



# THE FACES OF THE FUTURE CHURCH

## IMPACT REPORT

# WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE HAVE DONE



**Dustin D. Benac,  
ThD**

*Director and Co-founder of the  
Program for the Future Church*

## **Dear Friends and Partners in Ministry,**

The Program for the Future Church (PFFC) is possible because of the thoughtful and hopeful people that join us in this work. Since its inception in July 2021, the PFFC has been an initiative that is at once hyper-local and international in its reach and partnership. We have individuals from New Zealand to the Netherlands who are gathering around the future of the Church, and we also have strong networks in local neighborhoods, institutions, and communities who have linked arms in collaborative partnership. The 2024 Impact Report outlines the measurable and transformative impact that is happening in congregations, institutions, and communities, but I hope, above all else, you will take a chance to see the constellation of connected, collaborative, and creative ministry leaders who are hopeful about the future of the Church.

We have entitled this Impact Report *The Faces of the Future Church* in honor of the many people who have contributed to, enriched, and clarified our work.

As the Director and Co-founder of the PFFC, I have the privilege of interacting with and listening to the stories of many of the people and communities that are profiled here. These people serve a variety of ministerial settings, and their ages and backgrounds differ. Despite the many seen and unseen differences, they come to this work because of two fundamental commitments they share: 1) They long for a hopeful future of the Church; and 2) They believe God is still moving in the lives of individuals and communities. Our work together gives voice to these shared convictions. We are seeing and crafting pathways that give hope to individuals and communities, and as we do, God's grace is made manifest in our lives and in our communities.

Thank you for joining us in this collaborative work. It is a joy and honor to learn with and from the many people who are shaping the Future Church.

Better Together,  
Dustin



# BY THE NUMBERS

Hosted **32**  
convenings with  
more than **500**  
participants

Engaged **75**  
students

Distributed  
**\$80,000** in  
subgrants

Collaborated  
with **11/12** of  
Baylor's colleges

Developed a  
newsletter,  
Future Church  
Fieldnotes, that  
has **1,000**  
subscribers

Secured  
**\$1,145,000** in  
external grant  
funding

Gathered leaders  
in **4** urban  
centers across  
Texas

Partnered with **30**  
congregations or  
organizations that  
resource  
congregations

Engaged **more**  
than **150** leaders at  
the Leadership for  
the Long Haul  
Conference

Published **6** peer-  
reviewed articles,  
with **1** book  
forthcoming

# A PYRAMID OF ENGAGEMENT

# COLLABORATIONS

## PURPOSE

The PFFC engages a network of local and national partners in order to resource and research the future Church. Our work alongside these organizations expands the network that supports theological education at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary and enriches the organizations that are engaged in this transformative work. We are honored to work and learn from these and other partners in ministry.



## ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATORS

- Association for Theological Schools (ATS)
- Baylor University, ISR, Waco
- Calvary Baptist Church, Waco
- Christian Latina Leadership Network, San Antonio
- Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas
- Fellowship Southwest
- First Baptist Church of Marble Falls
- First Baptist Church of San Antonio
- First Baptist Church of Waco
- Hispanic Baptist Convencion, Convencion Bautista, Lubbock
- In Trust Center for Theological Schools
- Lake Institute on Faith and Giving
- Lilly Endowment Inc.
- Ministry Architects
- Mission Waco/Mission World
- Princeton Theological Seminary
- RootedGood
- South Main Baptist Church, Houston
- St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco
- Texas Baptist Women in Ministry
- Texas Methodist Foundation
- The Center for Integrative Counseling and Psychology, Waco and Dallas
- The Congregational Collective



# INDIVIDUAL COLLABORATORS

We are honored to collaborate with a vast network of thought-leaders and change-makers who are enriching and giving guidance to our collaborative work.



Alan Lefever, Angela Gorrell Audrey Martin, Becca Brune, Brad Schwall, Bryan Richardson, Charlie Dates, DeAmon Harges, Deidre Emerson, Don Corley, Eric Carter, Garrett Vickrey, Jack Bodenhammer, Jessie Higgins, Jesse Ricones, Jovan Overshown, Jill Hudson, Jimmy Dorrell, Joe Perez, John Calaway, Jonathan Tran, Kathy Wise, Kenda Dean, Mark DeVries, Matt Homeyer, Matthew Kim, Mignon Jones-Spann, Mike Stroope, Shannon Hopkins, Steve Moore, Steve Wells, Tatum Miller, Ted Smith, Tod Bolsinger, Todd Still

# PROGRAMMATIC IMPACT

**WE EQUIP AND CONNECT CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO  
DISCERN THEIR NEXT STEPS IN WORK AND MINISTRY**

## CONVENING

We are purposefully gathering Christian leaders around the gifts of their communities and the needs of the next generation. Our convenings make meaningful connections between individuals and organizations with common concerns in order to elevate, imagine, and equip leaders to take necessary and needed next steps.



“I think that in getting a room full of leaders together it is so refreshing to know that you are not alone in some of the problems and feelings you are having.”

**-AUDREY MARTIN**



## CURRICULUM

We offer curriculum that equips leaders and their communities to discern the next faithful steps in their ministries in response to change amidst God’s unchanging presence. Through traditional and non-traditional curricular offerings, we provide pathways for students, leaders, and researchers.

