

Gerlach brothers spur one another on to faithful ministry

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IRVING—Growing up in Irving, Jim and John Gerlach never expected they both would become pastors.

However, as the two brothers began helping with various ministries, it became clear the Lord was calling both of them to fulfill the Great Commission by pursuing pastoral leadership.

Today, Jim Gerlach serves as pastor of Oak View Baptist Church in Irving, while his brother John serves as pastor of Crestview Baptist Church in Midland.

During their early years, the Gerlach brothers attended Woodridge Baptist Church in Irving—now North Irving Baptist Church—and both accepted Christ as their Savior at a young age.

Felt call to serve while in college

While in college, both brothers began serving in leadership roles and sensed God's calling into student ministry.

"I graduated from college a year early and decided to use that year in ministry with the Baptist Student Ministry on a college campus at Tarleton State University," John Gerlach said.

"It was during that year that God called me to serve in ministry through my experiences with the students. I began ministry as a youth pastor at Riverside Baptist Church in Stephenville and began attending seminary."

While attending Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Jim Gerlach also served in Baptist Student Ministries there and sought the Lord's will.

"After I graduated from college, I spent a year at Stephen F. Austin University serving as a campus evangelism coordinator," Jim Gerlach said. "It was during that year that I felt called into ministry and started seminary the next year."

As the Gerlach brothers prayed about where the Lord was leading, they both remember when they first heard about openings at the churches where they serve now.

Search committee quickly made decision

John Gerlach served on staff five years at Crestview Baptist in Midland before moving to Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., where he planted and pastored a satellite campus.

"Unbeknownst to me, my name had been given to the pastor search team at Crestview, who had a policy of not considering staff members as a potential pastor. However, the search team decided to go ahead and come out to Little Rock and visit with us," he recalled.

The search committee visited Immanuel West Baptist Church in Little Rock. They told Gerlach he would hear from them in a few days after their next meeting.

"But to our surprise, they called us from the airport and asked us to come down to the terminal. We went to the airport and found that the team had prayed and met together while at the airport, and then decided to extend the invitation to come as the pastor of Crestview in Midland," he recalled.

Long tenure in Midland



John Gerlach preaches at Crestview Baptist Church in Midland.
(Courtesy Photo)

John Gerlach became pastor at Crestview Baptist in 2001 and continues to serve there. He points to several reasons behind his long tenure in Midland.

“One of the reasons is Crestview itself. Crestview is a great church,” he said. “I think every pastor who has served at Crestview has said the same thing, ‘Everyone needs a Crestview in their life.’ I have always had a deep love for Crestview and the people.

“I think another reason for my longevity is that we had already established relationships in Midland that had continued over the years, even though we were in Little Rock 10 years prior to coming to Crestview the second time.

“I think another factor is that we loved Midland and loved the people and the community. We love Crestview and always felt like the church was family to us.”

Began Oak View ministry as part-time youth minister



Pastor Jim Gerlach and his wife Tashia are pictured with their daughter Annalise. (Courtesy Photo)_

Likewise, Jim Gerlach also received a unique invitation to serve at Oak View and said the church has become a second family to him.

“I was teaching a 9th grade guys Sunday school class at Plymouth Park Baptist Church [in Irving] when I got a call from Mike Linville about a part-time youth minister position that was open at Oak View,” Jim Gerlach recalls.

“I only remember them asking me two questions in the interview: ‘First, how did you become a Christian and secondly, can you drive a bus?’”

In 2024, Jim Gerlach celebrated his 40th year on staff at Oak View and said the Lord has opened doors far beyond what he ever imagined as the church

celebrates its 75th anniversary later this year.

Through the years, the Gerlach brothers have seen numerous changes in their churches and communities.

“I think Crestview has changed in lots of different ways over the years,” John Gerlach noted. “The church changed from one style of worship to now where we have three styles of worship in three different services. The church relocated about 15 years ago, which was a huge opportunity to renew the vision of Crestview.

“Through the years, Crestview has continued to show great faith in God and willingness to move forward by faith. There has also been a willingness to change style and try new things to reach people during the years while remaining true to the foundations of faith.”

Connecting people to the love of Christ

As both brothers remain steadfast in their unwavering commitment to connect people to the life-changing love of Christ, they desire to see their congregations serve as the hands and feet of Jesus with the mission that is before them daily to reach their communities with the gospel.

“Oak View has given me lots of great opportunities to grow in my education, in missions and in ministry through the years,” Jim Gerlach said. “Oak View has also become a second family to me and is where I met my wife Tashia and where we raised our kids.

“About 30 years ago, our church started planting churches in apartments and mobile home parks in our community. That led to our first Spanish-language services, commissioning international missionaries and a church planting institute in Tapachula, Mexico. The more we got involved in local missions, the more opportunities opened up for national and international

missions.

“Last year, we started a residency intern program at Oak View to help train up the next generation of ministry leaders. We named the scholarship that we award to ministry students in honor of Wallace Philpot, our pastor emeritus who served as pastor of Oak View from 1966-2004. He was my mentor and friend, and this is a way to honor his impact during his years of ministry.”

Inspired by the mission that is placed before their congregations daily, both brothers are spurred on by new opportunities to reach their communities.

John Gerlach pointed to Crestview’s involvement in the “Love Midland” movement in his city.

“After the pandemic, I felt like it was the right time for our community to collaborate together in a way that has never happened before—to simply love our city with the love of Christ. We have begun an organization that is connecting with our city leadership, the leadership of our school district, churches, nonprofits and other community organizations to work together to love Midland,” he said.

“Our mission is to love our city by participating, connecting, giving and serving. I believe we have a vision for Midland where all people flourish spiritually, socially and economically through the demonstration of Christ’s love.”

Finding encouragers and equippers



Pastors Jim Gerlach (left) and John Gerlach (right) both attribute their longevity at the churches they serve to faithful leaders who have helped encourage, equip and edify them. (Courtesy Photo)

The Gerlach brothers both attribute the longevity of their ministry to faithful leaders who have come alongside to help encourage, equip and edify them. Despite the distance between Irving and Midland, they are grateful to have each other just a phone call or text away as they bounce ideas off one another.

“One of the hardest lessons that I’ve had to learn in ministry has been those key times in life where I had to make sure I trusted God, not in my ideas or my strength,” John Gerlach noted.

“In fact, most of those times were not in my control at all. It was at those times it seemed that God worked the most and most powerfully.

“It’s been such a blessing and asset to have my brother as a pastor. We don’t consult as much about comparing notes, but we have consulted each other quite often about different issues and decisions that we might be facing in the church. My brother is a great sounding board and a great help

in many ways.”

The Gerlach brothers encourage other ministry leaders to find someone who will help to build them up and spur them on in ministry and in life.

“Most of the things that matter most in ministry take longer to accomplish than I expected but have been more rewarding than I could have hoped,” Jim Gerlach said.

“My brother and I often talk about sermon series, and at times, exchange ideas on individual sermons. Often, we’ll pick up the phone and call each other to bounce around an idea or get some suggestions on solving some problem that’s come up.

“Through the years, we’ve covered most situations that could come up, but every now and then, we’ll talk about something brand new to both of us. For young ministers starting out, I would encourage them to find someone you look up to in ministry who can mentor you and someone you can mentor in ministry. Every minister needs a Paul and Timothy in their life.”