

Steven Michael Bezner

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Baylor University, August 2008

Major: Religion (Theology Emphasis), Minor: Philosophy.

Dissertation: “Knowing the World Better Than It Knows Itself: The Theological Hermeneutics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer”

Dissertation Advisor: Barry Harvey

Master of Arts, Hardin-Simmons University, December 1999

Major: Religion, Minor: English

Thesis: “Christ in a World Come of Age: The Christological Connection Between Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*”

Bachelor of Arts, Hardin-Simmons University, May 1997

Major: Bible, Minor: Leadership

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry, George W. Truett Seminary, Baylor University, August 2025-Present

Adjunct Faculty Member, George W. Truett Seminary, Baylor University, Houston and Waco Campuses, August 2019-May 2025

Senior Pastor, Houston Northwest Church, January 2013-May 2025

Pastor, Commons Church, June 2010-December 2012

Teaching Pastor, First Baptist Church Kaufman, April 2001-May 2010

Student Pastor, First Baptist Church Kaufman, August 2000-April 2001

Pastor, Lakeside Baptist Church Breckenridge, February 1998-August 1999

SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

Books

Published:

1. *Your Jesus Is Too American: Calling the Church to Reclaim Kingdom Values over the American Dream*. Brazos Press, 2023.
 - This book attempts to reframe evangelical Christianity apart from political and patriotic categories and instead situate it within a Kingdom framework suitable for pastoral application.

- Brazos Press is the trade imprint of Baker Books, targeting pastors and thoughtful laypersons. The book incorporated a reworking of some earlier material from my doctoral dissertation on Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Under Contract:

1. *Bonhoeffer for Pastors: Kingdom Vision During Cultural Upheaval* (under contract with Baker Academic Press; manuscript is due September 1, 2028).
 - This monograph argues that the concept of “vision” within churches is not optional but should not be marked predominantly by metrics and corporate speak. Instead, the vision of the local congregation should be shaped by a vision of the Kingdom of God. Drawing from several contemporary examples in the free church and baptistic churches, I demonstrate how moments of cultural upheaval create openings for outside visions to commandeer congregational life and argue that the Kingdom provides the framework necessary to resist such a takeover.
 - I use a lesser-known essay of Bonhoeffer’s to provide theological scaffolding for the concept of the Kingdom of God, arguing against both a temptation towards otherworldliness and Christian secularism, instead opting for a theology that both cares for the world and simultaneously relies on the power of God.
 - I presented an early outline of this book to the faculty of George W. Truett Theological Seminary in October 2025 and a slightly adjusted version to the Southwest region of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion to favorable responses with helpful feedback for incorporation.
2. *The Ministry Mentors: Best Practices for Pastoral Leaders* (under contract with Baker Academic Press; manuscript is due in 2029).
 - I am co-authoring this book with Dr. Matthew Kim, Director of the PhD in Preaching at George W. Truett Theological Seminary.
 - The book will feature 30 best practices for pastors in congregational ministry. While a practical monograph in many ways, the book will incorporate insights from a variety of pastoral theologians.

Invited and Editor-reviewed Scholarship

Accepted, In Progress:

1. “Us and Them,” in *Power, Politics, and the Way of Jesus*, ed. Caleb Campbell (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2027). (2,827 words.)
 - Pastor Caleb Campbell wrote *Disarming Leviathan: Loving Your Christian Nationalist Neighbor* with IVP in July 2024. This volume is a companion to that book and is designed to help congregations navigate the relational dynamics of a church working to love those within the church who have Christian Nationalist tendencies or outright beliefs.
 - My chapter focuses on the practice of enemy love as a tool to overcome hatred, drawing both from the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18, along with Jesus’s High Priestly Prayer in John 17, urging congregants to look through the perceived

differences we find in our ideological beliefs and instead find a foundation for love within our common connection in the love of Christ.

