry news and goals for 2021

By **FONDA NORRIS**

EIM Shepherd's Bag Ministry Coordinator

I know I'm not alone when I say I'm so glad that 2020 is in our rearview mirror and 2021 is here. While I'm not certain what the year 2021 will hold, I do know Who holds the future. Amen!

I wanted to give everyone a current update and praise report from EIM's Shepherd's Bag Ministry. Due to COVID-19 bursting onto the scene, we had to cancel all of our 2020 overseas trips to go distribute Shepherd's Bags in Honduras. Needless to say, that was very disappointing when countries began to close their borders. But God was faithful and still opened the door to allow us to be able to ship to Ghana, West Africa.

Bro. Tim Tyler, Director of Water For Christ, brought his truck in November and picked up 16,000 Shepherd's Bags. The Shepherd's Bags will go on the shipping container when Bro. Tim makes his next shipment hopefully in early 2021. We are still awaiting a few logistics to be worked out before that shipment. Would you join with us in praying that God uses each and every bag to bring boys, girls, men and women to Himself with the Gospel being preaching before the children receive their bag?

Plans and goals for 2021 include to keep doing what we've done since 1999 and that's keep assembling Shepherd's Bags. While we have been slower getting a shipment together, due to lack of work teams going and coming, with a few workers helping we currently have 8,000 assembled and boxed at our storage facility. We have supplies to finish up 8,000 more. When this shipment is completed, we pray to be able to ship them into the Philippines by this summer or early fall 2021.

In 2020, the border was closed for shipments due to the pandemic and we know only God can open it up this year but we can't stop, due to what may happen, or what may be closed. We understand EIM's Shepherd's Bag Ministry is in God's Hands and He expects us to be faithful and let Him decide where these bags ultimately end up. I will purchase

supplies for 16,000 more unisex Shepherd's Bags and we start all over again since we assemble bags all year long.

Thank you for all those who so faithfully give to EIM's Shepherd's Bag Ministry. You "give" so children around the world "get" to hear the Gospel while receiving a small one-gallon Ziploc bag filled with the same items so boys and girls receive the same gift. Having each child receive the same gift has worked so well and is very cost effective. You entrust us with your offerings to know that the lost will hear the Gospel and we try to be the best stewards of your offerings. Please covenant to pray for us and with us that we will be faithful whatever 2021 holds for us because we know Who holds the future and that many will come to know Jesus as Savior.



▲ Little girl in Honduras received a Shepherd Bag



▲ Rocky Goodwin and Tim Tyler loading Shepherd Bags

II PAUSE

SOAR 2021

SOAR21 planned for July 6-8

By **NICK JACOBSON**

BMA of America

We are excited to announce that SOAR 2021 will be a live, in-person conference in Dallas July 6-8! This year's conference will take place at the Hilton Anatole Hotel near downtown Dallas. Expect to see some familiar faces like Aaron Williams, as one of our speakers, and Soar Collective leading worship. SOAR21 will also have two concerts featuring Building 429 and Flame.

We are anticipating a great response, so be sure to register your group now at soarconference.com. We are aware of the potential hesitancy some may have traveling with a group to Dallas. As we plan for a great event, safety for our churches and for all participants at SOAR is a top priority. We are working with the hotel to ensure not only a safe, but great experience for all those who come to SOAR21.

SOAR21 will be all about worship. Our theme is *Pause* because of the need we see in current culture to call teenagers to pause and consider the holiness of God, why He deserves to be worshiped in a biblical way and how our biblical worship of Holy God should make a kingdom impact in our daily lives. We believe right worship must be biblical worship.

After calling upon people to consider the mighty works of God, the psalmist makes a significant statement in Psalm 46:10, *"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* Our intention at SOAR21 is to be still and thoughtfully consider the greatness of God. Our hope is that teenagers will know that He alone is God and commit to making Him known to all nations.

Words cannot express how thankful we are for the support received from our BMA churches last summer with our online conference. The decision to move forward in that format was far from easy, but your participation proved to be an incredible source of encouragement for all those who worked tirelessly to create an event that honored our Lord and served the teenagers of the BMA.

