

Dan Turner: The love of seeing people's lives changed by Christ

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Dan Turner has been a music and worship consultant for Texas Baptists since 2013 and is director of First Singers Choir at [First Baptist Church](#) in Amarillo, Texas. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on music, church and ministry. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated minister to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

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

- Arnett Benson Baptist in Lubbock as minister of music and youth, 1966 to 1969
- First Baptist Church in Shamrock as minister of music and youth, summer of 1969
- First Baptist Church in Saginaw as minister of music and youth, 1969 to 1974
- First Baptist Church in Dumas as minister of music, 1974 to 2000
- West Texas Music Specialist for Baptist General Convention of Texas, 2000 to 2009
- First Baptist Church in Canyon as associate pastor of worship, 2009 to 2013
- Five music ministry interims while working for Texas Baptists

Where did you grow up?

Pampa, Texas

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I accepted Christ as my Savior in a joint Sunday school revival service in First Baptist Church in Pampa. I was a part of the "Million More in 54" emphasis.

I was the last boy in my Sunday school class to be saved, and my teacher and all the other boys really were putting pressure on me. I wanted this to be my decision; so, every time someone said, "I'll go down the aisle with you," that put a stop to any decision for that day.

On this particular Sunday, I knew this was the day, and I was going down to receive Christ before anyone could get to me. On the first note of the invitation, I ran down the aisle. I still can't adequately describe the wonder of that day.

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

- Texas Tech University, Bachelor of Arts degree
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Master of Religious Education and Church Music degrees

About ministry life

Why do you feel called into ministry?

I was a history major and planned on being a college history professor. I was on schedule to be a graduate assistant at Texas Tech. However, I also served as minister of music and youth at Arnett Benson Baptist Church

during my years at Tech and loved it.

After much prayer and meditation, I finally came to a genuine sense of peace when I decided to go to the seminary. I have never regretted that decision.

What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?

That is a really hard question for me to answer as I so love working with choirs of all ages and leading in worship. However, I would say that seeing peoples' lives changed by Christ and watching and helping them grow in Christ would be my favorite.

How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?

The biggest change was moving from the music ministry in the local church to concentrating on helping and serving as a resource to ministers of music. Of course, the process of planning and leading in worship has changed tremendously over the years, too.

How do you expect ministry to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

In worship, I expect to see more people actually on the platform in leading worship. I also sense a renewal of choirs is coming in many of our churches in the days ahead.

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

I would say the starting of new churches in developing areas of my city. Many large new developments have no Baptist churches in them.

Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your ministry.

- We rapidly are running out of trained music ministers or worship pastors.
- The same is true of keyboard players. Not enough students are taking piano.
- How to face the social pressures of the world we now live in is also a challenge.

What do you wish more laypeople knew about ministry or, specifically, your ministry?

The tremendous time it takes to develop and maintain a full music ministry for every age group.

About Baptists

We often all are lumped mistakenly into one circle of beliefs and practices. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

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

Once again, how to deal with social changes in our society today.

What would you change about the Baptist denomination—state, nation or local?

As a denomination, I wish we would concentrate on what unites us rather than what divides us.

About Dan

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

Hugh Sanders, my high school choir director. It really is because of him that I am in music ministry. He opened a marvelous world of music to me and encouraged me so much through the years.

Joe Whitten, my music minister while growing up in First Baptist Church in Pampa. I emulated him in so many ways.

Ed Rogers, long time pastor at First Baptist Church in Dumas. I served with him for 22 years, and he was incredible to work with. I learned so much from him in all aspects of my ministry. In fact, I have striven to be as much like him as possible. He truly shaped my life and ministry.

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

How to deal effectively with all kinds of people.

What is the impact of ministry on your family?

I value so much the impact of the church on my family. For my wife, it gave her a place and a way to serve God also. For my children, the church was a place where they were loved, nurtured and educated. They never resented the church or my ministry. They and their families all are faithful church members today.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

Some of my favorite history writers: Stephen Ambrose, S.C. Gwynne,

Hampton Sides, Doris Kerns Goodwin and Ron Chernow.

My favorite American novelist is John Steinbeck.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). I have clung to this verse through thick and thin throughout my ministry.

Another life-inspiring verse that always gives me assurance when I am down is Isaiah 40:31: “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they will mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”

Who is your favorite Bible character, other than Jesus? Why?

Peter, not always perfect, but he believed in grace and is a wonderful example of faith and service.

Name something about you that would surprise people who know you.

I do competitive Walleye Team Tournament fishing with my brother as my partner, and we have qualified to fish in seven National Walleye Tournaments.

I was a competitive runner for many years until I wore out my knees.

I led the Baptist Men from Dumas on 15 mission trips into villages in Mexico across from Big Bend National Park. There, we would build churches and provide medical help to the villagers.

My wife, daughter, son-in-law and I got to spend 20 minutes in the Oval

Office with President George W. Bush as my daughter was leaving the White House to pursue another job. It was late in the president's term, and he gave us a lot of time as he was missing Texas and Texans. During that time, I got to discuss hymns with the president.

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

Not to be so hesitant to step out in faith.