

Editorial: God's redemptive story is still advancing

October 26, 2023

We heard good news during the September Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board meeting we want to share with you. It's the kind of news we need through these days of heartbreaking reports from so many quarters.

Representatives from Texas Baptist universities reported the Spirit of God moving at each of their schools during the opening days of the 2023-2024 academic year. One by one, they shared stories of students giving their lives to Jesus, among other works of God's Spirit.

As a reminder, the following universities are affiliated with the BGCT:

- [Baptist University of the Americas](#)
- [Baylor University](#)
- [Dallas Baptist University](#)
- [East Texas Baptist University](#)
- [Hardin-Simmons University](#)
- [Houston Christian University](#)
- [Howard Payne University](#)
- [University of Mary Hardin-Baylor](#)
- [Wayland Baptist University](#)

Two seminaries also are affiliated with the BGCT and are preparing for ministry those who have responded to God's call to serve:

- [Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary](#)
- [Stark College and Seminary](#)

[B.H. Carroll Theological Seminary](#) is in the process of merging with East Texas Baptist University.

I followed up with each university this week. Here are just some of the stories they shared with me of God's redemptive story still advancing in and through Texas Baptist universities.

HSU

So many times, particular outpourings of God's redemptive work are preceded by prayer. Sometimes, that prayer happens well in advance. Sometimes, God's work is [the prayer itself](#), such as has happened various times at Baylor University.

Prayer has played a major part in God's work at Hardin-Simmons University, particularly during the last couple of semesters. The HSU Baptist Student Ministry organized ANDY24—a 24-hour prayer event from 8 p.m. Mar. 29 to 8 p.m. Mar. 30 on the Anderson Hall lawn.

“Every one of our one-hour prayer sessions was full of HSU students, faculty, staff and even one alumnus who drove an hour to pray,” reported Manny Silva, HSU BSM director.

HSU Volleyball engaged in 25 days of prayer leading up to the start of the 2023-2024 school year, covering the entire campus—all staff, faculty, students, administration—health and safety, and trustees, parents and alumni.

UMHB

In a single Sept. 6 chapel service at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, 27 students indicated they started “a relationship with Jesus that morning,” reported Jason Palmer, UMHB dean of spiritual life and university chaplain.

Also, a UMHB men's golf team member active in the UMHB33 men's ministry led another teammate to Christ.

"As students embrace biblical literacy and biblical community on campus and through our local churches, the Lord is arresting their hearts with his love and calling them into faithful obedience," Palmer stated.

HCU

Houston Christian University—formerly Houston Baptist University—holds an annual Ignite Spiritual Renewal Week during the fall semester. This October, 76 students gave their lives to Christ for the first time, and 297 students committed to "surrendering total control of their lives to Jesus," reported Scott Bertrand, HCU assistant provost and dean of spiritual life.

Additionally, 52 students expressed interest in learning more about believing in and following Jesus, and 67 students wanted to be connected to discipleship and a Christian community or local church.

BUA

Gabriel Cortés, Baptist University of the Américas chief of staff, shared the following stories.

A struggling student from Colombia "decided to follow Christ" over the summer "and got baptized at a local church. She's now fully engaged in their media ministry and seeking to grow spiritually."

A student from Central America who previously said he didn't believe in God has started "to ask questions about the Bible and asking for prayer."

An international group of 10 students worked with Iglesia Bautista El Jordan in Monterrey, Mexico, during fall break. On their first day, "17

people from the community made decisions for Christ.”

BUA “chapel attendance went from around 70 in the spring to 120 this fall,” further evidence of spiritual sensitivity among students.

Wayland

At Wayland Baptist University, 12 incoming freshmen football players accepted Christ during a chapel service. Seven more students accepted Christ at a Sunday morning worship service during freshman orientation.

“Other students, Wayland staff or local ministers” have followed up with these students to connect them to discipleship, reported Donnie Brown, Wayland director of spiritual life.

Trinity, one of those students, “came to Wayland to play on the golf team” and was led to Christ after taking “the required Old Testament class” her freshman year, Brown explained.

“Through conversations with [Jacob] West—[adjunct professor of Old Testament and pastor of First Baptist Church in Plainview]—and other Christian students she met at Wayland, Trinity began to think about what it means to have a relationship with Christ,” he added.

“During the summer while she was at home, Trinity began reading her Bible and trying to follow Christ. Upon her return to Wayland this fall, she continued conversations with the girls who had been praying for her, and about a month into the school year prayed to receive Christ.