As we gather together in Dallas, we are confident SOAR21 will be one to remember! The vision that drives us year after year *is to lead teenagers to learn the Word, love the church, and live sold out, radical lives for King Jesus*. Our commitment to you is to honor Jesus in all we do.

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

BMA Texas Missions cont.

**CHRIS DRIVER—WEST TEXAS MULTIPLICATION NETWORK/
TEXAS MISSIONARY CARE
CJDRIVER316@GMAIL.COM**

“The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). The longer we strive toward the vision God has laid upon our heart for reaching West Texas with the gospel, the more I have experienced this truth. But I am so thankful for the clarity that God continues to provide as we remain faithful to that vision. He has recently established some steps that I had avoided for several years. We are so excited about these new steps, but they promise to stretch us and challenge us in so many areas of our lives and faith. I will be sharing these new steps soon, but for now, please just join us in praying specifically for the towns of Levelland, Whitharral, Sundown, Smyer, Whiteface and Morton. We continue to marvel at God’s goodness and faithfulness and His willingness to use us in His plan to reach west Texas. Thank you all for your support and your love and your prayers.

Prayer Needs:

Pray for the towns of Levelland, Whitharral, Sundown, Smyer, Whiteface and Morton.

**RONNIE MILLS—
KINGDOM CHAPEL MISSION, SAGINAW/NORTH FORT WORTH
RONNIE@KCHAPEL.ORG**

BMA churches, what a pleasure it is planting alongside each of you. We trust and pray the Lord is blessing according to His will in your context as He is here as well. Thank you for all of your prayers and support. We are doing well, and have seen the Lord moving among us as a church body. One celebration this month is we’ve received two new families into our family covenant, and we’re very excited about that. We continue to press forward in Christ and His calling on our lives. Blessings.

Prayer Needs:

Continue to pray for our mission here in Saginaw. We know the Lord hears, and answers accordingly, and we’re truly grateful for each of you.

**CHRIS MINDI/JESSE HALES—
ANCHOR AUSTIN MISSION IN LEANDER
CHRIS.MINDI@BMATS.EDU | HALESJESSE@GMAIL.COM**

God is good! It is always encouraging when you feel led to pray for someone you know who needs Jesus and then that person shows up at your door unexpectedly or you run into them unplanned in the community. God has been faithfully giving us opportunities just like this to share the Gospel. It’s also very encouraging when people hear about your church before they even move to the area and connect with you wanting to meet up. It is obvious that God is working and wants Anchor, Austin to a bright source of His light in the north Austin metro area. Praise Him with us for all He is doing. Thank you for your support.

Prayer Needs:

We have had a few of our families in our small groups tell us recently that they will be moving out of the area. Although this is expected in any ministry, I think it is especially hard for a new church plant to lose a good percentage of committed families all at once. Please pray that God will be with these families and lead them to others who will continue to faithfully disciple them in God’s Word. Pray also that we will be able to quickly fill the void they will leave behind in our groups. Thank you.



Auxiliaries

Exciting year planned for Texas WMA

By **GLENDAM CHAMBERLAIN**

The Texas WMA officers met March 6, 2021 at Latch, Gilmer to discuss and plan the new year for Texas WMA. Johnnie Ross, president, opened the meeting with scripture from Ephesians 6. Texas WMA is planning to have a spring retreat and is working to finalize those plans. We will use the theme Maeva Thompson planned last year, “The Miracles of Jesus,” which unfortunately was canceled due to COVID concerns. Johnnie Ross will be the coordinator for this event. Please stay tuned for more information coming soon.

The fall retreat will be held at the newly remodeled Daniel Springs Retreat Center in Gary. We are excited to be able to use these wonderful facilities. If you haven’t been to Daniel Springs Baptist Encampment lately you are certainly in for a treat. Kristi Key, 2nd vice president, selected the theme “Shipwrecked” and theme verse, “Be still and know that I Am God” (Psalm 46:10). She is planning wonderful, inspirational speakers and breakout sessions based on women of the Bible. Makaye Key and John Mendez will provide the music. You can also look for a fun silent auction to raise funds for the project.

