

# **Richard Smallwood, ‘Total Praise’ writer, dies at 77**

January 5, 2026

Richard Smallwood, a singer and pianist best known for his contemporary gospel music hit “Total Praise,” died Tuesday, Dec. 30.

---

# **Obituary: Melchor “Mel” Gomez**

January 5, 2026

Melchor “Mel” Gomez, pastor, community leader and longtime Hale Center restaurateur, died Jan. 2, 2025, in Hale Center. He was 70.

---

# **Obituary: James Lynn Scarborough**

January 5, 2026

James Lynn Scarborough, Southern Baptist minister and longtime associational leader, died Dec. 30 in Mineral Wells. He was 78.

---

# **Obituary: Sergio Ramos**

January 5, 2026

Sergio Ramos, ministry leader and pillar of the Tyler County community, died Dec. 27 in Conroe. He was 82.

---

# **Turning Point USA event exposes rifts in Christian right**

January 5, 2026

Speakers at AmericaFest in Phoenix painted Charlie Kirk as a spiritual unifier who connected disparate parts of the American right and reached out to progressives.

---

# **Pastors discuss Texas-Ukrainian partnership details**

January 5, 2026

Texas Baptist pastors and ministry leaders learned more about a four-phase

plan for partnership between Texas and Ukrainian Baptist churches during a Dec. 18 Zoom call.

---

## **Around the State: Wayland selects 2026 Willson Lectures speaker**

January 5, 2026

Wayland Baptist University has selected Ronald Angelo Johnson, associate professor of history and Ralph & Bessie Mae Lynn Endowed Chair of History at Baylor University, as the featured speaker for the 2026 Willson Lectures scheduled Feb. 10-12 at the university's Plainview campus.

---

## **NFL players call attention to religious persecution in Nigeria**

January 5, 2026

A group of NFL players sent a letter to Capitol Hill on Dec. 19, urging U.S. leaders to take steps to curb violence against religious groups in Nigeria, including Christians.

---

# **Obituary: Doris Ann Tinker**

January 5, 2026

Doris Ann Tinker of Richardson, who served as executive associate to two Baptist General Convention of Texas executive directors, died Dec. 12. She was 92.

---

# **Nigerian churches attacked and worshippers abducted**

January 5, 2026

Armed assailants attacked two churches in Nigeria's Kogi State in recent weeks and abducted worshippers, a United Kingdom-based human rights organization focused on international religious freedom reported.

---

# **Study shows rising interest in**

# **magic as religion declines**

January 5, 2026

As more people move away from regular attendance in religious institutions, they are moving toward individual spiritual exploration and “secular supernaturalism,” the latest findings from the Baylor Religion Survey reveal.

---

# **Nigerian faith leaders insist Christians are targeted**

January 5, 2026

Nigerian church leaders insist Christians in their country are persecuted for their faith, rejecting a growing narrative that violence in their country is not religion-based.