

Texas Baptist Forum_32105

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Elm Groves

I noted the Standard's announcement of the 150th anniversary of Elm Grove Baptist Church in Waelder. In 1956, when I was a junior at Trinity University, Elm Grove took a great faith risk and called me as their pastor. For two years, I served them, and my hope would be that every beginning pastor would have an Elm Grove to love him, allow his mistakes and begin him on a positive journey.

We dare not forget the past, appreciate and value it, and know that without the Elm Groves of yesterday, we never would have arrived at today.

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Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250 words maximum.



"It was like eating with one of the apostles. We bowed our heads, and Adrian prayed over our paper baskets of fish. I was convinced that when I opened my eyes, the fish would be multiplied all over our table. But that didn't happen."

Jack Graham

Former Southern Baptist Convention president, speaking at retirement festivities for another former SBC president, Adrian Rogers. (Memphis Commercial Appeal/RNS)

"The Seeker that we must serve in our worship services is, first and foremost, God himself. ... Our emphasis should be on content that serves the rhythm of revelation and response, not on pleasing guests with particular musical or stylistic choices. Worship should not be designed to suit unbelievers' tastes; nor should we shape it to suit our own. We are to worship God according to his requirements and for his own sake."

Gary Parrett

Assistant professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, who wrote "9.5 Theses on Worship" (Christianity Today)
"Jesus loves the little children, except the ones that burn CDs."

T-shirt

Created by Merchplaza, a company that is raising awareness of the theft of music, including Christian music, through unauthorized downloading.
(RNS)

Henry Adrion III

Hilltop Lakes

Un-Christian thinking

Marv Knox (Feb. 21) and Robert Flynn (March 7) are both wrong when it comes to supporting government spending to help the poor. Government is neither responsible for nor competent to aid the poor. Government programs merely subsidize poverty rather than teach self-reliance. Whatever we subsidize, we get more of, and so we have seen poverty increase with the growth of “anti-poverty” programs.

Government programs are neither charitable nor compassionate, and as such, they are certainly not Christian. Knox and Flynn claim the Bible supports their position, yet they have overlooked God's eighth commandment. None of the passages they cite advocate aid to the poor by way of the tax collector.

Helping those in need must necessarily be a voluntary act, not one forced upon us by the coercive power of government. It is astonishing to see such un-Christian thinking in a Christian publication.

William J. McNicoll

Houston

Facing toward God

Your editorial, “What would Jesus put in the budget?” (Feb. 21) hit the nail on the head. I just had to write to say, “Amen”!

I have seen the results of the previous state budget cuts to the Mental

Health/Mental Retardation Association cause such programs as In-Home and Family Support to get cut by 50 percent. For those who are less fortunate and have to care for some very physically and mentally challenged individuals, this cut was traumatic. It was the same for those in need of medications to control mental health problems.

Our legislators wasted close to \$4 million in three special legislative sessions just to redraw district lines to give the upper hand to Tom DeLay and the Republican Party. Meanwhile, our school-funding dilemma was not even considered at the time.

In our pledge, we recite, "one nation under God," yet we are straying far from our Christian principles. I agree with you that "Christians need to influence state and federal budgets to be just and compassionate."

I urge all Christians to exercise their right to be heard by calling their senators and representatives, urging them to quit listening to special-interest groups.

A nation that turns its face away from God will cause God to turn his face away from that nation.

Let us pray this will not happen to us.

Carmen F. Orozco

Pasadena

Taxed enough

Enough with the articles chastising us about paying too few taxes, "no justice without fair taxation" (Feb. 21). The total tax burden includes gas tax, property tax, school tax, sales tax, income tax and lots of others, both visible and hidden, and hovers at 50 percent of our income!

Interestingly, a *Reader's Digest* poll showed that Americans from every social/economic strata believed 25 percent would be fair for a total tax burden.

What a coincidence that the Old Testament tithes and offerings amounted to that figure as well.

We're taxed enough.

Steve White

Dallas

Do unto others...

I appreciated your editorial about government spending (Feb. 21). Jesus told the rich ruler to sell what he had and give to the poor. He didn't say, "post the Ten Commandments," "defend the Pledge of Allegiance" or "defend marriage." It's sad that paying one's fair share of taxes is no longer patriotic.

I am always amazed when folks who call themselves Christians try to justify the actions of our government by comparing our actions to those of despots. We supposedly have a Christian president who would do the right thing. If we caused the death of one Iraqi needlessly, it was too many.

ONLINE
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During the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong did some horrific things to the Vietnamese people and to some of our military folks who were captured. Did that justify My Lai? I recall an instance during my second tour when one of my fellow pilots made a comment that when we receive fire from a village, we should "level the village" with artillery fire. My response to this comment didn't help my popularity!

When we stop treating our enemies humanely, we lose the moral ground for demanding that our people be treated humanely when captured.

Carl L. Hess

Ozark, Ala.

Ease off on Democrats

Being a Democrat in many churches is not popular. A survey revealed there are more Democrats than Republicans, and they are hurt when our leaders say unkind things about them.

ONLINE
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It is a sin to generalize, and all democrats are not for abortion, homosexuals marrying and a welfare state.

Pastors need to be more interested in winning souls than partisan politics.

John Hollingsworth

Grandview

Compassionate bureaucracy

A letter-writer asked, "Have you ever met a 'compassionate government bureaucracy'?" (March 7). No, but I have met more than a few compassionate government bureaucrats. Their primary motivation is not just keeping their jobs. Unfortunately, for some government administrators, being compassionate just means greasing the squeaking wheels.

Those in charge need to make a greater effort to hire and retain compassionate employees and create an atmosphere in which compassion

thrives. This often means listening more closely to whistle-blowers. Campaigns that consist of slogans for a “Kinder, Gentler IRS” or asking (in the V.A.), “May I Help You?” won’t cut it.

ONLINE
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Unless their workloads are excessive, there’s no good reason why government employees cannot get to know enough about the people they serve to develop a genuine concern for their welfare. Christians in the organization should be the first to set an example.

The rest of us taxpayers cannot always take off from our jobs to see that the recipients are showing appropriate gratitude for the funds we’ve provided. Delegating responsibility may be necessary to get the job done.

And that job is often more than just rebuilding roads. People also need a minimum of food, shelter and health care if they are to be in any condition to listen to sermons about rebuilding their spiritual lives. I hope our government always has enough funds to provide physical necessities for those unable to care for themselves and that our churches have enough to provide for their spiritual needs.

James O. Morse

Woodway

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.