D’Andra Smith, 3rd vice president, will continue with recommendations for group Bible studies and also for personal growth. She supplied us with many great reads this past year and I’m looking forward to her selections in the coming months.

Jo Strong, corresponding secretary/treasurer will continue to email newsletters throughout the year. If you wish to be added to her list of email address please contact Jo at jostrong227@gmail.com, she can also be reached by phone at 817-480-0888.

Alicia Johnson, historian, wasn’t able to attend the meeting. Alicia handles our website and Facebook page. If you have anything of WMA interest you would like for her to post please email Alicia at saliciajohnson@yahoo.com.

Diana Morris, project promoter, spoke of the current project for Daniel Springs. The camp needs to replace their swimming pool. There are major leaks on both the interior and exterior areas of the pool. Every Texas WMA and Ladies Ministries are enlisted to join hands with Daniel Springs and help raise the needed funds to replace the decades old pool.

Hayley Rasco, GMA promoter, excitedly talked about the upcoming Houseparty March 20. The GMA officers have been working hard to get everything ready and are hoping for a great turnout of young ladies ranging from 4th through 12th grades.

Vera Koonce, Sunbeam promoter, was not able to attend the meeting. She shared her hope that the Texas Sunbeam Houseparty would be held this summer. It was canceled at the last-minute last year due to COVID concerns. The

Sunbeam Houseparty is a wonderful event for children, birth through 3rd grade.

Lynda Marsh represented the Project Selection Committee and noted they will be looking for a new project for 2022 in the coming months. If you have a project suggestion, contact a committee member. Their names are listed on our website texaswma.com. Please be in prayer for our Nominating Committee as they will be working soon to fill officer positions for the fall.

Other officers present were Charlotte Johnson, Cindy Allen, Elizabeth Midkiff, Jackie Ricks and Glenda Chamberlain.

It was exciting to hear all the plans for this year. To God be the glory. He is ever faithful.

GMA HOUSEPARTY

The Texas GMA Houseparty is a one-day event this year, and will take place on Saturday, March 20, 2021, at Rosewood, Gilmer. Rosewood is located at 8260 Arrowwood Rd., Gilmer, Texas 75644. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. The Houseparty will start at 10 a.m. and run through 4 p.m. There will be a morning session, then lunch furnished by Rosewood and an afternoon session. The cost is \$25 per person. The deadline for registration has passed, but you can still register late by going to their website www.texasgma.org, click on “Contact” at the top right of the page to send a message to let them know you are coming. Bring \$25 per person to the Houseparty for registration.

Last year’s officers worked so hard on the theme, “We Won’t Be Shaken.” It will be the theme for the morning session. After lunch the newly appointed 2021 officers will take the lead in the afternoon session. Plus, the new theme will be announced. The officers will have a variety of items for sale at the Houseparty to raise money for the project. The current project is missionary JW in Southeast Asia!

Even if you do not have a GMA program currently at your church, and you have girls between 4th and 12th grade, give them the opportunity to come and have fun, meet new people and most importantly, worship the Lord with girls their own ages. Please be in prayer for the Houseparty to be fun, successful and productive, but most of all, pray that the Lord would use it for His glory!

Glenda Chamberlain is the Texas Women’s Missionary Auxiliary (WMA) editor. Contact her at gcham33@yahoo.com. For more information about the Texas WMA, visit www.texaswma.com.



