

Around the State: Texas Baptists celebrate Legacy Day

June 12, 2024

Texas Baptists celebrated Legacy Day June 2 at Independence Baptist Church in Brenham—the oldest continually operating Baptist church in Texas, established in 1839. **Julio Guarneri**, Baptist General Convention of Texas executive director, presented Texas Baptists' Legacy Award to **Lee Baggett** and **Charles H. Whiteside**. Baggett, a Vernon native, served in the Spanish-speaking mission of First Baptist Church in Vernon from 1957 to 1959 and later as a Baptist Student Union summer missionary to Juarez, Mexico. He earned a bachelor's degree from Wayland Baptist College in 1964 and an M.D. degree from the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara, Mexico. The Foreign Mission Board appointed him as a physician missionary to Mexico in 1974. Baggett served as the medical outreach coordinator of the Baptist Hospital in Guadalajara, Mexico, from 1974 to 2007. He continues to serve in Guadalajara as the president of "Manos Hermanas," which seeks to provide resources to alleviate hunger, thirst, illness and poverty in Christ's name. Whiteside was born and raised in the Grapevine-Coppell area. He earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from Texas A&M University. After serving in the U.S. Army in Korea, he taught chemistry at Kilgore College and established an agricultural testing laboratory. Over the years, he contributed to the capital development of the Baptist Student Ministry at Kilgore College, was a recipient of the East Texas Baptist University W.T. Tardy Service Award for his support of the nursing education center and served on the BGCT Executive Board from 2002 to 2007. He also served the Texas Baptists Christian Life Commission with distinction as a strong supporter and promoter of the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering, and he served as an advisory member of the Texas Baptist Missions Foundation with a

particular interest in hunger relief.



(Courtesy Photo)

The Texas Division of Emergency Management honored Texans on Mission as the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters member organization of the year. Texans on Mission, previously Texas Baptist Men, is the first organization to receive this recognition. Texans on Mission received the award during the Texas Emergency Management Conference, where about 4,000 first responders, local emergency managers, elected officials, and state and federal officials from 40 states and three countries were in attendance. **Rubert Robbins**, associate director of disaster relief, accepted the award on behalf of Texans on Mission. “It really is a testament to everyone involved with Texans on Mission,” he said. “We are known far and wide for being on mission with Jesus Christ in meeting the needs of people after disasters. This award shows that statewide leaders also recognize our commitment to providing services at the highest professional level.”

Samuel Still, a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom and a staff member at Dallas Baptist University, has received the T.B. Maston Foundation’s annual scholarship for the 2024-25 academic year. The [Maston Foundation](#), chartered in 1986, perpetuates the teaching and legacy of its namesake, a renowned professor of Christian ethics and Baptist champion of racial justice in the 20th century. The foundation awards scholarships to graduate students majoring in Christian ethics, through which the Maston Foundation seeks to encourage ongoing leadership and scholarship in the field. It also attempts to challenge other Baptists to live out an authentic, Christlike ethic. Still anticipates receiving a Ph.D. degree in the summer of 2026. Still has been the assistant director of Dallas Baptist University’s Honors Program since 2022. He is an adjunct professor at DBU, where he has been a guest lecturer. He earned a

Bachelor of Arts degree from Baylor University in 2018 and a Master of Divinity degree from Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary in 2021. Still is a student member of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, the Society for the Study of Theology, the Conference of Christianity and Literature, and the Karl Barth Society of North America. He is a member of Valley Ranch Baptist Church in Coppell.

Baylor University's [Give Light](#) comprehensive philanthropic campaign raised \$1.5 billion, shattering its initial \$1.1 billion goal and making Give Light the most successful comprehensive fundraising campaign in Baylor's 179-year history. The university also reported \$166 million in total fundraising for fiscal year 2024, which ended May 31, making it one of the top five highest fundraising years in Baylor's history. All five of those top fundraising years have come during the Give Light campaign. "I am grateful for the more than 100,000 members of our Baylor community who have given generously through the Give Light campaign to help ensure Baylor University continues to have a distinct position and voice in higher education," Baylor President **Linda A. Livingstone** said. "The world needs a Baylor—this unifying truth is resoundingly echoed through the generosity of our Baylor Family. Together, we have answered the call of support from this institution, and together we will continue to build this bright future so the world will see Christ through the impact of Baylor University."



Juniper on display at "Timelines in Timber"
at Wayland. (Wayland Photo)

Dendrochronology is a big word, but so are some of the trees the science seeks to document and date, like the huge cuts of Douglas fir and mulberry trees currently displayed in "Timelines in Timber" at The Mabee, a collection of museums on Wayland Baptist University's Plainview campus. Spring and summer intern **Zachary Davis** created the exhibit in fulfillment

of his Master of Museum Science degree at Texas Tech University. Davis teamed up with **Matthew Allen**, professor of Biological Sciences in the Kenneth L. Mattox School of Mathematics and Sciences, to create the exhibit. Admission is free for “Timelines in Timber,” which is on display through Aug. 3. During the summer months, The Mabee is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.



