



WACO REGIONAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Family News

— FROM YOUR DIRECTOR —

Recently I had the privilege of sharing a worship service and a lunch with leaders from FBC Lorena and their new Interim Pastor, David George. This was a happy moment as they look forward to working through the Intentional Interim Process with a highly qualified pastor. Dr. George's message that morning on "It's Time for Hope!" was right on the money about the Christmas season as well as the season we are in as an association of Churches. God is doing something very special in many parts of the Association. We are even seeing a sharp rise in the request for Bibles from the inmates at the County Jail! Many of our churches are re-discovering the joy of worship. One church leader thanked me during a luncheon for (our) help during this time of transition in their church. His comment was, "It was so good to know that we are not alone."



I would like to echo that today across this whole central Texas region. You are not alone! We share a very large and dynamic and loving extended church family in the member churches of the WRBA. At the funeral service for Bro. Charlie Dupree Jr. of Waco Worship Center, I saw dozens of churches standing together with the brothers, sisters and family of Bro. Dupree. Each in solidarity and love and in a very strong way, they all said, "we are here for you." The brothers and sisters of Meadowbrook Baptist Church opened their facilities and welcomed all with a warm embrace. Their hospitality was exemplary and a beautiful testimony to the outworking of the Love of Christ.

This Christmas season, I'm very glad that we are not alone. This is good news.

In His Service,
Tim

— Upcoming Events —

January Pastors' Conference

12:00pm on January 8 at Truett Seminary

Cost: \$7.00

Speaker: Michael Godfrey, author of "Without Regret"

Please make a reservation by **January 2**. Contact Katelyn at admin@wacobaptists.org or 753-2408.



February Pastors' Conference

12:00pm on February 5 at Truett Seminary

Cost: \$7.00

Speaker: Bill Tinsley on the Sermon on the Mount

Please make a reservation by **January 30**. Contact Katelyn at admin@wacobaptists.org or 753-2408.

— Community News —

Continue to pray for WRBA churches seeking a Pastor:

Beverly Hills, Concord, Lakeview, Mart FBC, Old Time,
Western Heights, Westwood, Woodway FBC

Welcome to Dan Yeary, Interim Preaching Pastor at Woodway FBC!

Welcome to David George, Interim Pastor at Lorena FBC!

— A Wonderful Year —

I cannot believe that it has been a year since I entered the halls of Truett Seminary and nine months since joining the team here at WRBA as its associate director. When God directed me to come to Waco, I had no idea what a wonderful turn this journey would take. I have been blessed with outstanding, dedicated professors and dear friends at Truett, and through work I have been introduced to brothers and sisters in Christ that truly love our Savior and have expressed that love so unconditionally to me.

I believe that the relationship between WRBA and some of our churches have been in enhanced as I have visited a rainbow of congregations like the First Baptist Church of Waco, Christ the King Vietnamese Baptist Church, Amistad Baptist Church, Buffalo River Indian Baptist Church, the Pleasant Olive Missionary Baptist Church and several others. I have strived to share my experiences through the WRBA e-newsletters.

Likewise, I have seen the growth in our Community Ministries and have had an opportunity to work alongside members of the Task Forces (representing our restorative jail, collegiate and hunger ministries) that act on behalf of our WRBA churches. To them, I would like to echo Paul's words to the church at Philippi, "I thank my God every time I remember you." (Philippians 1:3, NIV).

I am so excited in anticipation of what God is going to do in 2014 as we deliberately watch and pray to see where God is working. Henry Blackaby reminds us in *Experiencing God* that doing the will of God has a simple but not easy message: "Find out where God is at work and join Him there." I am ready to join God.

Have a safe, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! -Evelyn Ofong

Other January Events

December 31-January 1 — WRBA Office Closed. New Year.

Wednesday, January 8, 12:00pm — Pastors' Conference. Truett.

Thursday, January 16, 8:30am — 50+ Senior Day. Latham Springs.

Thursday, January 16, 2:00pm — Leadership Development Team. WRBA.

Monday, January 20 — WRBA Office Closed. MLK Jr. Day.

Tuesday, January 21, 4:00pm — Administrative Team. WRBA.

Tuesday, January 21, 1:30pm — Networking & Missions. FBC Waco.

Wednesday, February 5, 12:00pm — Pastors' Conference. Truett.

Sunday, February 9, 1:00pm — RA Pinewood Derby. Columbus Avenue Activity Center. \$2/entry. Can order kits now at 866-244-7900.



In the last few years, Grace Temple Baptist Church has gone through remarkable changes. At a few points, the church was considering closing its doors. After much prayer, the congregation placed complete faith in God's work and were willing to do what was needed. The church is now growing.

Deacon Jason Featherston said, "We went through a six week span where every Sunday we had people joining the church."

They've also had a growth of people accepting Christ at the end of the morning services.

"It's been amazing. It's been very exciting. I think we're at a point where we can only look up. I see us climbing," Featherston said.

Polly Smith has been a member since 1983 and involved in various ministries and teaching Sunday School for many years.

"I'm excited because I feel like the people are more excited about growing the church," she said.

Many members feel much of the change has come through their pastor's excitement of what God could do. Pastor Craig Klempnauer started in 2012.

Smith said, "We're excited about our pastor and his wife and how they're leading our church."

Featherston agreed, "He's very good for the congregation. He's not a preacher, he's a pastor."