EVENTS

BAPTIST PROGRESS MINISTRY CONNECTION WORKSHOP: GOSPEL IMPACT THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

DATE: March 23, 2021

TIME: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided for \$10

PLACE: CrossRoads Church, 7900 Chiesa Road, Rowlett

2021 BMA OF AMERICA ANNUAL MEETING

DATE: April 19-21, 2021

PLACE: Farley Street Baptist Church, Waxahachie, Texas

BAPTIST PROGRESS MINISTRY CONNECTION WORKSHOP: CONFLICT—CAUSES AND CURES

DATE: June 10, 2021

TIME: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided for \$10

PLACE: Jacksonville College, 105 B.J. Albritton Drive, Jacksonville

BAPTIST PROGRESS MINISTRY CONNECTION WORKSHOP: REACHING PEOPLE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITES

DATE: Sept. 16, 2021

TIME: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided for \$10

PLACE: BMA of Texas Building, 632 Farley Street, Waxahachie

2021 BMA OF TEXAS ANNUAL MEETING (CHANGE OF DATE)

DATE: Nov. 4, 2021

PLACE: New Harmony, Tyler

2021 NATIONAL SENIOR ADULT CONFERENCE

DATE: Nov. 15-17, 2021

PLACE: Chateau on the Lakes, Branson, Missouri

PERSONNEL & POSITIONS

AVAILABLE POSITIONS

PASTOR—First, Palmer is seeking a pastor. Send resume to pastorsearch@fbcpalmer.org or mail to P.O. Box 70, Palmer, Texas 75152. ^{TFN}

PASTOR—Northside, Garland is seeking a pastor. Send resume to Linda Arnold or Betty Hoffman, 2510 N. Glenbrook Drive, Garland, Texas 75040 or northsidegarland@gmail.com or for more information, call 972-495-2986. ^{3/21}

PASTOR—Dr. Ray Thompson has retired as pastor of Enon Missionary, Gilmer. A pulpit committee was formed and is seeking ordained ministers as well as licensed ministers for pulpit supply. Please contact steven.waller60@yahoo.com. ^{TFN}

PASTOR—Lighthouse, Payne Springs is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resume to P.O. Box 142, Eustace, Texas 75124 or shirleyrawlinson46@gmail.com.

PASTOR—New Bethlehem, Cut and Shoot is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resume to 14630 Millmac Road, Conroe, Texas 77303 or nbbc2112@consolidated.net. ^{6/21}

PASTOR—Calvary First, Mesquite is seeking a bivocational senior pastor. Send resume to Mike Lampkin, 1001 Walford Drive, Forney, Texas 75126, mike_lampkin@att.net or call 214-862-4406. ^{6/21}

PASTOR—Lakeridge, Lubbock is seeking a senior pastor. Send resume to Karen Isaacs, 4601 82nd Street, Lubbock, Texas 79424, psc@mylrbcc.org or call 806-771-0514. ^{5/21}

PASTOR—Keltys First, Lufkin is seeking a full-time lead teaching pastor. Send resume, ministry philosophy, and any sermon links to jobs@keltys.org or to P.O. Box 3043, Lufkin, TX, 75903, Attn: Pastor Search. Visit keltys.org/pastorsearch for more information and a job description. ^{TFN}

PASTOR—Antioch, Carthage is seeking a pastor. Send resume to Pulpit Committee, Scott Dyer, 442 County Road 1081, Carthage, Texas 75633, sedyer57@gmail.com or call 903-690-4819. ^{TFN}

PASTOR—First Missionary, Morton is seeking a pastor. Send resume to jimmysealy@aol.com or to FMBC Box 981, Morton, Texas 79346. ^{TFN}

AVAILABLE MINISTERS

CHRIS PRICE is available for pulpit supply. He is a member of Mt. Calvary, Carthage. Contact him at 903-203-4958 or pastor.chris.price@gmail.com. ^{3/21}

CORRECTION

Baptist Progress reported incorrectly in our last issue that Mike Fisher is the new pastor at Enon, Gilmer. Actually, Bro. Fisher is the new pastor at Enon First, lola, not Enon, Gilmer. We apologize for the mistake.



MRS. GROVER (ESTER MAE) LAIRD

Ester Mae Farmer Laird, 93, of Dorsey, Mississippi, passed away March 3, 2021. She was a supportive minister's wife for 74 years alongside her husband, Grover, who served as pastor of churches in Texas, Kentucky and Mississippi and also as a state missionary in Texas. Funeral services were at East Fulton, Fulton, Mississippi March 6, 2021. Online condolences can be expressed at www.senterfuneraldirectors.com.



