

# Around the State: Abilene church opens Hope Center

December 6, 2023



Conceptual drawing of the Hope Center at First Baptist Church in Abilene.

First Baptist Church in Abilene marked the opening of its Hope Center on Dec. 5. The facility is home to City Light Community Ministries, which seeks to meet physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs in downtown Abilene; GLO (God's Little Ones), a licensed day care center for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years that serves families on a sliding scale based on income; and the church's ministry of counseling and enrichment, which offers affordable individual counseling and marriage and family counseling. The Hope Center project began five years ago when First Baptist purchased property previously belonging to First Christian Church. Under the leadership of former pastor **Phil Christopher**, First Baptist Church subsequently raised the funds necessary to complete a \$10 million renovation of the building. **Brandon Hudson** is senior pastor.



Jonathan Cooper, chair of the biology department at DBU, was the keynote speaker at the Herb Robbins Research Symposium.  
(DBU Photo)

Dallas Baptist University recently hosted its annual Herb Robbins Research

Symposium, featuring student and alumni presentations of scientific research. The two-day event is named in memory of **Herbert Robbins**, who was dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at DBU from 1979 to 1994, and sponsored in partnership with the Beta Beta Beta Biological Society. Keynote speaker **Jonathan Cooper**, chair of the biology department, discussed the importance of scientific research in general and his own research about exploiting intracellular communication for cancer treatment. Cooper completed his undergraduate degree at DBU before earning his Ph.D. in cancer biology from UT Southwestern Medical Center in 2016. Student presenters this year included **Grace Hayworth, Caroline Hudson** and **Yun Chen**.



Curtis Reynolds

**Curtis Reynolds**, vice president for business affairs at the University of Florida, will join Baylor University as vice president of business and finance and as chief financial officer, effective March 1, 2024. Reynolds will oversee all budgeting, business development, financial management, procurement, real estate operations, enrollment management, facilities, information technology and the office of investments. He also will spearhead the development, communication and implementation of innovative initiatives intended to grow institutional revenue in an ever-evolving higher education landscape. “I am thrilled to welcome Curtis Reynolds to Baylor University and our leadership team,” President **Linda Livingstone** said. “I am confident Curtis will bring a new entrepreneurial spirit and energy and sound financial principles to this crucial university function. He is a man of faith with a deep understanding of academia at the highest levels, and his leadership and contributions will only serve to deepen our position as a preeminent Christian research university.” Reynolds holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He

earned a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Alabama and is a member of the National Association of College and University Business Officers, the U.S. Green Building Council and the Association of Higher Education Officers. Reynolds and his wife Keisha have a blended family of eight children and 13 grandchildren.



Jonathan Luna

**Jonathan Luna** was named Wayland Baptist University's Title V project director, taking the lead on Wayland's \$3 million U.S. Department of Education grant funding for the "Pioneering Greater Access for Hispanic Students through Enhanced Student Support" program. The program is designed to improve support for Hispanic students, expand information systems, improve student success, increase fall-to-fall retention, and improve four-year graduation rates. As a bilingual higher education professional, Luna said he hopes to create strategic initiatives that specifically target the Hispanic community and provide in Spanish the proper resources and information needed for students to be successful in the college process. "One of the reoccurring issues across the nation is the continued dropout rate of Hispanic students after their first year in college," Luna said. "For the students that attend our campus, I would love to create an environment and community that provides an opportunity for them to stay plugged in and want to continue because they feel involved and cared for." Luna holds three degrees from Wayland—a Bachelor of Science in fitness management, a Master of Education in sports administration and management, and a Master of Education in secondary education certification. He served as an admissions assistant at Wayland from 2016 to 2019 before becoming an enrollment coach. In January 2023, he became the university's Title V La Familia outreach specialist, one of several student support positions included in the grant.



Greg Tomlin

The B.H. Carroll Theological Seminary board of governors named **Greg Tomlin** as director of the seminary's Ph.D. program. At the same time, Tomlin was promoted to professor of church history. Tomlin's appointment as director follows the retirement of **Karen Bullock**, who led the Ph.D. program since 2007. Tomlin has served the past four years as Carroll Fellow for Faith and Heritage and as director of the seminary's institutional effectiveness program. Previously, he held positions in administration at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Liberty University's Rawlings School of Divinity and the University of North Texas at Dallas. He earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and he completed his master's degree and his Ph.D. at Southwestern Seminary. He also studied at Baylor University and at Boston University's Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs.



The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor awarded degrees to about 460 students ranging in age from 19 to 72, including 132 graduate students, at fall commencement. (UMHB Photo)

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor awarded degrees to about 460 students ranging in age from 19 to 72, including 132 graduate students, at fall commencement. UMHB President **Randy O'Rear** noted 64 students were the first members of their families to graduate from college. **Catherine Burk** of Sunnyvale received the President's Award, presented to a graduating senior who has provided meritorious service to the university. Two students—**Caden Steubing** of Groveton and **Ange Rugira**

of Fort Worth—received the Loyalty Cup, awarded to students deemed most representative of the university’s ideals, traditions and spirit. UMHB presented the Provost Medal for highest overall grade-point-average to eight students who each graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA—**Olivia Grace Byle** of Round Rock, **Melody Grace Carl** of Garland, **Katherine Elizabeth Snyder** of Temple, **Jacob Warren Svare** of Killeen, **Rylie Nicole Torres** of Mathis, **Jon-Avery Solon Welch** of Waller, **Kelsey Maree White** of Keller and **Mackenzie Lois Worthy** of North Richland Hills. One graduate, **Alexia Brown**, was commissioned as an officer in the military.

Houston Christian University freshmen have been donating nonperishable food items to the Husky Storehouse, the university’s on-campus food pantry, as a service-learning activity in their Freshman Year Seminar classes. The campus-wide project addresses student food insecurity and the challenges related to concentration, academic performance and overall mental health that frequently accompany food insecurity. The generosity of these first-year students will help provide for the basic needs of others throughout the spring semester.

## **Ordination**

**Ryan Crowe** ordained to the gospel ministry by First Baptist Church in Floydada, where he is worship leader.