Klempnauer has found that by being excited about the church's ministries, the members are encouraged and step up to challenges. One example is their Operation Christmas Child contribution. Last year they had 85 boxes. This year, after the noticeable church growth, Klempnauer challenged them to fill 100 boxes. In the end they donated 114.

The church is full of many ministries, from working with CWJC to free Wednesday night meals provided by the members, from weekly services at Stillwell Retirement Center to visits and communion with the home-bound.

Klempnauer said the Stillwell and homebound ministries have blossomed.

"Pray for us and all that we're doing, just to keep the strength," he said. "Lift us up in all that the adversary may do. Grace Temple in turn is also praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ that make up our association."

— Journey to China —

On my first Sunday at Calvary after returning from China, Tom Purdy said, “Give me two words that capture your experience in China.” “Two words?” I thought. “Give me a break!” I was so tired from jet-lag that morning, which felt like night to me, and my mind flooded with snapshots and “wonders God had shown us” from our journey in China. I thought about chopsticks, red hanging lanterns, brightly colored fans, stinky tofu, gardens and gaze-bos from the Ming and Ching dynasty, evil e-bikes and women dancing in the streets.

I remembered the first day we arrived at the migrant school in our yellow school bus children ran up to us waving red scarves in the air that they carefully tied around our necks. During the opening ceremony, children stood at attention like toy soldiers, their faces beaming with excitement for the week.

I thought of the way Christine’s face lit up in joy when Isaac and Sarah ran up to give her a hug. Or about Patricia’s mischievous grin when she went out of her way to give us her snacks each day. Or about the 40+ Caterpillar volunteers we met and Dennis’ constant care for and encouragement to them.

I remembered stories about teachers who traveled three hours by train, taxi and subway to come to teacher training. I remembered the tears in Brenda’s eyes when showing the gifts teachers brought her at the end of the week: poems they had written her, flowers and a handmade, traditional Chinese dress.

I thought about Susan, the young girl I met at Lion Mountain Church, who came up to me on our first day there and told me she was tired of people making fun of her because she was “crippled.” I remembered how tears filled my eyes as she shared her story and how much it sounded like my own when I was her age. I remembered the shock in her eyes when I pointed to my own legs and showed her that they don’t work very well either and the instant connection we shared that transcended any language or cultural barrier.

I remembered our closing ceremony at the migrant school as I carefully opened each copy of *Oh the Places You’ll Go* and handed it to a child. I pointed to the different messages and pictures from friends at Calvary on the inside cover, and it was as if the people in the pictures were standing right there with us in that moment. I thought of the gratitude and pure excitement on each child’s face as they treasured this book that was now their own.

I heard the laughter, stories and passionate prayers that filled our small hotel room. Not long into the trip, I realized this group had become my family.

I thought about the prays and dreams for Calvary to serve and share God’s love with people in China for so many years now. And I thought about how God’s love permeated every experience we had in China. Even during the times we weren’t able to mention God’s name, He was incredibly present there, in ways I had never experienced before. My heart is still rejoicing at the wonders God has shown us through this journey. “Life changing” are my two words for all the stories, images and memories.

-By Mary Alice Birdwhistell



— A Time in Lebanon —

This summer, Calvary Baptist sent out a team of eight to Lebanon to serve alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ in Dar el Awlad, an all-boys orphanage. I had only traveled abroad once before, but not to the Middle East. I'll admit I was nervous. However, I knew that during this time in my life, I needed to go to Lebanon and live out my faith there for two weeks. Since I've been back I've had numerous inquires about the trip, desiring a summation or a complete, detailed report. I struggle to find the words to speak because, truly, how can you summarize one of the most powerful experiences you know you will ever have?

This was the third time my church had gone to Lebanon. The ones who had been to Lebanon in the past were greeted with embraces and kisses. Being a proud Texan, a handshake was just fine with me. It was powerful to see that the relationship my church had with DeA was strong. As a stranger in a foreign land, being welcomed takes on a whole new meaning.

While my team saw some sights (like Byblos, the Cedars in the north, downtown Beirut), we were there to see the boys. DeA also functions as a school that serves K-6th, but school was out during this time. My team had plans to tutor and do VBS programs with them, but that wasn't the extent of our work. In everything, we wanted to love them, serve them, play with them, talk with them, etc. Essentially, we were there to be with them.

One thing I learned about doing missions was: in whatever you do, whether it's construction, relief work, teaching, etc., if you are not doing what you are doing out of love for God and love for the people you are serving, then ultimately, you are not furthering the Kingdom of God. In 1 Cor. 13:1-3, Paul describes all these noble pursuits he could be doing, like speaking well, having faith, giving away possessions, etc., but he concludes that if he did these things and did not have love, what good was it?

On this trip, I did many works, but I learned that I need the love of God to make God's work last. While playing Risk and Jenga, watching movies and getting to know the boys and the staff members at DeA, the love of God impacted my team, changed us and formed us into more passionate disciples for Christ.

Fireworks were going off around us as we left. The Lebanese love fireworks. At first, I was perplexed by their love for them. By the end of the trip, I felt like they were sending us off in style. I believe I speak on my team's behalf when I write this: if some asked me in five words to give a summary my time in Lebanon, I will always respond with "I'm ready to go back."

-By Tyler Baack