“She began attending First Baptist, and a couple of weeks ago came forward at the end of the service to share her news with Pastor Jacob and to ask if he would baptize her.”

ETBU

Campuswide, “the most recognizable activity of the Lord” this semester at East Texas Baptist University “has been a fresh movement of the Holy Spirit in our chapel services” focusing on the fruit of the Spirit, noted Scott Stevens, ETBU dean of spiritual life.

“There has been a palpable sense of [God’s] presence in many of these services, and that has resulted in deep worship and rapt attention to the biblical messages of our speakers,” Stevens added.

“I believe one of the contributing factors to what we have experienced is a team of committed intercessors—our Chapel Prayer Team—who receive updates on upcoming services and have been diligent in prayer for the Holy Spirit to move in our chapel services. In his faithfulness, God has been answering these prayers,” Stevens wrote.

Stevens also shared the story of a new freshman from Southeast Asia. Her roommates regularly shared their Christian faith with her and invited her to attend church with them. Aug. 31, one of the roommates led her to Christ. Oct. 1, she was baptized “with a huge group of friends and family celebrating with her.” She now tells everyone she is saved.

DBU

Preaching during the first fall chapel service at Dallas Baptist University, Jason Paredes, pastor of Fielder Church in Arlington, “called for students to be undignified in their worship, praise and lives for Christ,” reported Jay Harley, DBU vice president of student affairs. During the response time, more than 100 students came forward for prayer.

Additionally, “two international students gave their lives to Christ at the 2023 BSM fall retreat,” Harley noted.

DBU students participate in several ministries throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. DBU Chapel Worship leads worship at many churches. They also led worship during the North Dallas Fields of Faith event at The Star in Frisco, where several hundred teenagers gave their lives to Christ.

HPU

“Howard Payne University has had 28 decisions this semester,” some of which may have been “first-time professions of faith,” reported Kyle Mize, HPU assistant vice president for communications.

Two athletes were baptized this semester at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood, and during HPU’s Fields of Faith event Oct. 9, eight students made faith-related decisions, Mize added.

BSM

Texas Baptists’ Baptist Student Ministry missionaries serve on 130 college and university campuses across Texas. Many of those serving raise at least part of their financial support.

Texas BSMs reported 572 salvations during the 2022-2023 school year and 310 calls to ministry.

Though a report of the 2023 fall semester was not ready at the time of writing, Texas BSM staff did report the following salvations this semester: 16 each at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and Sam Houston State University, 13 at University of Texas at Arlington, five at Texas A&M, and nine at University of Texas Permian Basin and Midland College.

Bailey, a UTA student, came to Christ last August, “was discipled and served as a Go Now summer missionary,” and this August, “led Angel to Christ. Now, Bailey is studying the Bible and teaching Angel to share the

gospel, as well,” reported Bill Noe, associate director of Texas Baptists’ Center for Collegiate Ministry.

Jason Palmer at UMHB reported Daniel McAfee, the director of the UMHB BSM, has been discipling a student who gave her life to Christ “through the combined experiences of UMHB chapel and the Texas BSM Abide Conference.” She’s also been baptized and joined a local church.

San Marcos Baptist Academy

The Spirit of God is also at work at [San Marcos Baptist Academy](#), a co-educational boarding and day school providing education for preschool through 12th grade. SMA also has a longstanding international program for sixth through 12th-grade students.

Ten students decided to follow Christ this semester during a prayer service for campus ministers Clint and Monica Followell after their son [Brandon](#) was killed in a vehicle accident. Clint shared the gospel as students surrounded the family, and 10 of the students gave their lives to Christ.

The stories above are only some of what is known of God’s work within students at Texas Baptist schools. My own story of coming to know and follow Jesus while a student at Hardin-Simmons University tells me the numbers don’t tell us all of what God’s Spirit is doing. So, consider them the tip of the iceberg.

I encourage you to choose at least one of the Texas Baptist schools listed above and to pray for them. You can contact the person who oversees spiritual life at each school to learn how. That’s one reason the list of schools at the beginning of the editorial is linked to their respective homepages.

I also encourage you to support a BSM ministry at a college or university near you. They always are looking for volunteers. You can also support them financially by visiting the Texas Baptists BSM Giving Fuel page [here](#). To support a specific BSM staff member, select the campus at the bottom of the page, then select the specific staff member from the list on the following page.

Amid all the bad news, it's easy to wonder if God is up to anything good. The stories above are just a sampling of how much good God is up to. Young adults still are giving their lives to Jesus.

During such troublesome days as these, let us not lose heart, and let us not forget God's redemptive story is still advancing.

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