MRS. DALE (LATANCE) HANKINS

LaTance Tate Hankns, 83, of Tyler, passed away Feb. 18, 2021. She was the widow of Bro. Dale Hankins, who served as pastor of churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. A graveside service was conducted at Valley Cemetery in Gillham, Arkansas Feb. 25, 2021. Online condolences can be expressed at www.chandlerfuneral.com.



JOHNNY (JOHN) WAYNE TISDALE

Johnny Wayne (John) Tisdale, 71, of McAllen, passed away Feb. 14, 2021. He was ordained as a minister of the gospel Dec., 1971. Bro. John served as pastor of churches in Beeville and Broaddus. He then planted two churches in the Rio Grande Valley, Fellowship, Edinburg and Anchor Bible, Pharr. Bro. John was pastor of Anchor Bible, Pharr when the Lord called him home. He received his Doctorate of Pastoral Studies from Anchor Theological Seminary and became president of the seminary in 1991 where he served until his passing. Bro. John was also a local businessman and owned Tisdale Motor Company in McAllen, since 1982. A memorial service was conducted at Anchor Bible, Pharr Feb. 25, 2021.



pastor & staff changes

ERIC JOHNSON, who has served as BMA of America director of international missions, is the new pastor of First, Jacksonville.

TANNER CHOPPY is the new pastor of Ebenezer, Huntsville.

** If you are aware of pastor and staff changes, please let us know at Baptist Progress by emailing us at editor@baptistprogress.org*

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

A gospel witness and a tragic postponement

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: May 2, 2021
TEXT: Acts 23:23-24:27

THE HOOK

I believe the saddest story I ever heard was about a man who wanted nothing to do with Jesus. A Baptist preacher befriended him, shared scripture with him a little at a time, and finally came to a place where he felt it was time to introduce him to Jesus, and asked him to receive the free gift of eternal life. But the man was hardened and refused. However, it was not long until he began thinking about death and dying. He pondered it to the point he became troubled—and suddenly the reality of death began to torment him. Not long afterward, he was diagnosed with a fast-growing malignant tumor of the brain. Very soon, it began impairing his thought processes, but one day he requested that his preacher friend come to his bedside. The preacher came, and one more time, asked him to receive the free gift of eternal life. But the only thing the man could do, by that time, was to clutch his head with his hands and shout, “I can’t think! I can’t think!” It was only a matter of days that the man slipped into eternity. The preacher said that those words, “I can’t think,” haunted him from then on. What a tragic postponement.

THE BOOK

Why is Paul a marked man by the Jews? Because He preaches Jesus. But while they wanted him dead, his message created division among the Pharisees and Sadducees, concerning the doctrine of the resurrection (verse 6). They were divided over this doctrine.

Paul is sent to Governor Felix (verse 23). Claudius Lysias sent a memo to the Governor (verse 26) explaining that he is being sent, under heavy guard to Antipatris, Caesarea, because of the plot, by the Jews to have him killed.

Paul on trial at Caesarea (24:1-3). The high priest, Ananias, brings his lawyer, Tertullus, who brings accusations. Paul was accused of being an insurrectionist, desecrating the Temple by entering it while being identified by the Nazrenes.

Paul gave his defense in chapter 24, verses 10-27.

1. He defended His devotion to the Way—Jesus (v. 14).
2. He defended His position on the resurrection (v. 15).
3. He did not discount the Law of Moses (v. 14).
4. He explained his raising funds in Macedonia to bring back to his struggling brethren in Jerusalem (vv. 17-18).
5. He was testifying to Felix, who understood the information about Jesus (v. 22).

6. Felix was troubled about the effects of the gospel and sought to postpone any decision to follow the Way (vv. 25-27).

THE LOOK

The main thrust of this lesson is to showcase Felix’s postponement of the decision to follow Christ. This is perhaps the most haunting text in scripture. Many are like Felix – they have been on the brink of receiving the free gift of eternal life, but postponed it until another day. But for Felix, that day never came. The horror is spelled out in the old Phillip P. Bliss (1838-1876) standard, “Almost Persuaded.” This hymn has been billed by many as the saddest hymn ever written.

