

IN FOCUS: Clear directions point to clear goal

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Several years ago when I was pastor of First Baptist Church in Panhandle, we sent a group of young women to a [Woman's Missionary Union](#) conference in Fort Worth. They made it to the conference fine, but the trip home was an adventure. The usual route ran north on I-35 from Fort Worth and then west on US-287. Unfortunately, this group got to talking, and the next sign they saw said, "Welcome to Oklahoma." They turned around and ultimately found their way home.

The moral of the story is that if you don't know where you are going, you may end up in Oklahoma.

I thought of that story this week as our convention looks at where we are headed as Texas Baptists.

Steve Vernon

The search for a new leader—executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board—has begun. So what is our direction in the meantime? I believe this is not the time to wait. Our vision is [Hope 1:8](#), based on Acts 1:8. That is not a vision invented in the last three years. It is a vision and mission given to us as the last recorded words our Lord spoke on this earth. It is what we must be about as individuals, churches, associations, institutions and as a state convention. It is the mandate of our faith.

So how do we do it? It begins with prayer. Let me ask you to pray specifically for several things. Please pray for the executive director search committee as they seek to find the person God already has prepared to lead Texas Baptists. Please pray for our Executive Board staff as we seek to help

churches move ahead in the mission mandate our Lord left us. Please pray for our associations as they help churches and our state convention as we shoulder the work of being witnesses. Please pray for our institutions as they partner with the convention to collaborate in the Hope 1:8 mission. Please pray for our Jerusalems, Judeas, Samarias and the ends of the earth that we will reach.

I was talking recently to a friend who pastors in the Valley. He was sharing with me some of the trials that the churches, pastors and individual Christians there live through each day. These are difficult times in the Valley. It would be easy to give up on the region. Yet this friend is excited about how God is working in the midst of the difficulties. That is the hope of Christ. That is the hope we have, the hope we can live and the hope that demands to be shared with a world that often seems hopeless.

The amazing truth of the gospel is that God is in the hope business. He can redeem broken lives, broken people and even broken situations. That is the hope we find when we trust and follow him.

Well, we have no intention of ending up in Oklahoma. Don't get me wrong. Oklahoma is a nice state. We have clear directions and a clear goal—to share the hope of Christ with our world.

Let's be about it.

—Steve Vernon is associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board.