

Ethiopian-Texans follow pastor's path to education

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GARLAND—Education provides a key for fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission, Pastor Bedilu Yirga believes. That's why 47 members of [Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church in Garland](#) have completed ministry training in just two years.

"When we evaluated the teaching program in our church, we realized we needed to teach lay leaders for ministry," Yirga told participants in commencement exercises at the church March 10. Nineteen congregation members received Certificate of Christian Ministry degrees from [Wayland Baptist University](#).

"Our lay members must be equipped with knowledge of the Scriptures and understanding of ministry. That's the only way we can be on target for the Great Commission," he said in an interview.

All the graduates are members of Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church, and all are involved in leadership, he said. One of them, Bruke Gidey, is pastor of a mission congregation the church is planting in Allen.

Learned example

The new graduates have learned from the example of their pastor, noted [Patty Lane](#), director of intercultural ministries for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Yirga immigrated to the United States and realized the importance of education for making an impact in society, Lane said. So, he worked and went to school simultaneously for almost 20 years. Ultimately, he earned a

doctor's degree—and also leads one of Texas Baptists' most vibrant intercultural congregations.

“This started as a dream of your pastor. God has brought forth such wonderful fruit,” Lane told the graduates.

Wayland President Paul Armes challenged the graduates as they accepted their new degrees to continue to minister and “work for God.”

“See life as a great gift, and dream God's dream for that life,” Armes told them. “Be a person wholly committed to Christ. ... Dallas County and Garland need the message you can share—the world needs Jesus Christ.”

Certificate of Christian Ministry program

Wayland's Certificate of Christian Ministry program began about a decade ago, noted Lewis Lee, who retired as program director Jan. 31. The program offers ministry training in about 40 locations in the San Antonio area, the Rio Grande Valley, Garland and Clovis, N.M.

Study consists of 18 semester hours—six each in biblical studies, general ministry studies and directed training in an area of specialty, reported David Maltsberger, the new program director. Students take classes in English or Spanish.

Students work from notebooks designed for each course, and they expand their training in classroom discussions guided by trained facilitators.

Students who enroll in Wayland's college-level programs may qualify to transfer the credits earned in the certificate program.

For more information on the Certificate of Christian Ministry, [click here](#).