“Almost persuaded, now to believe,
Almost persuaded, Christ to receive.
Seems now some soul to say, ‘Go Spirit, go Thy way
Some more convenient day, on Thee I’ll call.’”

Almost persuaded, harvest is past!
Almost persuaded, doom comes at last!
Almost cannot avail; Almost is but to fail.
Sad, sad, that bitter wail—Almost, but lost.”

Being obedient to the call

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: May 9, 2021
TEXT: Acts 25:1-26:32

THE HOOK

How seriously do we, as God’s people, take the urgency of God’s calling upon our lives to do His bidding in this world? Would we rather just have a marginal ministry, with the hopes of escaping persecution—or even inconvenience? This week we are looking at Paul’s impeccable character and total devotion to Christ, and the calling on his life.

THE BOOK

When God’s man is faithful and obedient to God’s call, he wants to be totally above board, totally innocent, operating with pure motives, and possessing an impeccable character. This describes the character and

dedication of the Apostle Paul. I observe some characteristics of this great man of God.

1. Paul desired to be judged by the highest authority—Caesar (25:10). Festus was more interested in appeasing the Jews Paul did not want to find some run-of-the-mill court to try to find a quick acquittal. He wanted his life put to the ultimate judgement, knowing he was innocent. There was an issue far more urgent than seeking personal freedom. He wanted to vindicate the gospel.
2. Paul’s conscience was clear concerning the charges brought against him and accusers could not prove otherwise (25:7).
3. Paul was willing to abide by the rule of law and let it take its course.
4. Paul was willing to die for his faith and ministry (25:11).

5. Paul gladly shared his testimony his faith and calling (26:1-23). The Apostle had total recall of his encounter with Christ, and the experiences to follow.
6. Paul’s boldness was on display when he testified before King Agrippa (26:29).
7. A faithful servant witnesses to the great and the small.
8. Paul had an overwhelming passion to see the lost come to Christ (26:29).

THE LOOK

May we, as God’s servants, determine to use the apostle Paul’s regard to God’s call upon his life as our own and serve Him with great diligence. May we, rather than appeasing others, be willing to sacrifice convenience or even freedom, if need be, in order to be faithful to God and the gospel.

Safe in the storm

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: May 16, 2021
TEXT: Acts 27:1-44

THE HOOK

In this lesson, we find that God has a plan for His servants and has plotted the course for that plan to come to fruition. Often, he uses adversity to bring about His will. His plan is according to His own sovereignty, and his own good time, and often, our timing is a little off course. Case in point—Bro. John Gradberg and his Kilgore congregation made great plans for their special merger celebration with another church on Sunday, Feb. 14. The evangelist was invited, and was about two miles from his destination when he totaled his car. Then the worst blizzard since 1895 struck the country. It seemed apparent God wanted the celebration to be the following week instead. We are reminded in our lesson today that it is best to let God navigate our lives through the storm.

THE BOOK

Paul and company, under the supervision of Julius, a centurion of the

regiment of Augustus, set sail from Adramyttium, (in modern day Turkey) headed for Rome. God’s grace and provision was seen in the kindness of Julius in allowing Paul to disembark at Sidon to visit friends and have their needs met. Even in great difficulty, God is faithful.

Life is filled with storms. The band of men faced a raging sea throughout the voyage. Such phrases as “the winds were contrary” (verse 4) and “the winds not suffering us” (verse 7) reveal the treachery. God the Father allows turbulence to remind us to trust Him.

Always follow divine guidance and not the direction of mortals. Paul assured the company that the Angel of the Lord told him he would stand before Caesar (vv. 21-25). But rather than believing Paul’s divine instruction, Julius believed and trusted in the helmsman (v. 11). We must trust God, not men. If God assured Paul he would stand before Caesar, it should stand to reason the company would survive the treachery of the sea. Bro. Jack McDaniel once said while he and his wife, affectionately known as Mrs. Peggy, were in Hawaii, the Lord gave him a message to preach to Farley Street, Waxahachie about planting a new mission (Heritage Baptist Church). As the plane took off from Honolulu, he was apprehensive about the flight home. Mrs. Peggy reminded him of the

message God gave him, and that God would not give him a message and then not let him survive the trip home to preach it.

