

Divine detour directed Ratcliffe to classroom_32105

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Divine detour directed Ratcliffe to classroom

By Jonathan Petty

Wayland Baptist University

PLAINVIEW-If someone had asked Carolyn Ratcliffe 40 years ago what she intended to be doing at this stage in her life, she would have gladly replied, "making quilts and baking cookies."

Churches change as city moves to country_32105

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Churches change as city moves to country

By George Henson

Staff Writer

Rural churches and inner-city churches sometimes face similar problems from opposite ends of the spectrum.

Prayer & love power vibrant church_32105

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Prayer & love power vibrant church

By George Henson

Staff Writer

THORNDALE-Larry Givens has been pastor of First Shiloh Baptist Church in Williamson County since 1986, just two years after the rural congregation installed its first indoor plumbing.

Tehuacana sees shared vision_32105

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Tehuacana sees shared vision

By George Henson

Staff Writer

TEHUACANA-Dale McDaniel vividly remembers sitting with his pastor and friend Billy Don Roberts as Roberts described his vision for First Baptist Church in Tehuacana.

Rural Church Challenge_32105

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Rural Church Challenge

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

Church growth experts insist a church is a living organism, and everything that's alive grows. But even the most avid advocates of church growth acknowledge it helps if the church is planted in fertile soil.

Judge bases legal decisions on 'foundation of values'_32105

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Judge bases legal decisions on 'foundation of values'

By Erin Curry

Baptist Press

WICHITA FALLS (BP)—Roy Sparkman has developed a reputation as an honest, fair district judge who expects sufficient preparation from those who bring cases to his courtroom in Wichita Falls.

Tsunami response demands quick start, long process_32105

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Volunteers start framing (left) on more permanent structures for tsunami refugees in Sri Lanka. The finished house (right) is ready for a family to move in.

Tsunami response demands quick start, long process

By Craig Bird & John Hall

Baptist Child & Family Services & Texas Baptist Communications

SRI LANKA (ABP)-Tsunami disaster relief is not a race between the tortoise

and the hare. It's more like a relay effort by the two.

TBM building new lives in Sri Lanka_32105

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TBM building new lives in Sri Lanka

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

When Texas Baptist Men initially went into Sri Lanka, God led them day by day, footstep by footstep, reported Dick Talley, the group's ministry logistics coordinator.

Leaders are only now starting to clearly see the plan God was developing for Texas volunteers, he said.

In early January, it was difficult for Texas Baptist Men to lay out a long-term plan for relief and recovery because leaders needed to find the proper governmental channels, Talley said. God orchestrated those contacts, and his mission is becoming a reality in Sri Lanka.

**TBM needs two
volunteers as office
managers in Sri
Lanka**

Texas Baptist Men is looking for two people to help with its continuing disaster relief efforts in Sri Lanka.

Two office managers are needed to support the TBM operation in Sri Lanka for two to three months. These people will live in Sri Lanka for their period of service and would need to go through the Texas Baptist Men "yellow cap" training.

The positions are voluntary, but Texas Baptist Men will help with travel expenses. For more information, contact Jeanette Nichols at (214) 828-5357.

"God did not allow us to plan ahead over there," Talley said. "He showed us the way day by day." Now "literally some of the barriers that were there

when we arrived are coming down.”

As each wall has fallen, TBM volunteers have been able to meet more needs, he noted. They have cleaned more than 400 wells with the help of Sri Lankans and are looking for equipment to drill 300 more wells that could survive another tsunami.

Volunteers also have started serving in Batticaloa General Hospital. The men’s group purchased commercial laundry equipment to help supply the hospital with clean linens for patients. TBM has supplied a television and digital video disc player and *Veggie Tales* discs so children can watch Christian programming. Volunteers have cared for some of the children.

Texas Baptist Men provided a refrigerator and freezer for a temporary house for orphans. The children also were given school uniforms. TBM has contracted with locals to make clothing and school uniforms for several hundred more children who will stay in a Compassion International-constructed orphanage.

Texas volunteers have donated kitchen equipment for 700 nationals in refugee camps and trained them on how to use it. Gospel for Asia, a nondenominational mission organization, is working alongside TBM in each of the refugee camps.

The Texans have built eight homes after getting the design approved by the Sri Lankan government, and they may construct as many as 200 for all the people in Vaddavaan refugee camp. The group also built a community center there that will serve as a meeting place for refugee activities, including church services.

