

Truett event focuses on police and faith community

October 8, 2024

WACO—Crime in Waco is at its [lowest level in three decades](#), and Police Chief Sheryl Victorian offers much of the credit to the strong relationship between the city’s faith community and law enforcement.

Victorian, the first African American and first woman to serve as chief of the Waco Police Department, spoke at an Oct. 7 [Faith & Blue](#) community gathering at [Baylor University’s Truett Theological Seminary](#).

She applauded faith leaders who hosted Faith & Blue community engagement events that help to build relationships of trust with police officers and “humanize the badge,” she said.

Victorian also expressed appreciation for the prayers local churches offer for the protection of law enforcement officers.

“The prayers of the righteous keep us safe,” she said.

Chaplain Damus Vice explained [MovementForward](#) launched the Faith & Blue initiative in 2020 in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services Office.

“The ties that bind officers and residents must be reinforced if we are to build neighborhoods where everyone feels safe and included. Faith-based organizations are key to building these bonds, because they are not only the largest community resource in the nation, with 65 million participants in weekly events, but also because they are as diverse as our nation,” Vice said.

He applauded the “overwhelming response” of the Waco faith community in

building strong ties with law enforcement. The Faith & Blue program in Waco launched in 2022 with 12 events, but more than doubled last year, with 29 events hosted by houses of worship.

This year, Waco's faith community hosted or helped sponsor 42 Faith & Blue events over 11 days, enabling police officers to have "4,300 positive encounters" with community residents, he said.

'Jesus knows what it's like'



John Durham, lead pastor at Highland Baptist Church in Waco, urged police officers not to grow discouraged but to realize, "Jesus knows what it's like" to deal with people at their worst. (Photo / John Durham)

John Durham, lead pastor at Highland Baptist Church in Waco, urged police officers not to grow discouraged but to realize, "Jesus knows what it's like" to deal with people at their worst.

He encouraged fellow pastors and church leaders to offer words of encouragement to police officers, to pray regularly for them and offer opportunities for officers to engage with youth at church events.

Durham noted he and Victorian regularly text each other to offer encouragement, addressing one another in their text messages as “Brother Pastor” and “Sister Chief.”

Durham challenged police officers to consider the admonition in Ephesians 4:1 to “live lives worthy of your calling” and in Colossians 3:23 to do their work “as unto the Lord.”

“We see you. We are grateful for you,” Durham said. “Your life’s calling is making a difference in our city.”