When turbulent winds blow, take your hands off the helm and let God direct. In verse 15, we learn a valuable divine lesson. When things reel out of control, we are to do what the company at sea did—“And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.” Great faith in God’s provision will cause us to let go and let God navigate us.

When life’s baggage gets you down, relinquish it to the Father. We also learn that it is always best to rid ourselves of life’s heavy load in order to better adhere to God’s direction (vv. 18-19). We also learn that fear and lack of faith in God to sustain us, inhibits our appetite, thus adding to our weakness.

THE LOOK

The victorious life in Christ calls for us to cast away the baggage of life that weights us down—and rather than to trust in the earthly helmsmen of our lives, trust in the one and only true and living God to plot and navigate our course (Hebrews 12:1).

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

Hospitality, friends, and encouragement

By **PAUL GAUNTT**

DATE: May 23, 2021

TEXT: Acts 28:1-16

THE HOOK

Everyone has an experience of giving and receiving hospitality. Paul and company seemed to be inundated with it wherever they went. I went with a party from Farley Street, Waxahachie, to Moore, Oklahoma to volunteer in the aftermath of the deadly tornado which cut a 14-mile swath of destruction throughout southern areas of Oklahoma City and decimated the city of Moore to the tune of \$2 billion in damages in May 2013. We went there to help and were assigned to the task of delivering water and food to families standing in front of rubble that was once their homes. As we distributed the sandwiches, we were

greeted by people who possessed an overwhelming spirit of joy and gladness. We would love to think that some of it was due to our efforts, but these people possessed an ecstatic joy that could only be sourced in Heaven. It is a blessed event to be in the presence of hospitality, friends and encouragement.

THE BOOK

Hospitality in the midst of danger. When the ship went aground at Melita, Paul and company were confronted by hospitality from “a barbarous people.” The men could have easily been killed by the soldiers aboard the ship being afraid the prisoners would escape. But Julius commanded the soldiers to stand down. All made the swim to safety.

Opportunities to show God’s power. In gathering wood to build a fire,

Paul was gripped by a venomous snake. It was the belief of the islanders that any man bitten by a poisonous snake was a murderer. But when he didn’t die, they accepted him all the more. Paul also prayed and laid hands on the father of the island governor. Many gifts and favors were bestowed upon Paul from the people. While the world hates the truths of God’s Word, they can be touched by the hand and ministry of God’s servants.

THE LOOK

After studying this lesson, we should become even more emboldened and challenged to spread the message of the good news of Christ without fear, knowing that although many will respond negatively about the gospel, many will warmly receive it and express appreciation through hospitable acts.

The gospel unhindered to all peoples

By **PAUL GAUNTT**

DATE: May 30, 2021

TEXT: Acts 28:17-31

THE HOOK

Scripture is clear—Christ desires that the whole world come to Him. But being omniscient, He knows that only a few will come (Matthew 7:13-14). And He knows who will come, and who will reject. But we do not know who will come, hence the command to “go ye into all the world and preach the gospel...” Paul was faithful to go, and He was meticulous about ensuring that his former reputation as a persecutor was not the reason he was presently incarcerated. Paul was absolutely cognizant of the need for total integrity as he proclaimed the gospel.

THE BOOK

1. Paul meets with the leaders. Paul always went to the Jews first wherever he went. Spreading the gospel is done more efficiently when the leaders are on board with the message.

2. Paul was passionate in making sure they knew he had not turned his back on Israel. It was his desire to show the link between the Mosaic Law and the law of grace.
3. Paul wanted them to know he was innocent of any crimes against the law or the Jews. He knew many would misunderstand since he was in chains.
4. He wanted them to know he was a prisoner because of his belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Hope of Israel.
5. The response by the Jewish leaders to Paul was that they assured him they had not received any negative communication about him.
6. The response by the Jewish leaders to the gospel was that some believed and some did not believe (v. 24).