“I have lasting connections with people in Waco and beyond who are doing great work, and we can cheer one another on or offer support as we continue. It’s huge to know that we’re not alone in a task that can feel like an uphill battle.” - Student and Community Leader



## CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

The PFFC listens to local communities to discern the pathways for the future of the Church. Our research hubs are collaborative, interdisciplinary, and multi-vocational teams that investigate some of the pressing questions confronting current and future ministry leaders.

To date, our Research Hubs have investigated:  
**belonging, leadership and loneliness, and mental health and burnout.**



“The research hub showed me the importance of making room (space and time) for honest conversations and listening to the wisdom of the people around us.”

- 2024 PARTICIPANT

## COLLABORATION

We have pioneered a model, the Collaboratory, that combines convening, curriculum, and contextual research. The Collaboratory is a theological laboratory for collaboration that provides a context to discern and resource the future of the Church.



“Sometimes we need to be in a group with other people to believe again. This setting really encourages me that we can indeed put our imagination to work and make an impact all together.”

-COLLABORATORY 2023 PARTICIPANT

# GRANTS

## \* Subgrants Distributed

The Program for the Future Church supports catalytic research across Baylor and other institutions that is having a transformative impact in scholarship and in local communities.

### ROUND 1

**Education from a Gardner's Perspective**

**Directors: Stephanie Boddie and Kevin Magill**

**Measuring Love as a Virtue in Adolescent Christian Athletes**

**Directors: John White, Andrea Ettekal, and Brian Gamel**

**Re-Imagining Diversity and Belonging in Christian Communities**

**Director: David E. Wilhite**

### ROUND 2

**Learning in Spanish from the Iglesias of the Future: Immigrant Latino/a Churches in Waco**

**Director: João Chaves**

**Communities of Discernment Project**

**Director: Nicholas Norman-Krause**

**Loving Our Land and Neighbor: International Integral Agroecology Project**

**Directors: Jenny Howell and Matthew Whelan**

### ROUND 3

**Reimagining Congregational Studies through the Lens of Social Capital and Race**

**Director: Jerry Park**

**Understanding the Liturgical Diversity and Flexibility of Young People in Public**

**Directors: Emily Snider Andrews, Nelson Cowan, and Sarah Kathleen Johnson**

**Psychology, Scarcity, and Fortitude**

**Director: Myles Wernitz**





# CATALYST FOR CHANGE WITHIN AND BEYOND A SEMINARY

## \* External Grants Received

- \$1,000,000 grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. for “The Future Church Project”
- \$50,000 subgrant from Princeton Theological Seminary’s “Teaching Spiritual Entrepreneurship Project” to pilot the Baylor Ecclesial Entrepreneurship Program with Mike Stroope
- \$15,000 In Trust grant for a project regarding “Mental Health and the Future Church”
- \$110,000 in capacity building funding from private foundations

## A COLLABORATORY FOR TRANSFORMATION

We are combining research, practice, and transformative gatherings to equip faith leaders and communities to take next steps.



# A RESOURCE HUB

The PFFC is a theological research, resource, and relationship hub. When coordinated and combined, our work creates a virtuous flywheel that is stirring imagination, driving innovation, and kindling hope.



**TEXTUAL**

**CONTEXTUAL  
RESEARCH**

**RESOURCE**

**CURRICULUM**

**RELATIONSHIP**

**CONVENING**

## **AN ONLINE DATABASE OF RESOURCES**

We are regularly developing and distributing new resources that engage the complex and emerging needs of faith leaders and communities. You can access the latest resources online at <https://truettseminary.baylor.edu/programs-centers/program-future-church/resources>



# GRATITUDE



We offer this work in an abundance of gratitude and hope. Thank you for joining with us as we work to build and imagine a hopeful future for the Church.

The PFFC team is comprised of Dustin Benac, Emma Cartisano, Jaida Shoffstall, Juli Kalbaugh, Rachel Burton, Nathan Gibbs and Suzii Paynter  
March

*We are particularly grateful for Jaida Shoffstall's work as the lead designer of this Impact Report.*

# AN INVITATION

The next phase of our work will build upon five pivotal pillars and will deepen our commitment to our five founding pillars. Five strategic priorities will guide the next phase of the PFFC's work. We invite you to join and contribute to our collaborative learning community by signing up for the Future Church Fieldnotes and emailing us at [pffc@baylor.edu](mailto:pffc@baylor.edu).

## 5 PIVOTAL PILLARS 5 CORE VALUES

**1 Leadership:** We nurture imaginative, adaptive, and collaborative leadership.

**2 Next Gen:** We invest in and equip the next generation of leaders and churches.

**3 Lived Experience:** We honor individual's lived experience with existing work in belonging, crisis, loneliness, mental health, and burnout.

**4 Innovation:** We create a context for faithful and hopeful innovation.

**5 Philanthropy:** We celebrate and cultivate a culture of generosity and stewardship.

**1 Collaborative**

**2 Convening**

**3 Conjunctive Imagination**

**4 Context**

**5 Creative**

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Sustain existing and emerging initiatives through strategic partnership and collaboration
- Expand curricular pathways through credit-bearing certificates and degrees
- Develop and launch a Future Church Scholars initiative to support scholarship and shared learning at and beyond Baylor
- Continue collaborative and contextual research as an engine for resource development
- Cultivate an individual donor base to complement existing grant efforts

## THE FUTURE CHURCH FIELDNOTES

A newsletter from the PFFC that provides regular updates, resources, and collaborative opportunities for individuals, church leaders, and communities.

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