

Tim Randolph: ‘Awed at the privilege of seeing the Father’s hand of redemption’

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For more than eight years, Tim Randolph has been the director of the [Waco Regional Baptist Association](#) in Waco, Texas. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on church and ministry. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated leader to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you worked, and what were your positions?

- Pastor of Beulah Baptist Church during seminary (near Weatherford, Texas).
- Pastor of FBC of Yuma, Colo.
- Church planter and strategist with the International Mission Board in Argentina
- Director of missions in Tri-Rivers Baptist Area.
- Congregational strategist team leader for the BGCT.

Where did you grow up?

Colorado Springs, Colo.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I grew up in a preacher’s home and attended church from an infant on. As a young child, I understood the very basics of the facts that I was a sinner

and I needed forgiveness. And that Jesus would forgive me if I would trust him to and ask. My father baptized me when I was seven.

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

- Wayland Baptist University: B.A. in religion, Spanish, and elementary education.
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: M.Div. with an emphasis on missions and church planting.

Ministry/Profession

Why do you feel called to your particular vocation?

It has been a lifelong understanding of what God made me to do. I remember making a commitment to that understanding (that I was cut out to preach the gospel) when I was just nine years old. That understanding of how I am made and what is important to me has sharpened and shifted slightly over the years, but at its heart it has always been the same.

Please tell us about your association—where it's located, the key focus of its work and ministry, etc.

The Waco Regional Baptist Association is a network of 93 diverse churches covering McLennan County and a little more. These churches have banded together to do missions and ministry for more than 157 years. The way those churches expressed their connection to one another has changed over the years, but it remains the bedrock of our identity as an Association.

We have twelve ministry teams that provide leadership and consulting and training for our churches. These include evangelism, church member health, hunger, student ministry at McLennan Community College and Texas State Technical College, church protection, church strengthening, church planting (missions), networking and missions, restorative justice/jail

ministry at the County jail and the church technology team. Our focus is on healthy churches transforming communities through extending and embodying the Good News of Jesus.

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What do you like best about leading your association? Why?

I love the great diversity of our churches. It feels like a great privilege to see such a broad spectrum of the kinds of work, ministries and worship that goes on every week in such unique ways. There is no cookie-cutter feel to anything about our Association. Absolutely every church has a different way that they express their love for God and their love for their neighbors.

I guess the favorite part is getting to *see* all of this variety in motion every week. I feel awed at the privilege of seeing such a broad stroke of the Father's hand of redemption every single week.

What aspect(s) of associational ministry and/or its mission do you wish more people understood?

That the root of an Association is *relationship*. And relationships take investment. Church leaders invest in relationships inside their church all the time. But it seems like they don't understand the value to them and their church of relationship outside of their church - with other churches.

I get to hear preachers preach about "unity" in the body regularly when I visit, but they only apply it to them and their particular church body. Seldom is the message applied to the brothers and sisters across town.

How has your association and its mission changed since you began your career?

I started serving as a director of missions in the Tri-Rivers Area in 1998.

The transition away from the connected model of denominationalism had already started, but it is complete now. What services we deliver and how we deliver them are completely different. The types of phone calls and email inquiries we receive every day are totally different. Even the governance in the association is different now.

What remains stable, however, is the need and desire for face-to-face relationships with brothers and sisters.

How do you expect your association and/or its mission to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

Associations all across the state of Texas are in transition. Some are downsizing or merging. Others are shifting into more content-specific consulting. I expect these trends to continue. Associations are not bound by geographical boundaries as they once were. But 10 - 20 years is quite a long horizon.

I really expect this to resemble the disruption of so many industries in the world today. First, many associations will cease to exist, and a vacuum will follow. Then some bright church leaders will get a great idea of forming an association of churches to make a greater impact and to help one another. What emerges will definitely not be the association of the 1980s, but it will be an association.