THE LOOK

Often, we are despondent because we are not totally successful in spreading the gospel. We must take courage and realize some will reject, and others will accept. Yet others will say, “We will hear you again.” It is all in the

hands of God the Father. All we can be are mouthpieces for Him—not change agents. “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet” (Matthew 10:14).

Paul Gauntt served for 16 years as the BMA of Texas Department of Church Ministries director. He has served several churches as pastor, and is a correspondent and featured article writer for Baptist Progress. Contact him at pop.gauntt@gmail.com.



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E.D. and Juanita Sarratt—77 years of wedded bliss cont.



▲ Calvary, Crockett

The following pastorates included Rocky Hill, Huntington; Calvary, Crockett; Liberty, Gun Barrel City; and then it was back to Dallas where Elmer served as assistant to his close friend, Marvin Hudler, at Friendship Baptist Church. The church planted a mission in Mesquite and sent Sarratt out to be the founding pastor. He also served for 13 years as pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove and eight years at Long Creek, Sunnyvale. He said that most every church he served went into a building program.

While Sarratt was pastor in Crockett, he preached many funerals, including the father of famous country singer, Kenny Rogers.

“I knew the funeral director really well, and often there were people to be buried, and the families had no preacher,” he said. “So he would call on me to come preach. There were times when I would have two funerals a day for several days.”

When asked about the difficulty in preaching funerals of people with whom he was not acquainted, his reply was, “If I didn’t know them, or have any information about them, I just preached salvation, and the need to be saved.”

“I was Marvin’s assistant at Friendship, and then later, Marvin was my assistant at Long Creek,” Sarratt explained. “This was the place where I retired from the active pastorate.”

Elmer and Juanita Sarratt had two sons, Edwin and Darwin, each who passed away from cancer: Edwin in 1980 and Darwin (Buddy) in 2017. The two sons gave them a total of five grandchildren, most who remained close by them.

Although Juanita Sarratt made a profession of faith later in life, she spoke about how, as a young girl, she had thoughts and dreams of being a church pianist.

Her childhood dream of being a church pianist was to become a reality after her husband began in the ministry. They acquired an old upright piano, which had a very good tone, and she began to prepare herself to play during church services. She located a lady who agreed to come to her home once a week and give her lessons for \$1 per lesson since they only had one car and she was not able to drive herself to the lessons. She was used



▲ Gethsemane, Dallas

extensively in her husband’s ministry as a pianist in services. Elmer lauded his faithful, godly wife.

“My wife never had any trouble going from one church to the next with me,” Sarratt said. “She has helped in Sunday school and has led people to the Lord—God is so good!”

In his younger days, Sarratt played guitar in a country band, and was quite a singer. Juanita laughed as she told of his band playing in the Sportatorium in Dallas, and the song he sang was, “Next Sunday, Darling, is My Birthday.”

Trademark dress for the band was cowboy hats and boots. But after Sarratt went into the ministry, he gave up wearing the boots, saying that they reminded him of times in his life when he wasn’t serving the Lord.

The couple lives near the church he planted—Friendship, Mesquite—and are faithful to its services.



▲ Friendship, Mesquite



▲ Long Creek, Sunnyvale

New BMA of Texas logo

By **JERRY FULTON**

Baptist Progress Editor.

The Baptist Missionary Association is debuting a brand-new logo. After praying and thinking about the mission and make-up of the association, it was decided that the BMA of Texas is a family of unique churches making Christ followers in an increasingly diverse Texas.

The logo symbolizes all these things. The family (togetherness) aspect is symbolized by the round shape (circle) of the logo. Unique churches making Christ followers

is symbolized by the unique, diverse shapes of people in the logo. Of course, Christ and the association’s mission to glorify Him by fulfilling the Great Commission is symbolized by the cross in the middle of the logo.

In the future, the vision of the BMA of Texas—“A family of unique churches making Christ followers in an increasingly diverse Texas”—as well as the logo will be used in publications, on websites and more.





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