

Voices: Church starting: God calls from East to West

July 31, 2019

On July 21, I had the privilege of preaching at the Union Baptist Church in Hopkins County, just south of Sulphur Springs. It was a commissioning service for their pastor, Brant Small, and it was Brant's last Sunday as their pastor.

On Monday morning Brant, his wife Melissa and their three children left East Texas and Hopkins County and drove all the way across the state to far West Texas and the city of El Paso.

With the blessing—amidst the sadness of losing their pastor—of the Union Baptist Church, the Smalls are following the call of God to plant a new church in El Paso called Sun City Church.

Our Texas Baptist West Texas Church Starting consultant, John Silva, has walked with the Small family all the way through this process and was in El Paso waiting for them upon arrival.

Thanks to the sponsorship of the First Baptist Church in Sulphur Springs, where Dr. Jeff Gravens is the pastor, and the Church Starting Office of your Baptist General Convention of Texas, this new work has a great chance of success.

Texas Baptists are a church starting success story

Under the leadership of Dr. Josue Valerio, director of the Texas Baptists Missions Team, and through the work of Tom Howe, director of Texas

Baptists Church Starting, the BGCT may be the most successful church starting enterprise in the world.

The average church start success rate is a bit under 40 percent. Texas Baptists, however, have a success rate of over 80 percent over the past five years.

Church starting is hard work, but thanks to our BGCT family, we are doing it as well—if not better than—anyone else.

A note of joy and a request for prayer

Years ago, when I was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Sulphur Springs, I had the joy of baptizing Brant Small and his family. I have known Brant to be someone truly committed to the Lord and who loves the church, is kind, gracious and caring, articulate and visionary. The Lord called him to full-time ministry and continues to lead him to make a difference for the gospel.

After a visit to El Paso, he and Melissa sensed God confirming their call to that great city. Despite several highs and lows in the first few days of this new journey, God continues to confirm their call.

I am so proud of and happy for him and his sweet family. Please join me in praying for them and this new endeavor.

David Hardage is the executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. The BGCT and Baptist Standard are independently-related partners.