HPU names Lonn Reisman as assistant to the president for special projects. (Courtesy Photo)

Howard Payne University recently named **Lonn Reisman** as assistant to the president for special projects. He assumed the new role at the beginning of June. He will provide leadership in the areas of athletics, fundraising and campus development. Reisman previously served at Tarleton State University more than 30 years, including his most recent tenure as vice president for intercollegiate athletics. He also served as Tarleton State’s head men’s basketball coach from 1988 to 2018. During his time at Tarleton State, he successfully led the university through two NCAA reclassifications, first out of NAIA into NCAA Division II in 1994, and most recently into NCAA Division I and FCS Division I football. Reisman is the only documented athletic director in NCAA history to successfully lead one program through two such reclassifications. He is the longest-tenured Athletics Director in Tarleton State history and third-longest tenured athletic director across all of NCAA Division I. Reisman holds a Bachelor of Science in education from Pittsburg State University and a Master of Science in education from Arkansas State University.



Randall Cason Jr. makes brigadier general. (Courtesy

Photo)

The Air Force ranks include more than 61,000 officers. Only 108 of those have reached the rank of brigadier general. In December, Baylor graduate [Randall Cason Jr. \(BS '95\) joined that esteemed group](#)—and he chose to return to his alma mater to mark the occasion. The son of an Army test pilot, Cason took an early interest in flying. As a mathematics major at Baylor University, he was a part of Baylor's longstanding [Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps](#) program. In 1995, Cason accepted a commission to fly the F-16 Fighting Falcon and later flew missions over Iraq. Amidst [challenging circumstances](#) after the first Gulf War, he distinguished himself and later became [the first pilot in the Air Force Reserve to fly the F-22](#) in 2006, then recognized as the most technologically advanced fighter jet created. Cason went on to train future pilots and rose to the rank of colonel. When it came time to receive his promotion to brigadier general, he chose to hold the ceremony at Baylor's Truett Theological Seminary, where his mother, Jan Cason, served many years as financial manager and continues to serve as adjunct faculty.



(HCU Photo)

The examination pass rate for nursing school graduates from Houston Christian University's Linda Dunham School of Nursing taking the nursing licensure exam exceeded the national average for Texas nursing programs according to results recently published by the Texas Board of Nursing. In 2023, the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses exam pass rate for HCU nursing school candidates who took the exam for the first time was 97.92 percent, compared to an average of 91.15 percent for Texas nursing programs and a national average of 88.56 percent. The exam uses a computerized adaptive testing technology to measure the foundational knowledge and skills needed for safe nursing practices for

entry-level nurses. **Carol Lavender**, dean of the Linda Dunham School of Nursing, credited nursing school faculty and their passion for student success for the high pass rate, as well as adjustments to the school's curriculum and improvements to lab space.

Houston Theological Seminary at Houston Christian University will offer a class on the Old Testament to anyone in the community who wants to improve biblical understanding. The essentials course is designed for busy people who want to go deeper in understanding the Bible and theology for the sake of ministry. The class will begin in the fall 2024 semester and will be held on Mondays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. from September 9 through November 18 via Zoom or in-person at Heights Church in Houston. **Paul Sloan**, associate professor at Houston Christian University, will teach the course. Participants who complete all the essentials courses can qualify to receive three hours of graduate credit. The next planned courses in the essentials series will be New Testament, Christian doctrine and church history. Each class costs \$380, which includes two meals at the kickoff and final celebration. Early bird price is \$360, before Sept. 1. For more information, email Celeste Risteski at cristeski@HC.edu.

Wayland Baptist University at San Antonio expects to confer 119 degrees during its 84th commencement ceremony June 14 at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio. **D. Glenn Simmons**, executive director and dean of the San Antonio campus, will present the candidates for degrees to **David Bishop**, vice president for external campuses, who will confer degrees. He will be assisted by **Linda Flores**, assistant dean for the San Antonio campus. Bexar County Precinct 4 Commissioner **Tommy Calvert** will deliver the commencement address. **Michael Hart**, pastor of Spirit Filled Family Church, will give the invocation. Candidates for graduation include three students scheduled to receive doctoral degrees, 42 students set to receive master's degrees, 65 students to receive bachelor's degrees, and nine to receive associate's degrees. "Half of the students set to walk across

the stage to get their diplomas are age 40 or older,” said Simmons. “They juggled work, family, church, social events, and school. They did not do this alone. Through the help of spouses, family, friends, and coworkers, they refused to yield to the demands and surged ahead. These are our academic heroes, and, at graduation, we honor their diligence, patience, and tenacity.” Livestream coverage of the commencement ceremony is available at <https://livestream.com/tbcspecialevents/waylandbaptistgraduation>.

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor announced 516 students have been listed on the Spring 2024 Provost’s Honor Roll. To receive this recognition, a student must achieve a 3.85 grade point average or better on a 4.0 scale. Additionally, 505 students were named to the Dean’s Honor Roll for Spring 2024. To receive this recognition, a student must achieve a 3.5 to 3.849 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. To see a complete list of honor roll recipients, visit www.umhb.edu/news.

Ordinations

Collin Pittman and **Hayden Swearingen** were ordained to the ministry June 2 by Golinda Baptist Church. New pastor **Scott Rhodes** and outgoing interim pastor **Bruce Crawford** welcomed them to the ministry.