

Center offers sabbath to ministers and spouses

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Couples in ministry need sabbath rest more than they realize, Cory and Amy Brand believe. That's why the Brands created a safe place where ministers and spouses can experience it.



Cory and Amy Brand believe God gave them a vision. They wanted to create a retreat center for ministers and spouses. (Courtesy Photo)

During more than two decades serving on Texas Baptist church staffs in a variety of roles, the Brands witnessed and experienced the challenges that accompany vocational ministry.

Constantly caring for others without taking time for self-care can be draining, they observed.

“The two relationships every pastor needs to work on the most are their personal relationship with God and their relationship with their spouse,” Cory Brand said. “Way too many times, those two things suffer for the sake of the church.”

The Brands believe God gave them a vision. They wanted to create a retreat center for ministers and spouses.

They dreamed of a place where couples in ministry could get away—at no cost—for a few days to rest and simply spend time with each other and with God.

Five years ago, the Brands approached a small group and asked them to pray with them for clear direction. Those individuals became the initial board of directors for [The Hiding Place Ministries](#).

Brand submitted 40-plus pages of paperwork to the Internal Revenue Service to create a nonprofit corporation.

“They told us it would take about six months: ‘Don’t call us. We’ll call you.’” We got that paperwork back in two weeks. And the IRS doesn’t return a phone call in two weeks,” he said.

‘God provided a way’

In 2023, Amy Brand accepted a position as children’s minister at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood. At that point, her husband committed to the fulltime pursuit of developing their ministry to ministers and spouses.

The Sunday when the church voted to call his wife to the ministerial staff, Brand fully grasped the reality of their situation.

“I had a little panic attack there in the pew, because I realized, ‘I don’t

have a job anymore,” he confessed.

“But the next day, I got a phone call from the pastor we work with here in Brownwood. He said: ‘I have a name for you, and I want you to call this gentleman. He wants to talk with you.’”

When they met, Brand discovered the man and his wife already had bought lakefront property in Brownwood and begun making improvements on it with a specific purpose in mind.

“They really felt God had called them to use that property for the encouragement of ministers and missionaries,” he recalled.

Brand toured the property and compared notes with the owner. He discovered the owner’s vision for how the property would be used was almost identical to a business plan he and his board had written for their ministry a year earlier.

“So, we struck up a partnership,” Brand said.

The owner agreed to allow The Hiding Place to use the property to host ministers and spouses for four-night, five-day retreats several times a year.

“I thought I was going to be raising money for five years just to buy property,” Brand said. Instead, God provided a way for The Hiding Place to offer four retreats last year and set aside nine weeks this year, he noted.

Offering ‘radical hospitality’

The ministry makes available to ministers and spouses lodging in a private cabin and meals for individualized retreats at no cost to participants.

“There are a lot of other places people can go, but it’s expensive,” Brand said. “We felt a strong conviction to make it free. We depend on the

generosity of Christian believers to fund it.”

The ministry provides breakfast food in each cabin, allowing couples to eat their morning meal at their own leisure. Lunch and dinner are shared experiences with the Brands and other couples.



Conversations after dinner at The Hiding Place sometime last late Into the night. (Photo / The Hiding Place)

“That’s kind of where the magic happens for me,” Brand said. “After those dinners, some of those conversations go into the night. We end up going down to the lake or onto the front porch. A lot of heart is being shared at that point.”

The Hiding Place practices what the Brands call “radical hospitality.” As much as possible, the experience is customized to meet the needs of individual couples, including special dietary needs.

Having served on Texas Baptist church staffs in Monahans, San Antonio, Edna, Corsicana and Midland in roles including youth, education and family ministry, he understands the demands placed on ministers and spouses.

“A lot of ministry leaders are used to giving, giving, giving, and very few

times do they receive that type of care,” Brand said. “When they receive that type of care, the walls break down.”

No prescribed program

The Hiding Place offers a retreat “with no agenda” and no prescribed program, he emphasized.

“I tell all our pastors: ‘What I want you to do is just come, rest, spend time with God, and spend time with your spouse,’” Brand said.

He provides couples a five-day devotional guide about sabbath, which they are encouraged to read.

“Other than that, just show up for meals. That’s the only expectation,” he said.

For busy ministers, the adjustment to days of leisure can be difficult initially, Brand acknowledged.

“The first 24 hours, they don’t know what to do,” he said. “But when they hit that second day, it almost never fails. Their bodies start letting down and letting go, and that’s when the naps start happening.”

He encourages ministers and spouses to use their time at The Hiding Place not just as a vacation, but as an occasion to learn the importance of sabbath rest. To avoid burn-out, he urges them to incorporate the rhythms of regular sabbath observance when they return to work.

Many ministers are physically exhausted, but they don’t recognize it until they get away, he said.

“I have the believe that if you’re physically exhausted, you have a hard time hearing God’s voice clearly,” Brand said.

Couples in ministry who wish to apply for a retreat at The Hiding Place in Brownwood can do so by clicking [here](#). Retreats are available to any minister and spouse serving bivocationally or full-time in a church, or as a chaplain, missionary or leader of a Christian nonprofit or parachurch ministry.