

# Kathy Hillman: Upward and Onward

January 2, 2015

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

“I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward...”

-Philippians 3:13-14 (Message and NASB)



Kathy HillmanThe decorations have been packed away, the greeting cards read, the leftovers eaten, and every thank you said. Memories of Christmas 2014 have been placed in our hearts. With the loss of their tradition-driven grandmother this year, our grown children proposed downsizing gift giving. I reluctantly agreed.

One Christmas before Marshall, Michael, and Holly married, my sister gave each of them a package marked “from your ancestors.” They loved the tokens from previous generations since, they said, “You don’t have to write thank you notes to ancestors.” So, I decided to give ancestor presents.

The gifts allowed our family to look back and make past stories part of the present and the future. Two special ones went to Michael’s family. Jennifer

received Grammy's lovely Waterford crystal cross, and Michael "got back" the well-worn King James Version Bible he received as a first-grader at Columbus Avenue Baptist Church. He immediately pointed out to his sons Ephesians 6:1, marked with yellow highlighter, "Children, obey your parents... ."



This Christmas I gave my daughter-in-law, Jennifer, Grammy's lovely Waterford crystal cross, and my son Michael "got back" the well-worn King James Version Bible he received as a first-grader at Columbus Avenue Baptist Church. The two presents remind me of my friend Randy Lofgren's favorite phrase, "Upward and Onward." He closed notes, letters, meetings and conversations with the charge. The cross encourages us to climb upward with our eyes on Christ. The Bible serves as "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" as we move onward.

Like our family, Texas Baptists have a wonderful heritage. But also like our family, we must move upward and onward. New Year's resolutions help set those directions. Facebook friends confirm major areas for personal goals—improvement, involvement, organizing, relationships and finances.

As Texas Baptists move upward and onward together, we also make New

Year's resolutions that seek to offer equal emphasis to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These include:

- **Improvement.** Relocate BGCT offices to facilities strategically located and right-sized for current needs.

The Christian Life Commission already has been repositioned in Austin. The transfer of most staff from the current Baptist Building to leased space in Dallas likely will occur in August. Meanwhile, the Texas Baptist Historical Collection will move to Waco.

- **Involvement.** Emphasize the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering effort on Mother's Day while affirming other fund-raising methods.



Randy Lofgren gazing upward. As the first mother and grandmother to serve as BGCT president, I can imagine sadly how not being able to plan the next meal for my children

or grandchildren would feel. Texas is second among states in the number of hungry children with one in four living in food-insecure households. Worldwide, almost 70 percent of childhood deaths are associated with malnutrition and related disease. Through the offering, we work with Baptist partners to meet immediate needs and help families long-term.

- **Organizing.** Align the staff to most effectively carry out the mission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas to “encourage, facilitate and connect churches in their work to fulfill God’s mission of reconciling the world to himself.”

To this end, the Executive Board will hear ideas about realignment at the February meeting.

- **Relationships.** Pray for every lost person in Texas.

Through the Pray for Every Home Texas plan, Texas Baptists will be encouraged to prayer walk and pray for 5 different households a day for 20 days to reach 100 of their closest neighbors and then do it again.

- **Finances.** Increase awareness of the financial operations and the need for giving among individuals and churches.

When the BGCT recently decreased funding to educational institutions, many Texas Baptists expressed concern. However, some churches have reduced their giving or give little or nothing to the Cooperative Program or Mary Hill Davis Offering. Individuals sometimes don’t know how much their congregations give. To find out, call the BGCT at (888) 244-9400 and ask for the finance office.



Will we as individuals keep all of the New Year's resolutions we make? I hope so. Will we as a state convention keep all of our resolutions? I pray so.

Sadly, my friend Randy Lofgren, who spent a lifetime leading and making music in Texas Baptist churches, passed away the day after Christmas. A special picture of Dr. Lofgren gazing upward reflects his philosophy of moving onward under God's guidance. I pray that we as individuals, churches and a state convention will adopt that same philosophy.

"Upward and Onward, Texas Baptists!"

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