

Texas Baptist pastors and churches support other pastors

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Some of the most generous donors to Texas Baptists' newly created Pastor Relief Fund have been fellow Texas Baptists pastors and churches.

The fund was established in March to provide grants to bivocational and small-church pastors who were struggling financially by providing short-term financial support for those who have experienced economic difficulties as a result of COVID-19.

Donations and pledges to the fund have totaled more than \$200,000. Texas Baptists helped pastors overcome financial hardships through Pastor Relief Grants. In addition to the grants, all Texas Baptist pastors who applied were offered free access to Teladoc services for six months.

'A great way to impact kingdom work'

First Baptist Church in Midlothian decided to donate to the fund because the congregation realized the important work these pastors are doing for their communities, said Kevin Phillips, discipleship pastor at First Baptist in Midlothian.

Churches and pastors are perhaps most aware of the challenges that other pastors go through and also know of the multitudes of good works, both public and not, that churches are engaged in on a daily basis, he noted.

"We want to support the Pastor Relief Fund because we believe it is a great way to impact kingdom work around our state, in addition to what we are doing locally in our community," Phillips said. "

“We are excited that this fund is allowing bivocational and other pastors to love and serve their community better because they can take care of their families. Whole communities can be loved well where pastors can be more financially secure. As God continues to bless our church, we hope to continue to support this fund.”

‘We need each other’

First Baptist Church of Decatur also recognized the good these pastors are doing for their communities.

“When you think of the sacrifices these pastors make for their churches, we had to come to their aid. We need each other,” said David Lowrie, pastor of First Baptist Church of Decatur.

Jerry Raines, a retired pastor who is a member of First Baptist in Decatur, led the way in the congregation’s expression of generosity, Lowrie noted.

“We thank God for our Baptist family pulling together in times like these,” he said.

‘Our prayers accompany each dollar’

Churches across the state are getting creative to help provide for pastors who are experiencing financial troubles.

At Austin Baptist Church, canceled mission trips provided an opportunity to reroute the money to support the Pastor Relief Fund. Eddie Cox, missions committee chair, said the church was blessed to be able to set aside money for national and international mission teams, but travel restrictions due to COVID-19 meant many of the trips would not occur in 2020. So, the church’s missions committee decided to divert a portion of the missions budget towards the relief fund.

“When we heard about the financial issues a great number of our Texas bivocational pastors are experiencing, our missions committee quickly communicated via emails and texts to designate [money] from our missions budget to help to alleviate some of their financial pressure. Our prayers accompany each dollar awarded to these precious servants,” Cox said.

‘Blessing brings responsibility’

Craig Christina, associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, donated to the fund for personal reasons. He explained he knew firsthand how challenging the work can be and the financial struggles that can arise. His first pastorate was a new church start, and he was bivocational during that time.

“It was a struggle financially in the best of times,” Christina explained. “With the economic shut-down, many bivocational pastors lost their secular job, and their churches don’t always know how to practice online giving. The least we can do is help them survive this economic shut-down.

“The Lord has blessed me with a great job working for Texas Baptists. Blessing brings responsibility, and I feel compelled to share what the Lord has given me to help those in need.”

Jerry Carlisle, vice president of the Texas Baptist Missions Foundation, said this outpouring of giving shows the true collaborative spirit of churches around the state.

“The generosity of churches and pastors to bless small church pastors reveals the true character of Texas Baptists in collaborating to reach our state for Christ,” he said.

Carlisle pointed to the word of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:12: “This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s

people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.”

While many pastors have already been assisted, Texas Baptists continue to receive applications from more pastors in need. To donate to the Pastor Relief Fund, click [here](#).