

IN FOCUS: Focus on & share the hope of Christ

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“Four hundred sixteen children are taken from a West Texas polygamist compound.” “A 48-year-old grandmother and her 5-year-old granddaughter were killed by a gunman when a child’s birthday party turned violent.” “Home sales decline last month, the steepest so far, putting the entire first quarter into a double-digit downturn.”

We are reminded of the sorrow and fear in our world each morning when we read the paper. Our own lives also are interrupted by challenges and heartache at unexpected times. Yet we still are called on to proclaim a message of hope. How can we do this with integrity?

In Colossians 1:27 we read, “Christ in you the hope of glory.” Hope is not what we wish to experience or imagine. Hope doesn’t come from pretending that bad things are not happening. The hope we proclaim is the transformational hope we know in Christ. As Texas Baptists, we must focus continually on the hope of Christ that God makes available to the world through us.

As I begin this journey with you as your executive director, I am filled with hope. I am certainly not looking at the world through rose-tinted glasses, yet I am reminded constantly of the power of Christ.

Sheila and I have worshipped with three of our BGCT churches already and each time heard powerful biblical messages. Each church celebrated baptism the Sunday we were with them. Some of these were accompanied by video or live testimonies of the new believers about the hope they have found in Christ. Baptism reminds us that God still rescues and transforms.

One of our first opportunities was to attend the Baptist University of the Américas Hispanic Preaching Conference at Theo Avenue Baptist Church in San Antonio. I read some of the history of this church led by Pastor Efraim Diaz and saw that for several years the church had baptized more than 100 people. Many of the attendees were bright, young, enthusiastic students from the Baptist University of the Américas merging with the presence of men and women of other generations who have been faithful leaders in our Baptist life. I was filled with the hope of Christ when I was reminded that God continues to raise up men and women in each generation who will share this hope with the changing world around us.

Saturday evening, April 5, Sheila and I attended a dinner at Dallas Baptist University, where we celebrated the 20th anniversary of Gary Cook as president. It had been years since I had been on the campus, and I was absolutely amazed. During these past two decades, the enrollment has tripled and dozens of buildings stand as testimonies to the vitality of this great Baptist institution. The real story, however, was listening to Dr. Cook tell his own personal story about the healing power of Christ in his own life. The miracle of DBU is the miracle of prayer.

We must not focus on the real problems of the world or even the challenges we face as a family of faith. We must focus on the hope of Christ and be committed to sharing this hope with every person in Texas.

Randel Everett is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board.

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