

Texas Baptist missions leaders train in Washington, D.C.

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WASHINGTON—Thirty directors of missions and associate directors from around Texas traveled to Washington, D.C., during Holy Week for their annual training event.

The heart of a Texas Baptist missions leader

Directors of missions engage in training on a regular basis because they “love the local church” and see the local church as “the hope of the world,” Vince Smith, executive director of Collin Baptist Association, and David Smith, executive director of Austin Baptist Association, said—almost in unison.

DOMs want to equip themselves to equip the local church, the pair said. They value the relationships they share as DOMs and want to learn and engage in the best practices of leadership.

“Eighty people a day are moving to Collin County. The average Southern Baptist church is about 75 people. That means a church a day is moving to Collin County,” Vince Smith said.

Directors of missions know the local churches in their area, often serving their areas longer than most pastors in the association, Vince Smith and David Smith agreed. They know the hurts, needs, assets and successes of each church and—out of their love for the local church—can be allies in helping them find new pastors when needed.

Texas Baptist missions leaders strengthen relationships

Jay Vineyard, associate pastor of Dogwood Church in Tyrone, Ga., led the DOMs in an approach to leadership developed by Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller and contained in their book [*The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*](#). Miller is an executive with Chick-Fil-A and a member of Dogwood Church.



Texas Baptist missions leaders observing communion in the Capitol Rotunda (Photo by Eric Black)

Training concluded with two special events. Dan Cummins, who serves as a chaplain to legislators and law enforcement at the Capitol Building in Washington, hosted the group of Texas DOMs for prayer and communion in the Capitol Rotunda.

Cummins encouraged the DOMs to focus on relationships over policy and to approach lawmakers with open arms rather than outstretched hands and pointing fingers.

DOMs also gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to pray at the spot where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Before praying together, Joseph Fields, pastor of New Beginnings Church in Lewisville, addressed racial reconciliation.

African-American and Anglo individuals often are afraid to talk to each other because they fear misplaced indictment, he said.

Addressing Anglo members of the group, Fields said: “You aren’t guilty of what happened 400 years ago. As an Anglo, you don’t come to this place with misplaced guilt. You’re not responsible for what happened, but you are accountable that it not happen again.”



Pastor Joseph Fields speaking on racial reconciliation at the Lincoln Memorial (Photo by Eric Black)

Fields concluded by reminding the group that the gospel of Jesus Christ is communicated through love for one another.

Missions leaders learn about Bible translation

The trip to Washington, D.C., was a joint venture between the Baptist General Convention of Texas and [illumiNations](#), a Bible translation project set to launch in October 2019. Two individuals and a DFW-area Bible church associated with illumiNations—all of whom wanted to inspire unity among Texas Baptists—provided the funding for travel, lodging and most meals for the group of DOMs.

illumiNations is an outgrowth of an initial meeting of a group of Bible translators and Mart Green, founder and CEO of Mardel Christian and Educational Supply and son of Hobby Lobby founder David Green and brother of Hobby Lobby president Steve Green, the same family who provided [significant funding](#) for the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C.

[Mart Green recognized](#) current technology can enable the rapid translation and dissemination of the Bible to every language group in the world and called together donors and [major Bible translators](#) to make that vision a reality. Translators include American Bible Society, Biblica, United Bible Society and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

The DOMs received a private tour of the Museum of the Bible, located two blocks south of the National Mall. Tour guide Ryan Smith, after saying the museum houses 72 hours—or eight 9-hour days—worth of exhibits, took the group through the entire museum in two hours.

The museum is designed around three themes—light, vine and branches, and languages—and three ways of engaging the Bible—seeing, hearing and touching. In addition, three main floors focusing on the impact of the Bible, the story of the Bible and the history of the Bible.

Texas Baptists encouraged to join illumiNations project



The illumiNations exhibit at the Museum of the Bible, Washington, D.C. (Photo by Eric Black)

A visit to the museum culminates with the dramatic illumiNations exhibit, an oblong room ringed with shelves filled with books, at least one for each language in the world. Most of the books are covered with a yellow dust jacket, signifying a language with no portion of the Bible translated in it.

The goal of the illumiNations project is for 100 percent of the world's languages to have at least a portion of the Bible translated by 2033. Museum guests—including the Texas DOMs—are encouraged to sponsor translation projects.

Lorenzo Pena, director of mega associations and cultural engagement for Texas Baptists, said the combined trip was intended to give DOMs exposure to the illumiNations project. While DOMs do not “tell churches what to do,” they can “provide exposure to opportunities” to be involved in projects

larger than themselves, Pena said.

EDITOR'S DISCLOSURE: Joseph Fields is a member of the Baptist Standard board of directors. Editor Eric Black's travel, lodging and most meals were provided by the same donors who sponsored the DOMs.