

# **TOGETHER: Thank God for servants who lead\_61404**

June 11, 2004

Posted: 6/11/04

## **TOGETHER: Thank God for servants who lead**

The nation has turned its attention to life and death this past week. Americans bid farewell to Ronald Reagan. Millions of us watched the coverage of his life, politics, and service and gave thanks for him and other presidents who served this nation faithfully and well

And in the midst of this, I attended two funerals of Texas Baptist deacons who were faithful stewards of the trust God and his people placed in them.

One was Noble Hurley, well known for his involvement in the development of Dallas. He was a generous Baptist General Convention of Texas benefactor. When he died, those who knew him best thought of David's lament regarding the death of Abner, "Do you not realize that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel this day?" (2 Samuel 3:38)

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Another great leader among us also died in the last few days. George W. Hawkes took to heart the passionate words of the prophet: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

Many of the best deacons I have known claimed this verse as the guidestone for their lives. He believed in God, treasured and obeyed the Scripture, loved his family and set before them a true and compassionate standard of the Christian walk. He loved First Baptist Church in Arlington and believed the church could do anything God set before it. He moved to Arlington from a childhood in Flatonia, where he began his newspaper career as the 18-year-old editor of the Flatonia Argus. As editor and publisher of the Arlington Citizen-Journal through the formative years of Arlington's growth into a major city, he won more awards for journalism than any other Texan. He was always a friend to the editors of the Baptist Standard and served on the board of directors from 1967 to 1975.

But the most amazing thing about him to me as his pastor was his ability to provide effective leadership in our church without calling attention to himself or building a power base that intimidated and frustrated others. He gave moral, consistent, convictional and compassionate leadership. He was open to change as long as it rose out of biblical principles.

The young deacons in our church looked up to him. He was never jealous of his place and never failed to be where he was needed most. People grew in his presence. He cheered our younger leaders on, believing in them and making room for their contributions to the church and community.

The pastor of our church now, Dennis Wiles, told me: "George Hawkes called me about six months after I came as pastor. He said: 'Dr. Wiles, we have loved Henard East and Charles Wade. They were wonderful pastors and leaders for our church. But now you are our pastor, and we love you,

and we want you to take the reins and lead our church where we need to go. I will support you in every way I can. Do you see the city library out your office window? If our church ever needs to buy that library in order for us to have room to grow, I will be at the head of the line to remove the first bricks.'" It is named the George W. Hawkes Library.

In all the years we served together, it was never about him, but always about God's kingdom work and the part FBC Arlington had in it. That is what is meant by Jesus' call to servant leadership.

Give thanks today for all the men and women who serve in your church with that kind of spirit.

We are loved.

*Charles Wade is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas*

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