

Longtime Texas Baptist pastor David Dykes died at age 72

July 7, 2025

David Dykes, longtime pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, died July 3 after a brief time under hospice care. He was 72.

Dykes began his tenure as pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler in 1991, where he served until his retirement in 2021, becoming pastor emeritus.

The church announced his passing on Facebook: “It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Dr. David Orlo Dykes. Pastor David finished his race surrounded by his family at his home in Tyler, Texas on July 2, 2025. ...

“Pastor David was deeply loved by his church family and East Texas community. His passion and dedication to teaching God’s word has impacted countless lives over the years in East Texas and around the world.”

Under Dykes’ leadership, Green Acres Baptist Church gave substantially to Baptist causes at state and national levels.

[Dykes received](#) on behalf of the congregation the M.E. Dodd Award, the Southern Baptist Convention’s highest cooperation award, at the 2008 SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis.

In the year preceding the award, Green Acres’ giving to the SBC Cooperative Program eclipsed the next highest giving congregation by almost one half-million dollars.

In his acceptance speech, paraphrasing New York Yankees legend Lou

Gehrig, Dykes noted: “I consider myself to be the most blessed person alive. I’m pastor of the most missions-minded church I’ve ever heard about. They’ve taught me more about missions than I could ever teach them. ...

“If I told them we were going to attack hell tomorrow morning with water pistols, they’d ask, ‘Pastor, where do we fill up?’”

Equally committed to Texas Baptists’ Cooperative Program, the congregation also was honored in 2019 as the top giving church of its size at the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, a distinction the church has held multiple years.

Texas Baptist responses

Texas Baptists quickly began to respond on social media to the news of Dykes’ passing.



East Texas Baptist University celebrated the legacy of Dr. David Dykes at the David Dykes Servant Leadership Award & ETBU Scholarship Dinner at the Green Acres Baptist Church Crosswalk Conference Center. (Courtesy photo/ETBU)

East Texas Baptist University President Blair Blackburn—where Dykes served in numerous capacities—reflected: “Dr. Dykes has been teaching me God’s truths since I was in college. He has modeled for me what it means to give your life in service to Jesus and to shepherd the flock.

“He has fed his sheep, and I am one of them. I am grateful to have been a part of his ministry at Green Acres—what a blessing to grow in my walk under his guidance since my college days at UT Tyler,” Blackburn continued.

“He has been a loving and caring pastor to Michelle and me, our kids, my parents, and the ETBU Family. He has shaped our lives and our discipleship. ... I watched him show us what ‘become less’ means as he led others to see ‘Jesus become greater.’”

ETBU noted Dykes “is the namesake of ETBU’s Servant Leadership Award and has served as a dedicated trustee, chapel speaker, adjunct faculty member, and faithful friend to our campus community.”

David Ritsema, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Waxahachie, expressed deep loss in a Facebook post and by email: “I’ve been dreading this news. David’s impact on my life is immeasurable—my first pastor, my mentor, my dear friend.

“He was not only the first pastor I ever had, but the one who shaped the course of my calling, my convictions, and my character.”

“He was part of every major decision of my adult life; he was one of my biggest cheerleaders and encouragers,” Ritsema said, “believing in me, even when I struggled to believe in myself.”

“His calls, notes, emails, and prayers always came at just the right moment and always felt like they came straight from heaven,” he said, noting, “I know I wasn’t the only one. David made everyone he loved feel uniquely seen, deeply valued, and eternally anchored in Christ.”

“To me—he was the prince of preachers, and a man who walked the walk with the highest humility,” but “his sermons went beyond what was spoken. His life was a living sermon, and he lived it with quiet courage and unwavering faithfulness.”

Ritsema asserted, “The legacy he leaves behind is not etched in stone but in souls—in mine, and in countless others who met Jesus more clearly because of him.”

Yet, Ritsema recalled a sermon in which Dykes said he wanted Philippians 1:21 etched on his gravestone: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

"How fitting," Ritsema said.

Darin Wood, pastor of First Baptist Church in Midland, paused a social media break to note: "We have lost a legend and for me, this loss is profound. Dr David Dykes was used by God to change many lives including mine. In 2008, I was at a low point in ministry, to the point I was seriously considering leaving pastoral life altogether. Into that moment David called me.

"To this day I don't know why or how he even knew I existed," Wood continued. "He invited me to lunch and thus began a conversation that has endured. His encouragement and confidence in me gave enough strength to try again and to keep going."

Dykes submitted Wood's resume to First Baptist Midland on his behalf, Wood noted.

"I laughed at him and told him he was crazy," Wood said. "He saw something in me I didn't. Literally, I wouldn't be where I am without David ... Thanks David. If I am half the man you were, I'll count myself fortunate and highly blessed."

Andrew Hébert, lead pastor of Mobberly Baptist Church in Mobberly, wrote on behalf of the church: "David Dykes' influence for the gospel in East Texas and around the world cannot be quantified in this life.

"He was a pastor's pastor. He and his wife Cindy have made an eternal impact through their ministry at Green Acres Baptist Church. His time at Mobberly Baptist Church as interim pastor before the Lord called our family here provided stability and wisdom to the Mobberly church family."

Background and memorial information



David Dykes, pastor emeritus of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, addressing the Hilltop University spiritual retreat for senior adults on the ETBU campus. (File Photo)

Dykes was raised in Alabama, where he earned a degree from Samford University. He attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and also studied at the University of Cambridge in England and ETBU.

Dykes authored more than 20 books, baptized thousands and led many mission teams to serve internationally in more than 30 countries, notably including trips to both the Crimea in the early 1990s and China in the 2000s.

Dykes often described himself as a missionary disguised as a pastor.

Before being called to Tyler, he was pastor of churches in Alabama.

Dykes was born in Ruston, La., on January 16, 1953. He became a Christian at age 9 and began preaching in 1970 at age 17.

In addition to his formal degrees, in 2017 Dykes received an honorary doctorate from East Texas Baptist University and was honored as Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Alumni of the Year in 2021.

Dykes served locally on the boards of the American Red Cross, P.A.T.H., The Greater Tyler Chamber of Commerce, The Mother Frances Foundation and Baptist Child and Family Services (Breckenridge Village).

He also served on the Board of Trustees for ETBU and LeTourneau University. He served 10 years as a member of the Executive Board of the SBC, and he served as volunteer chaplain with the Smith County Sheriff's Department.

In his 30 years as senior pastor at Green Acres Baptist Church, the church grew from 9,000 members to 17,000 members.

Dykes was married to his wife Cindy for 51 years, and he was a devoted father and grandfather. He was an avid golfer and had his private pilot's license. Throughout his life, he enjoyed traveling the world, and he and Cindy led more than two dozen tours to Israel.

Dykes is survived by his beloved wife Cindy; his daughters Jennifer Holman and Laura Grace Dykes; his sons-in-law Jason Holman and Joseph Provencher; his grandchildren Lizzie Holman, Caroline Holman, Ada Liner, Grant Holman and Samuel Provencher; his sister Judy Kapa and his brother Daniel Dykes.

A memorial service for Dykes will be held on Wednesday, July 9, at 1 p.m. at Green Acres Baptist Church Worship Center with Michael Gossett and Jim Gillen officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Green Acres Foundation, 1607 Troup Hwy., Tyler, TX 75701, or through gabc.org.