Peer-Reviewed Publications:

1. "Capital Punishment: A Pastoral Perspective," *Christian Ethics Today*, Issue 64 (Jan 2011), Page 10. (2,243 words.)

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Submitted, Under Review (both journals are on Truett's approved tenure materials list):

1. "Unexpected Treasures: Bonhoeffer's Kingdom Vision for Congregational Life," submitted to *Word and World*, August 2026. (3,632 words.)
2. "Reframing Pastoral Vision: The Place and Necessity of the Kingdom of God for Congregational Direction," submitted to *Practical Theology*, August 2026. (5,975 words.)

Mission-Driven Publications:

1. "Feasts Amid Fasting," *Ever Approaching Dawn: A Lenten Devotional for the Season of Easter*, *Christianity Today*, Spring 2026, pp. 12-15. (612 words.)
2. "Behavior Opens the Door to Belief," The Daily Grace Co. Blog, thedailygraceco.com, February 13, 2026. (957 words.)
3. "Voices: Concerns about Israeli Government Lobbying Churches," Baptist Standard, baptiststandard.com, October 2025. (477 words.)
4. "Fire is Fine, But Follow the Fruit," Baptist Standard, baptiststandard.com, September 2025. (653 words.)
5. "Pastor, Please Don't Endorse a Candidate," Baptist Standard, baptiststandard.com, July 2025. (994 words.)
6. "Not Neutral, But Independent," Baptist Standard, baptiststandard.com, May 2025. (1,122 words.)
7. "Spurgeon for Plumbers," For the Church, ftc.co, June 2018. (1,402 words.)
8. "Be a Small Town Pastor," For the Church, ftc.co, June 2018. (895 words.)
9. "Please Clap: The Dangerous Addiction to Compliments," For the Church, ftc.co, May 2018. (849 words.)

10. “The Weight of Pastoral Glory,” For the Church, ftc.co, August 2017. (831 words.)
11. “The Church, Politics, and Bonhoeffer’s Way Forward—Part III: Start at the Bottom and Work Your Way Lower,” For the Church, ftc.co, August 2017. (1,054 words.)
12. “The Church, Politics, and Bonhoeffer’s Way Forward—Part II: The Kingdom Maker,” For the Church, ftc.co, August 2017. (1,169 words.)
13. “The Church, Politics, and Bonhoeffer’s Way Forward—Part I: The Primacy of Prophecy,” For the Church, ftc.co, August 2017. (1,589 words.)
14. “Pastor, Don’t Forsake the Goodness of Deep Friendships,” For the Church, ftc.co, July 2017. Republished at baptiststandard.com, August 2017. (729 words.)
15. “Voices: A Pastor, An Imam, and A Rabbi Sit Down at a Bar,” Baptist Standard, baptiststandard.com, June 2017. (1,496 words.)
16. “In Pursuit of a Multi-Ethnic Church,” For the Church, ftc.co, November 2016. Republished at baptiststandard.com, April 2017. (667 words.)
17. “Pastors, Stop Texting Your Church Members,” For the Church, ftc.co, October 2016. Republished at baptiststandard.com January 2017. (558 words.)
18. “The Idea That Changed The World,” For the Church, ftc.co, May 2016. (1,812 words.)
19. “Fervent for Grace, For the Church, ftc.co, September 2017. (1,536 words.)
20. “He Is Your Praise,” For the Church, ftc.co, March 2017. Republished at baptiststandard.com, February 2017. (672 words.)
21. “A Hope for Overcoming Racial and Ethnic Division,” Baptist Standard, baptiststandard.com, November 2016. (689 words.)
22. “The Thing About Old People,” For the Church, ftc.co, February 2016. (1,265 words.)
23. “The Slippery Slope of Vision Salesmanship: Casting Vision Without Feeling Icky,” For the Church, ftc.co, January 2016. (1,282 words.)
24. “On Being Matt Chandler’s Roommate,” For the Church, ftc.co, November 2015. (1,213 words.)
25. “Cleverness and Wisdom,” For the Church, ftc.co, September 2015. (818 words.)
26. “The Spectacle of Preaching,” For the Church, ftc.co, September 2015. (1,331 words.)