Throughout the history of the church, churches have sought out relationships with one another and worked together where it made sense. See Acts, where the churches got together to decide about doctrinal questions (Ch. 15), to send missionaries (Ch. 13), to train leaders (Ch. 18), and to raise funds for disaster relief (2 Cor. 9).

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

1. Actually capturing and utilizing the great potential that we have within the membership of all of our member churches has to be the number one challenge that we face. There are so many really smart, spiritual, godly and committed Christian leaders with great wisdom and abilities all around in the Waco Regional Baptist Association. Simply building relationships with all of them and helping them to connect with like-minded brothers and sisters to make an impact on our world is our challenge.
2. Dying and stagnant churches are both a challenge and opportunity. We are seeing about three churches per year close due to a long decline and an inability to win new people to Christ and make disciples in the face of changing communities. We have had some fairly good success at seeing the remaining assets of these churches resurrected into viable and vibrant new churches that more closely resemble the new population right around them.
3. The larger denominational issues affect associations. Declining denominational identity, squabbles, a lack of trust and a lack of valuing each other as genuine partners leaves each entity on its own to figure things out.

What one aspect of your job gives you the greatest joy or fulfillment?

If I could quote a line from an old TV show: “I love it when a plan comes together.” My heart races with joy and gladness (that I get to do what I do) when the Lord uses me in a facilitation or a coaching role with a congregation and things really change for the better right in front of my eyes.

About Baptists

What are the key issues—opportunities and/or challenges—facing Baptist churches?

Churches are in a time of great flux and change. But that is not really a “new” thing. Throughout history, churches have faced plagues, persecution, massive wars, migration, conflict and false teachings. I am confident in the future of Baptist churches for that reason.

We have some bedrock values, such as the autonomy of the local congregation, the priesthood of the believer and the separation of the church from the state that poise us in a favorable position to flexibly navigate the massive cultural and technological changes that are sweeping our globe. Therefore, I believe the greatest challenge our Baptist churches face is staying clear on our mission and vision and pursuing those regardless of anything else.

What are the key issues facing Baptists as a people or denomination?

I can think of three significant issues right away:

1. We have grown to view “Baptists” as an organization or entity, like the BGCT or the SBTC or the SBC or the CBF, rather than an identity. Therefore, we have lost our identity.
2. We have not grappled with the disruptions coming through technology and figured out what our organizations ought to be doing considering those disruptions.
3. We have become self-serving by making the question, “How can I get people to support our (my) organization?” the primary focus of our energies.

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

I’m not sure I am the right person to express an opinion about all of that. I think I have a grasp of what needs to change in our Association, and we are hard at work on those things. That is enough for me to get my mind around.

About Tim

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

My parents shaped much of who I am. My dad served the Lord through pastoral ministry and denominational work all his life. My mom is still a hero hard at work leading people to faith and making disciples across cultural and language barriers. They instilled a work ethic in me that I have never been able to shake.

I had a youth minister, Steve Mostellar, who invested heavily in my life in those formative years of ministry. He and our pastors at that time, Bob and Charlotte Buster, really believed in me and challenged me in every aspect of Christian growth: scripture memory, evangelism, missions, leadership and ministry.

Other pastors along the way let me try out my wings, and they trusted me with huge responsibilities that caused me to grow. I hesitate to try to name them all because there are legion. On the mission field, Clayton Rock and others helped me to grow and mature as a missionary.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Matthew 6:33: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." It was one of those verses that has spoken to me time and again - even when I was a small child - about what the focus of my life should be. It has comforted me in times of doubt, filled me with confidence in times of struggle and filled me with hope in times of discouragement.

There are other verses that have made a large impact on me, but this one wins the prize for the longest-lasting influence in my life.

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

Paul was a man of perseverance and great impact. He knew what he was about and he just went and did it over and over again until his time was up and his cup was poured out.

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

I love almost every genre of music that there is. So what I might be listening to when I am driving across town might surprise some.