

# **Kyndall Rae Rothaus: Called to ministry to help make faith accessible**

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**Kyndall Rae Rothaus** has been senior pastor of Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco for the past year. She is the fourth pastor featured in the *Baptist Standard's* new "Deep in the Hearts of Texans" column. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated minister 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 was the pastor of Covenant Baptist Church in San Antonio, and before that, I served as the interim pastor at a United Church of Christ church in West and as a resident chaplain at Baylor University.

***Where did you grow up?***

I grew up in Oklahoma.

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

I grew up in church, surrounded by the stories of the Bible. I remember taking my faith so seriously from a very young age! When I was 5, I told my parents I was ready to "ask Jesus in my heart," and I was baptized that same year. I still have journals from my childhood full of prayers and my early exploration into Scripture. I memorized a lot of Bible passages as a

child, and as a teenager, I was reading Leviticus and Numbers and the prophets, trying to make sense of it all! It's probably fair to say I was an unusual child.

I didn't express emotion all that well, but I was very sensitive to people's pain, so underneath my calm exterior, my empathy and compassion were often very active, which drew me toward a helping profession and also toward a kind of faith that puts the compassion of God front and central.

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

I received my bachelor of science degree in theology from Southern Nazarene University and my master of divinity degree from Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

## **Ministry/church**

***Why do you feel called into ministry?***

I feel called to ministry because I have a desire to help make faith accessible to the doubting, the confused, the wounded and the ostracized. I feel called because I know I have a peculiar knack for absorbing Bible stories and bringing them to life for others in ways that both comfort and challenge, and it would be a squandering of that gift to remain silent. I feel called to ministry because I want the world to know God is love.

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

I love those unexpected conversations when someone feels safe enough to tell me what is really going on in their life or in their mind. It's those particularly vulnerable and human moments that sing to my soul and tell me all the hardships of ministry are worth it, because I have the privilege of bearing witness to the intimate struggles of so many people of goodwill, and where I can, lending my support and care.

***How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?***

Over the years, I have slowly become more authentic, less afraid and increasingly free. I've embraced my creative instincts and my quirks as a part of who I am as a minister. I'm still learning to be gentler with myself.

The focus of my ministry has shifted some as I have fallen deeper and deeper in love with populations of people I consider marginalized. There are people who linger on the outer edge of the church or have given up on church altogether, and I keep finding them to be front and center of my life. I'm not so much on a mission to convert them as I believe I am on a mission to convert the church universal to turn around and see them, too—and not just see them, but embrace them as brothers and sisters.

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

I believe congregational life will transition to being less institutionalized and more organic. I'm not sure what that will look like specifically, but churches and denominations already are seeing some of our structures fading away.

I don't think that has to be a bad thing. I think the death of one thing can be fertilizer for the new thing God is growing.

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

Goodness, that's a hard question. I have so many ideas and not enough time.

I would launch a support network for survivors of sexual assault, with a particular focus on healing through arts, self-expression, friendship, storytelling, free access to good therapy, etc. Or maybe I would develop

resources to help churches address abuse and assault. Or maybe I would start an effort to house homeless youth.

I would write five more books—some poetry, some stories.

I would start a community initiative to encourage civil discourse to help heal the polarization in our country. I would make the church a more welcoming and supportive place for those who are grieving. I would launch a No Fear campaign based on [1 John 4:18](#), helping us be less afraid of those who are different from us. I would open a house for women who have been victims of sex-trafficking. I would start groups that empower women to use their voices.

### **Why?**

Because I can. Because someone's got to do it. Because God dwells among the hurting.

Then again, I haven't told you one of my most frequent daydreams, which is that I move into the woods and open a simple retreat center that allows me to be a part-time hermit who spends most of her days praying and writing.

I would say that my passionate justice-driven side and my quiet contemplative side haven't quite learned to harmonize yet. I often feel like they are pulling me in separate directions. Once they learn to tango together, ask me again, and we'll see what shape my daydreams have taken then.

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

This sounds simple, but I wish laypeople knew that ministers aren't going to be perfect. We are juggling so many expectations, and often the expectations are in contradiction to one another! It's impossible to please

everyone, but goodness knows, too many of us try to do it anyway. What I strive to do is take each person and his or her individual concerns seriously and be open to learning from each person, but I also try to balance what I hear with my own sense of purpose and calling.

I have to be willing to change my own mind the more I learn, but I also have to hold onto my own integrity, meaning I must stay true to myself and my conscience, no matter how many people wish to persuade me in a different direction.

## **About Baptists**

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

I think one of the key issues facing Baptists is whether we will hold fast to our four fragile freedoms (Bible freedom, soul freedom, church freedom, religious freedom), which often seem fragile indeed. We are facing a time where our commitment to local-church autonomy and the freedom of the individual conscience are being tested as churches and denominational bodies argue over our different perspectives regarding same-sex marriage. Our character is being tested as we work hard to respect one another even while we may disagree.

Another key issue in my opinion is whether the church will be willing to bind up wounds. As we know, denominations across the country are in decline, and millennials are rather rapidly leaving the church, but many of them are leaving because they have been hurt by their church experiences. Will we make it our mission to hear their pain, to take their scars seriously, and to work toward healing, even when it requires uncomfortable humility and repentance on our part?

# About Kyndall

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

I am not exactly quiet about this, but some people who only see me in a public role might be surprised to know I am extremely introverted. I love being alone, and I like for things to be still and quiet so I can think. On a Myers-Briggs assessment, I have essentially no extroversion points. As a child I was extremely shy, and though I have developed better social skills since then (I hope!), being friendly and chatty does not come naturally to me at all. I have to work really hard at it, and I am utterly exhausted at the end of a party.

I am also generally very afraid to try new things. Occasionally, people say I am fearless, but that is not true. I can do a lot of avoiding and procrastinating when I am afraid! But I have also decided I will not be the sort of person who lets fear rule her. At the end of the day, I'm going to act in spite of my fear. The more I have done this, the more I have experienced some of my fears disappear. The more I have done this, I have also learned that some of my fears probably aren't going to budge. They may always be with me, but never again will I let them run the whole show.

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