27. “I Didn’t Learn Anything at Church Today,” For the Church, ftc.co, September 2015. (725 words.)
28. “The Spectacularly Ordinary Ministry of My Wife,” For the Church, ftc.co, June 2015. (609 words.)
29. “The Greatest Miracle of All,” For the Church, ftc.co, June 2015. (502 words.)
30. “Bonhoeffer and the Costly, Enjoyable Kingdom,” For the Church, ftc.co, May 2015. (947 words.)
31. “Serving in Obscurity,” For the Church, ftc.co, April 2015. (754 words.)

Scholarly Presentations

1. Currie-Strickland Lectures on Christian Ethics. Tentative Title: “Power Unplugged: A Christocentric Approach to Power Dynamics.” To be delivered at Howard-Payne University, Brownwood, Texas, January 26-27, 2027.
2. “In Defense of (the Right Sort of) Pastoral Vision: Bonhoeffer as a Kingdom Guide During Cultural Upheaval.” Southwest Regional NABPR, Dallas, Texas, March 2026.
3. “Übermensch or Stellvertretung?: The Competing Anthropologies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” Southwest Regional AAR, Dallas, Texas, March 2006.
4. “Ontological Obedience: Examining Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Hermeneutics of Nonviolence in Light of the Bruderhof Community,” National AAR, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2003.
5. “God’s Vulnerability: Impassibility and Passion in the Thought of William C. Placher,” Southwest Regional AAR, Dallas, Texas, March 2001.

Invited Talks, Workshops, Panels, and Sermons

1. Invited Speaker, “Religious Liberty and Christian Nationalism,” Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, September 23, 2026.
2. Invited Speaker, Leader Training, Valley Ranch Baptist Church, Coppell, Texas, August 8, 2026.
3. Sermon: “Service,” First Baptist Church of Bryan, Texas, July 19, 2026.
4. Sermon: “Fasting,” First Baptist Church of Bryan, Texas, June 14, 2026.
5. Sermon: “Cast of Characters,” First Baptist Church of Hamilton, Texas, June 7, 2026.

6. Sermon: “Fully Invested,” Chalk Bluff Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, May 3, 2026.
7. Sermon: “Under the Colonnade,” University Baptist Church, Clear Lake, Texas, April 26, 2026.
8. Sermon: “The Sweetness of Grace,” Wallace Pack Unit, Navasota, Texas, March 22, 2026.
9. Sermon: “Surrendered to Presence,” The Perfecting Church, Sewell, New Jersey, March 15, 2026.
10. Invited Speaker, Life Group Leader Training, First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas, March 1, 2026.
11. Sermon: “You Feel Me?” Truett Chapel, February 10, 2026.
12. Invited Speaker: “Radical Discipleship,” First Baptist Church, Abilene, Texas, January 31-February 1, 2026.
13. Invited Speaker: Bible Summit, “Ephesians,” First Baptist Church, Kaufman, Texas, January 4-7, 2026.
14. Sermon: “Light of the World,” Valley Ridge Baptist Church, Lewisville, Texas, December 28, 2025.
15. Sermon: “Discovering Discipleship,” Park Lake Drive Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, December 14, 2025.
16. Sermon: “Kingdom Generosity,” Story Church, Houston, Texas, December 7, 2025.
17. Facilitated Staff Retreat for FBC Woodlands (w/Dr. Poe-Hays), November 11-12, 2025. Topic: Pastoral Resilience.
18. Sermon: “Unity Among Diversity,” Coastline Church, Seattle, Washington, November 9, 2025.
19. Invited Speaker at Dallas Baptist University Global Religious Freedom Gathering, October 2025, Topic: Religious Freedom.
20. Invited Speaker at Pastors Common Gathering, Abilene, Texas, October 2025, Topic: Kingdom Preaching in Divided Times.
21. Invited Speaker at Beyond Us Missions Conference, Waco, Texas, October 2025, Topic: Kingdom Church Planting.