Carroll Prewitt, a member of First Baptist Church in Lindale who served as on-site coordinator for TBM relief efforts, said he believes there is a nucleus for a church in Vaddavaan, due in some part to TBM’s presence. He documents at least nine people coming to faith in Christ while the

Texans were there.

That is the tip of the spiritual iceberg, Prewitt said. Five of the volunteers' drivers and interpreters have converted to Christianity. One member of a nongovernmental organization made the same commitment. Texans have shared their faith and prayed with numerous people around the house they are renting.

The TBM home has become known as the "lighthouse of prayer," partly because of its proximity to a lighthouse. Their offices are called the "faith cottage."

"I really think the spiritual impact is greater than anything else we're doing," Prewitt said.

The Sri Lankan government has accepted their evangelistic efforts, Talley said. It has praised them for continuing to serve long after other agencies left.

In a sign of a growing relationship between TBM and the government, Sri Lanka leaders have invited Texans to help with a festival for children.

Some logistical issues still continue, as TBM tries to find people with the appropriate skill sets to match needs, but Talley believes God will work it out. TBM next is sending another building team.

"There are obstacles, but the acceptance we're being shown is exceptional," Talley said.

Texas Tidbits_32105

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Texas Tidbits

Baylor hires search consultant. Baylor University's board of regents has engaged Bill Funk, head of Korn/Ferry International's National Education Practice, to help find a successor to President Robert Sloan. Based in Dallas, Funk has conducted more than 250 university and college presidential and chancellor searches for institutions such as Vanderbilt, Syracuse, Miami, Tulane, Purdue, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Iowa and University of Texas at Austin.

Neaves scholarship fund established at DBU. The Neaves endowed scholarship fund has been established at Dallas Baptist University to provide scholarship assistance to deserving students. The fund was made possible by a gift from the Mary Emma Neaves estate. It honors Neaves, a longtime member of Park Cities Baptist Church and public school teacher, and her parents, Roy and Ethel Neaves.

Easter pageant set at UMHB. The 65th University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Easter pageant will be presented March 23 at 12:30 p.m., 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. The outdoor presentation of Christ's passion, resurrection and ascension will be held at the Luther Memorial arches on campus. The drama is produced, directed, costumed and performed by university

students. More than 90 students, along with children from the area, will participate in the pageant.

TOGETHER: Who would you follow except Jesus_32105

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TOGETHER: Who would you follow except Jesus?

Dallas Willard teaches philosophy at the University of Southern California. He is a gifted teacher who is deeply committed to Christ. At Epicenter, our Texas Baptist gathering for evangelism and the missional church, he said: "Sometimes students step alongside me as I walk across campus and ask, 'Is it true that you are a follower of Jesus?' I ask, 'Who else did you have in mind?'"

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). And they followed him. Who else could they go to? And as they followed Jesus, with many a detour, they became more and more shaped by God into the likeness of Christ.



Executive Director
BGCT Executive
Board

I am deeply moved this Easter week as the Baptist General Convention of Texas has been recommended for full membership in the Baptist World Alliance. To be connected in Christ-centered fellowship with Baptists around the world is to join a global group of disciples who, with Peter, proclaim Jesus is the Christ and move forward to follow him. And together this Easter week, Christians around the world are thinking about what it means that Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead.

Ugandans follow Texan's steps in walk of faith_32105

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International Mission Board missionary John Witte walks from village to village to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ. Ugandan men walk with him along the path and discuss the Bible stories they learned in the villages. Witte walks around 72 kilometers a week. Witte contends that in this area of northern Uganda, walking models a way of evangelism the Dodoth people can carry out themselves. (Photos by Jon Jamar)

Ugandans follow Texan's steps in walk of faith

By Sue Sprenkle

International Mission Board

KAABONG, Uganda—Looking up from his daily chores, a village elder saw a group of men in the distance picking their way across the dry, rocky terrain. The presence of a stranger among them attracted his attention, but he continued working.

Musical turn-around sparks surge in youth ministry_32105

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Musical turn-around sparks surge in youth ministry

By Marc Rogers

Southwestern Seminary

FORT WORTH (BP)—As recently as a generation ago, student participation in music ministry at most churches meant singing in the youth choir or playing in a bell choir. Especially gifted students might have had the rare opportunity to play piano or organ for the congregation.