

Editorial: Three major blessings in a tough year

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The first line from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* has echoed around my cranium this year: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"



Marv Knox

For much of the year, the "worst of times" seemed to prevail.

When have we endured a more dispiriting, debasing, divisive debacle of a presidential campaign than in 2016? If I had a dime for every time someone said they needed to take a shower after listening to a debate or actually going to vote this year, I could do some powerful good in God's kingdom. Unfortunately, the dismal tone of the campaign reflected the mood of the nation. We're more divided than we've been in at least five decades—along racial, religious, cultural and economic lines. And given the polarizing nature of politics, we're hard pressed to expect things to get better any time soon.

Closer, closer

Striking closer to home, the Baptist General Convention of Texas has experienced its share of discord, too. The sadness and embarrassment of Baylor University's response to sexual assault—which included the

departures of President Ken Starr and Head Coach Art Briles—stirred pain, remorse and anger far beyond direct members of the Baylor family. And reaction to churches' response to human sexuality created the most divided BGCT annual meeting in almost two decades. At least two congregations will be cast out, and others are sure to follow.

These situations are grievous, whether or not you voted for the next president or approved of the BGCT's decision. They're bad enough because of the contention they create. But more disturbing, they point toward fissures within our society and convention. Those fissures reflect deep pain and anxiety, formed by circumstances that seem beyond individual control. Yet every soul feels them deeply and personally.

We have treated our culture—both secular and sacred—as a zero-sum game. Every winner requires a loser. Creative, redemptive solutions to challenging problems seem beyond comprehension, much less attainment.

We need Thanksgiving

So, thank God for Thanksgiving. Taking time to count blessings provides much-needed perspective, particularly in a pernicious year.

Of course, counting blessings does not remove curses. Recognizing benefit and joy and goodness does not eliminate anguish and challenge and injustice. But counting blessings lifts our eyes to the horizon. It helps us see the good in even the harshest circumstances and infuses us with hope for brighter tomorrows.

This year, our family has received monumental blessings. This Thanksgiving, I am thankful for:

- **Young Abram**, God's response to heartache and anguish.

Our older daughter, Lindsay, and her husband, Aaron, became parents of

our oldest grandchild, Ezra, almost six years ago. But other expected children did not follow. For 10 months, they provided a home to a foster baby they hoped to adopt, until a judge had other ideas.

But this summer, through a word-of-mouth in Aaron's hometown, they learned about a young mother of two little boys who needed a home for the third child she was carrying. Mere weeks later, Lindsay, Aaron and Ezra took Abram home from the hospital. And less than two months after that, he became their forever child, praise God.

- **Improved health**, God's response to pain and uncertainty.

Joanna, my wife, first endured Miniere's disease—an inner-ear condition that visits extreme dizziness and nausea upon its victim in a flash—almost a quarter-century ago. Miniere's came and went twice across the decades. But it arrived with a vengeance this year. Jo could feel fine one minute, only to see the world spinning out of control the next. This made driving hazardous and a normal life next to impossible.

But thanks to the wisdom, patience and skill of doctors and medical experts near our home in Dallas, Jo underwent what seems to be successful surgery early this fall. Two months later, and no dizziness or nausea. Life is back to what passes around our house for normal.

- **An impending doctorate**, God's response to a dream and hard work.

If all goes as scheduled, our younger daughter, Molly, will cross a stage and receive a Ph.D. degree from Texas Christian University in a few weeks. The little girl who loved to read has grown up to become an expert in young adult literature. She followed her passion, and she worked hard. God opened doors—at TCU, and before that, at Baylor, and before that, at Lewisville High School. She's reached the end of a long academic road, at times thrilling and at times just plain long, is in sight.

And as an added blessing, next spring, Molly and her husband, David, and their 2-year-old daughter, Eleanor, will add another little girl to their family.

Those are my top three blessings of 2016. Of course, once I start, I can name plenty more. I'm always thankful for Tex-Mex and Lyle Lovett and novels and dogs.

Counting blessings helps us endure the hard times and enjoy the great times.

What are your blessings?

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