

Texas Baptist Men trailblazer Bob Dixon dies at age 90

May 10, 2018

Robert E. “Bob” Dixon, who led Texas Baptist Men three decades and pioneered disaster relief ministry among Southern Baptists, died May 10. He was 90.



Bob Dixon

Dixon led the missions organization to blaze a trail for Baptists in disaster relief ministries after Hurricane Beulah hit the Texas Gulf Coast in 1967.

Under his leadership as executive director, TBM created a network of trained volunteers and developed a fleet of response vehicles that became a prototype for disaster relief ministry throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

Responded to ‘invitations from the Father’

He also led the organization to respond to what he called “invitations from the Father” to minister globally, from disaster relief throughout Latin America to refugee relief among Kurds in Iran.

Those who served alongside him noted Dixon always recognized TBM’s vast array of ministries as assignments from God, not evidence of human achievement.

“I’m grateful the Father taught me early on that it’s his work and his kingdom. I’m just a recruiting director,” he often said.

‘A spiritual giant’

Dixon “would be the last person to tell you how much he shaped and influenced TBM,” TBM Executive Director Mickey Lenamon said.

“He was a spiritual giant and has literally touched millions of lives through TBM,” he said.

Lenamon counted Dixon as his spiritual mentor since the mid-1970s, when they traveled together to St. Cloud, Minn., to help start a church.

“Bob taught me to read the Book and talk with the Father on a daily basis,” Lenamon said. “Other than my parents, Bob Dixon has had the most influence on my life.”

He credits Dixon with teaching him an important leadership principle—to ask, “Who can do the job better than me?”

“He taught me to look for other’s spiritual gifts and empower them to

serve,” Lenamon said.

Preparation for ministry

Dixon was born in eastern Tennessee and professed his faith in Christ at age 11.

He served in the Sixth Naval District during World War II. While in the armed forces, he played on a Navy baseball team, and he spent two years later as a catcher on the Washington Senators AA club.

Dixon next worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority, where he received disaster relief training from the U.S. Bureau of Mines—experience that later proved valuable in ministry.

When he felt God calling him into youth ministry, he and his wife Jean moved to Fort Worth, where he attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and served on staff at College Avenue Baptist Church.

He went on to serve in church recreation and youth ministry at churches in Mississippi and Tennessee before he was invited in 1966 to return to Texas to become state director for the Royal Ambassadors missions program for boys.

Three years later, he became TBM executive director, a post he held 29 years. After he retired from the staff position, he was elected TBM president.

‘A courageous visionary’



David Hardage (left), executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, presented the Texas Baptist Legacy Award to Bob Dixon during a 2014 service at the historic Independence Baptist Church, near Brenham. (File Photo)

“Bob Dixon was a man of vision, who was able to see what others don’t,” said John LaNoue, who served alongside Dixon on the TBM staff.

Before he went to work for TBM, LaNoue designed and built the first Baptist disaster relief mobile unit, working closely with Dixon, who secured funding for the project and handled organizational details.

“Bob always had an amazing insight into what we would need next,” LaNoue said.

He marveled at Dixon’s capability to energize and mobilize men to respond when God presented an opportunity to serve, as well as Dixon’s spiritual sensitivity.

“He was a courageous visionary who had the ability to inspire others to do God’s work,” LaNoue said.

Man of prayer

Don Gibson, retired executive director of TBM, first joined the organization’s staff in 1982 as lay renewal director. He assumed the position before there was any budget for it, but Dixon gave him the job, trusting God would provide.

Dixon always gave God the glory for anything TBM accomplished, Gibson noted, and he made it his life’s work to fulfill the Apostle Paul’s admonition in Colossians 4:17 to “complete the work you have received in the Lord.”

Gibson characterized Dixon as a man of prayer who was open and obedient to God’s leadership.

“Bob helped me, encouraged me, taught me, and I know he prayed for me and the others on our staff,” he said. “He prayed over all the assignments he believed God gave TBM to fulfill.”

‘Down-to-earth servant leader’

Bill Pinson, executive director emeritus of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, likewise marveled at Dixon’s prayer life.

“When you heard him talk with the Father in prayer, it was listening to an intimate conversation of a person with Someone he loved with all his life,” he said.

Pinson called Dixon “one of the greatest, and yet humblest, persons I have known—a truly godly man.”

“Yet when I think of him, I do not think of a halo but of the warm smile of a terrifically practical, down-to-earth servant leader,” he said.

“Constantly searching for God’s leadership, he became an amazingly creative leader, constantly charting new directions for Texas Baptist Men. As a result, TBM became one of the most effective ministry organizations in the world, and Dixon always gave God the credit. ...

“Heaven’s population is greater and earth is better because of the life and ministry of Bob Dixon.”

A memorial service is scheduled at 2 p.m. May 19 at the TBM Robert E. Dixon Missions Equipping Center in east Dallas. Dixon requested that volunteers who serve with TBM wear their ministry uniform to the service. In lieu of flowers, the family requested memorial gifts to TBM, 5351 Catron Dr., Dallas, TX 75227 or click [here](#) to make an online donation.