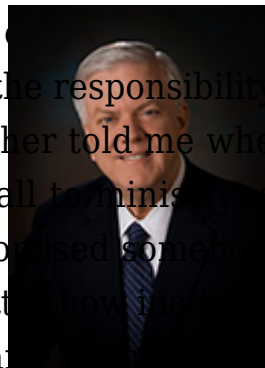


Armes reflects on ministry in churches, education

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Serving as the president of a faith-based educational institution is not something I thought I ever would do. When God called me to full-time Christian service 50 years ago, I assumed I would serve as a pastor or church staff member my entire life. When San Marcos Baptist Academy invited Duanea and me to serve as their president and wife in 1996, we prayed about the decision for a long time. We loved the church we were pastoring—First Baptist Church of Corpus Christi. When we accepted the academy's invitation, it was for us both a calling—just like serving as a local Baptist church pastor and wife 25 years also was a calling.

Although most of us who are privileged to serve in the capacity of president often feel unworthy of the responsibility, it has been helpful for me to remember something my father told me when I was a freshman in college. I was struggling with my call to ministry and my dad said, "Paul, if God calls you to a task, he has promised someone to equip and empower you to accomplish that task—no matter how inadequate you may feel." That word has given me comfort again and again as I have served as pastor of four Texas Baptist churches and as president to two Baptist General Convention of Texas educational institutions.



For Duanea and me, our work at Wayland Baptist University has been a wonderful and challenging journey, which we would not have traded for anything else in the world.

Wayland's blessings are not as much about presidential leadership as they are about discovering and embracing this university's place in the plan of God. The school is led by a wonderful and professional group of faculty, staff and administrators who know how to do faith-based education really well.



Our founder, James Henry Wayland, had a dream with two dimensions: First, he wanted the education offered at Wayland to be available to as many individuals as possible. Second, he wanted us to retain and encourage the extra dimension of faith in Christ.

In pursuit of the first objective we are, for all intents and purposes, an open enrollment university. Watching students who come from a wide variety of personal and educational backgrounds find their place in the plan of God as teachers, business professionals, doctors, lawyers and church staff professionals has validated Dr. Wayland's dream repeatedly. Embracing his second objective means this: The faith component of our university's life remains strong and vibrant and pervasive. As one of our trustees, Ted Sanders, has noted: "Higher education almost always enhances life. Faith-based higher education has the very real and great potential of transforming life."

During these most recent years of Wayland's history, our budget and endowment has more than doubled. Enrollment has increased. Three major construction projects have been completed. Infrastructure improvements across the campus have been effected. Wayland is one of the top universities in America when it comes to return on investment. Teaching points have been added in places like Boerne, New Braunfels and El Paso. Advancement efforts have been expanded. Annual giving is at record levels. Academic programs have been added, and we have been approved to offer our first doctoral degree by our regional accreditation agency. The spiritual atmosphere of the university is evident to anyone who visits our campuses.

We are profoundly grateful for our Lord's gifts, especially the gifts of the students who enroll to study at this very special university family.

Duanea and I have loved our time at Wayland. We have been gifted with two wonderful and meaningful careers, each of which has touched us deeply and grown us spiritually. I think our journey has helped the two of us see life from two complementary perspectives—congregational and institutional. As a result, one of our lifelong convictions has been validated again and again: We can do more together as Texas Baptists than we can do alone as a single congregation or a single faith-based institution. One of the clearest expressions of who we are as Texas Baptists can be seen in the ministries provided by our partner institutions.

Thank you, Texas Baptists, for walking with my wife and me in this wonderful journey of life and ministry together. Thanks to Agee Baptist Church in Hamilton County, Big Springs Baptist Church in Garland, Oakwood Baptist Church in Lubbock and First Baptist Church in Corpus Christi for believing in us enough to call us as pastor and wife.

Thanks also to the boards of trustees at San Marcos Baptist Academy and Wayland Baptist University for your confidence, support and encouragement.

And while we will be spending more of our time with grandchildren, we look forward to our continuing partnership with Texas Baptists, the finest folks on the face of the earth!

Grace and peace to each of you.

Paul Armes is president of Wayland Baptist University. He retires at the end of June after more than 15 years as Wayland's president.