

Brent McDougal: People on the margins need love

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Brent Patrick McDougal has been pastor of Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas since 2010. He is the third pastor highlighted in the *Baptist Standard*'s new "Deep in the Hearts of Texans" column. To suggest a pastor to be featured in this column or to apply to be featured, [click here](#).

Background

- *Where else have you served in ministry, and what were your positions there?*

I previously served as the coordinator for the Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, as senior pastor of Corinth Heights Baptist Church in Haleyville, Ala., and as associate pastor of Riverchase Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala.

- *Where did you grow up?*

I was born in Birmingham. I spent some years in Dayton, Ohio, and Columbia, S.C., as a child, but most years were spent in Montgomery, Ala.

- *How did you come to faith in Christ?*

I came to Christ through the love and witness of my family, and through several wonderful churches, including First Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C., and Far Hills Baptist Church in Centerville, Ohio.

- *Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?*

I have a bachelor of arts degree from Emory University in political science

and religion, a seminary degree from Beeson Divinity School of Samford University, and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Alabama.

- *Why do you feel called into ministry?*

Ministry is something I was drawn to as a young adult and as one who was developing in my own faith. Serving churches as a pastor has been a natural fit with the gifts God has given to me and my life's trajectory of trying to bring people together and live out the life of mercy and love.

- *What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?*

I enjoy most seeing those persons on the margins feel loved and welcomed. When I share meals or a conversation over coffee with a new friend and find ways afterwards to connect them to others, I feel the Spirit's power the strongest.

Ministry/church

- *What one aspect of congregational life gives you the greatest joy?*

Seeing the congregational members deepen in discipleship and prayer.

- *What one aspect of congregational life would you like to change?*

Helping our congregation to grow in discipling one another, where those walking the road of following Christ are consistently helping someone else along the road. We need more reverse discipleship as well, where younger and older members are interacting to share about what it means to follow Christ.

- *How do you expect congregational life to change in the next 10 to 20 years?*

Fewer and fewer persons in culture will engage in the local church,

requiring believers to become more open with their lives and innovative in the way they connect with everyday people in neighborhoods and workplaces. Those who don't engage in intentional disciple making will likely find themselves declining.

- *If you could launch any new ministry—individually, through your congregation or through another organization—what would it be? Why?*

I would create a ministry platform for innovation—where there is encouragement, training and support to launch hundreds of creative small and large ministries.

- *What qualities do you look for in a congregation?*

Multi-generational relationships, multi-ethnic engagement, authenticity, joy and love for one another.

About Baptists

- *What are the key issues facing Baptists—denominationally and/or congregationally?*

The key issues facing Baptists are: (1) the public perception that Baptists are among the most judgmental and strict among all Christians, (2) navigating a culture that is in many ways post-denominational and (3) lifting up principles of religious autonomy and freedom to a new generation.

About Brent

- *What did you learn on the job you wish you learned in seminary?*

I wish I had more instruction about how to lead a church organization. I did have a course in “administration,” but it did little to teach me about visionary and strategic leadership—developing and casting vision, then

developing and implementing a plan. These seem like crucial, expected tasks among church leaders but were not addressed in seminary.

- *What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?*

My “gateway” into Scripture is the calling of the first disciples by the sea: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” My earliest memory is of my grandfather, who was a pastor, teaching me to fish. I love the faith and passion of Peter (“because you say so, we will let down the nets” and “go away from me, Lord, I’m a sinful man”). I love the idea of a great catch and the miraculous power and presence of Christ among the simple fishermen.

- *Name something about you that would surprise your church.*

I think about politics all the time and about jumping into a second career in political life.

- *If you could get one “do over” in ministry, what would it be, and why?*

I would ignore the advice to first become an associate pastor/youth minister before becoming a senior pastor. Instead, I would seek to pastor a small church and begin immediately the varied tasks of serving as a solo/senior pastor.

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