

Conclave NextGen equips leaders for ministry

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SAN ANTONIO—More than 700 children, youth, college ministers and pastors from across Texas and beyond gathered in San Antonio, Oct. 7-8, for worship, training and networking at Conclave NextGen.

Jana Magruder, strategic initiatives director of Lifeway NextGen, discussed discipling the next generation and teaching “a counter-cultural identity message that helps kids and students know who they are because of who God is.”

She challenged attendees to create relationships that build belonging in students, so they understand their identity in Christ better.

“When we connect these two things together, belonging and identity, we are doing two really important things,” Magruder said.

“Number one, we are meeting the cultural need that this generation has to feel seen and known. And number two, we are answering the big cultural question that they have about who they truly are.”

Magruder provided a tool to help create relationships so the next generation feels like they belong. She offered the acronym ‘FLIP’—making sure children and youth have a Friend, Leader, Influencer and Pastor investing in them.

“Everyone is called to the urgent work of reaching the next generation,” Magruder said. “I want us as the church to fight for them, because we want them the most, because we know that the Father wants them the most. ... You have the most strategic seat in the church to lead this fight, and to

rally every generation of your church and mobilize them around reaching [the next] generations.”



Conclave attendees visit a ministry booth in the exhibit hall. (Texas Baptists Communications Photo)

Conclave attendees had the opportunity to choose from more than 30 breakout sessions on topics such as family ministry, evangelism, ministering to mental health, empowering volunteers and navigating social media.

A specialized “Pastor’s Track” was offered for senior church leaders to learn from and form community with other pastors.

David Gonzalez, Congreso coordinator at Texas Baptists, led a breakout session on “Bridging Generations: Expanding Church Outreach to Connect with a Diverse and Growing Church.”

Leaders can bridge the gaps between generations by empowering students to be involved in ministry and embracing the change that comes with it, Gonzalez said.

Students “want somebody to come tap on the shoulder and say, ‘I think you are capable of being in X, Y, Z ministry.’ And I think it’s a step of faith in you taking the leap of faith and saying, ‘I’m going to put trust in you’ and loosen the reins just a little bit,” he said.

“Sometimes change has to be done for growth to happen ... bridging the gap is embracing change. We need to make sure that our younger generation also has a seat at the table.”

Joining God in ministry by looking to the cross



Chris Benites and the worship band lead worship at Conclave NextGen, Oct. 7-8. (Texas Baptists Communications Photo)

Mike Satterfield, founder of Field of Grace Ministries, encouraged leaders with a sermon based on John 19:30. He explained the Greek word *tetelestai*, meaning “it is finished,” is a word that helps us understand “the past completed act with present, ongoing, permanent effect for all eternity.”

“It was in John 19 ... I learned Jesus tasted bitter vinegar, completely sour, so we can taste the best victory in being completely saved. I’ve been bought with a price. I’m no longer my own. I have been set free,” Satterfield asserted.

Satterfield encouraged Conclave attendees to lay down everything hindering them from resting in Jesus’ words, “it is finished,” and join him where he already is leading their ministry.

“Stop trying to help God, when all you have to do is join him where he’s already at work,” he said.

Displaying the friendship of Jesus

Justin Whitmel Earley, author of *Made for People: Why We Drift into Loneliness and How to Fight for a Life of Friendship*, spoke about “the holiness and the importance of friendship in ministry.”

He referenced Genesis 2-3, encouraging NextGen ministry leaders to

understand they were made for people, and John 15:13-16, emphasizing Jesus showed what it means to be a friend.

“Jesus is demonstrating here not just how to be the best friend that you can be. He is also showing that one way to summarize the gospel is that God has taken the lonely, broken people and made them friends again—friends with God, and thus friends with the world,” said Earley.

Earley asserted friendship is at the center of “what the gospel calls us to,” and encouraged ministers to allow themselves to be fully known and loved by someone, so they can, in turn, fully know and love others in ministry.

“If the call of the New Testament, think of Ephesians 5:10, is ‘to be imitators of God,’ well, if Jesus is friendship made flesh, then to become more and more like him is necessarily to become more and more like a friend,” Earley said.

“So, go into your ministry knowing you were made for people, don’t do it alone, and put the friendship of Jesus on display.”

Investing in holistic church health



A specialized “Pastor’s Track” was offered for senior church leaders this year. (Texas Baptists Communications Photo)

Bobby Contreras, pastor at Alamo Heights Baptist Church in San Antonio, led a “Pastor’s Track” breakout session on pursuing holistic church health by investing in spiritual, physical, mental/emotional, financial and relational health. He held an open discussion on these five areas.

“Healthy pastor, healthy family equals a healthy gospel community,”

Contreras said.

He reminded pastors “using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade,” (Ecclesiastes 10:10), challenging them to treat Conclave as an opportunity to “sharpen the blade.” That way they return to their ministry “more intentional and more biblical in how we are leading and how we’re living within our ministry context.”

Contreras gave pastors resources, including pastoral and church health reports from the Baptist Health Foundation and social media pages for Scripture intake, such as ‘The Daily Gaze.’ He invited Olga Harris, director of counseling services at Texas Baptists, to let ministers know about counseling options available for pastors and their families.

“I want you, and Texas Baptists wants you in your ministry context for the long haul ... so what we do now matters,” he asserted.

Being a vessel of the Holy Spirit

Ed Newton, lead pastor of Community Bible Church in San Antonio, preached on 2 Kings 4 and charged attendees to empty themselves before the Lord daily, so they can be used as vessels by the Holy Spirit to carry out the Great Commission.

“The oil of heaven flows with empty vessels,” Newton said.

To live in the “overflow of heaven,” Christians must abide in Jesus daily, he said.

“Your daily commitment, every day, John 3:30, ‘You must increase, I must decrease,’” Newton said. “Your daily checklist—every day, put on the full armor of God. Your daily covenant—you’ve got to remind yourself who you are in Christ Jesus ... be first with Jesus and [then] ‘Come, follow me,’ (Matt. 4:19).”

Conclave NextGen 2025 is scheduled Oct. 6-7 at First Baptist Church in Arlington. To learn more about Conclave NextGen, visit txb.org/conclave.