

Missions expert Bill O'Brien named director of Dallas ministry center

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Gaston Christian Center, an emerging community ministry center in northeast Dallas, named internationally recognized missions expert Bill O'Brien as its first executive director.



Bill O'Brien “Having someone of Bill’s reputation, experience and integrity in this position does nothing but help us establish Gaston Christian Center as a legitimate project—something worthy of support by individuals, churches and foundations,” said Gary Cook, pastor of [Gaston Oaks Baptist Church](#) and chair of the center’s board of directors.

In fact, the center recently received its first major grant—a \$100,000 endowment given through the [Baptist Foundation of Texas](#).

Gaston Oaks Baptist Church and [Wilshire Baptist Church](#) in Dallas launched Gaston Christian Center—with plans to enlist other congregations as supporting partners—to ensure the long-term missions use of property currently owned by Gaston Oaks Baptist Church.

Gaston Oaks was created more than 20 years ago when members of historic Gaston Avenue Baptist Church relocated, hoping to reach young families. In recent years, the congregation conducted a self-assessment and saw an aging Anglo congregation with a dwindling membership. But it also saw growing ethnic congregations sharing its 66,000-square-foot facility, which had potential for [expanded missions use](#).

The property now houses five congregations—Gaston Oaks; La Promesa Iglesia Bautista, a Spanish-language congregation; the Karen Fellowship; Afrika Fellowship; and Bhutanese Fellowship.



Healing Hands

Ministries' clinic for the uninsured is located at the Gaston Christian Center in Dallas. It also houses several nonprofit Christian ministries, including [Healing Hands Ministries](#), a medical and dental clinic for the uninsured; [Gateway of Grace](#), an interdenominational ministry focused on refugee resettlement; and the [Korean-America Sharing Movement](#), which has supported famine relief in North Korea, among other projects.

Gaston Christian Center also offers English-as-a-Second-Language classes, and a computer-training lab is under construction.

“Our goal at the present is to transfer ownership of the property sometime

next year from the church to the center,” Cook explained. At that point, Gaston Oaks Baptist Church and the other four congregations will continue to worship at the facility, but the center and its board will assume ownership and responsibility for management of the property.

O’Brien’s arrival as executive director lends the center “a lot of credibility,” Cook added.

O’Brien was founding director of The Global Center at Samford University and recently taught at Dallas Baptist University, Baylor University’s Truett Theological Seminary and the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in the Washington, D.C., area.

He served as executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Foreign Mission Board and began his career in missions as a music missionary in Indonesia.

In addition to Cook, other members of the Gaston Christian Center board are Vice Chair Mark Wingfield, associate pastor at Wilshire; Treasurer Tom Diggs, a layman at Gaston Oaks; Secretary Joy Fenner, retired executive director-treasurer of Texas Woman’s Missionary Union; Dorothy Myers and Nell Bowles, lay leaders at Gaston Oaks; Allan Stafford, an attorney and member at Wilshire; Heather Mustain, minister of missions at Wilshire; and Patty Lane, ethnic congregational consultant with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.