22. Invited Speaker at Truett Seminary Faculty Colloquium, October 2025, Topic: Bonhoeffer for Pastors
23. Sermon: “The Limits of Grace,” October 12, 2025, Crossbridge Church in Sugar Land, Texas.
24. Invited Speaker for Park Lake Drive Baptist Church, October 8, Topic: Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*.
25. Invited Speaker at University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Christian Studies Forum, “Death and Life,” September 2025, Topic: Christian Nationalism
26. Park Lake Drive Church in Waco, and Valley Ridge Church in Lewisville.

Thesis and Dissertation Committees

Director of D.Min. Project. Pheobe Barron. “Foundational Practices for Mindsight: Helping pastors Hone Agency in the Life-Long Transformational Process Through the Lens of New Creation and the Method of Internal Family Systems.” (in progress)

Director of D.Min. Project. Daniel Lumpee. “The Bible and the Newsfeed: Preaching, News Consumption, and Formation in a Media-Saturated Age.” (in progress)

TEACHING ACTIVITY

At George W. Truett Theological Seminary:

- Leadership for Congregational Ministry (LEAD 7303), (Fall 2025, Spring 2026, Summer 2026, Fall 2026). An overview of personal, congregational, and organizational leadership strategies and tactics useful for the leadership of a local congregation in a Baptist or free church context.
- Living the Kingdom (DMIN 7320), (Fall 2022, 2025, 2026, Spring 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). An advanced discipleship course helping D.Min. students construct a paradigm for church members to learn to follow the Way of Jesus as described by the Kingdom of God.
- Mentoring in Ministry (MENT 7900), (Spring 2026, Fall 2026). Professor of record for supervised ministry apprenticeships. Student and professor record meet regularly.
- The Business of Ministry (LEAD 7302), (Spring 2022). An overview of basic business components within congregational ministry, emphasizing things like budgets, staff leadership, and congregational vision.
- Studies in Historical Theology: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (THEO 7364), (Fall 2020). An overview of the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer with selected readings from a broad selection of his writings.
- Texts and Traditions III (THEO 7360), (Fall 2019). An overview of the modern period of theology, beginning with Friedrich Schleiermacher, continuing through modern theologians such as Barth and Niebuhr, and concluding with contemporary theological approaches.

At B.H. Carroll Theological Institute:

- Systematic Theology (circa Fall 2006). I am unable to locate the records for this course, but I taught two sections of Systematic Theology for B.H. Carroll on the campus of First Baptist Church, Kaufman, Texas.

At Baylor University:

- Graduate Teaching Assistant, 1999-2000.
 - Assisted in teaching Old Testament Survey (no longer listed, but like REL 1310), covering led exam reviews for undergraduate students, graded reading reflection assignments.

GRANTS/AWARDS/HONORS

Bethge Scholar, International Bonhoeffer Society, April 2004. Studied in Berlin at the Bonhoeffer Haus as part of this award.

SERVICE**Academic Service**

Pastoral Trainer, “Faith and Global Engagement Initiative,” March 2026-Present.

- Part of an MOU between Truett and GlocalNet (a subsidiary of the Center for Public Faith).
- Funded by a grant from the Gates Foundation, this program is designed to train pastors in processes surrounding navigating diplomacy and public square ministry through meetings with diplomats and government officials in Washington, D.C.

Vice-President, National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, Southwest Region.
Elected March 2026.

Professional Affiliations:

American Academy of Religion
Association of Ministry Guidance Professionals
International Bonhoeffer Society
National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion

Truett Service

Member, Committee for Diversity and Belonging, 2026-27.

Ministry for Life Pastoral Cohort Coordinator, 2026-2027.

Sermon Coach, Sermon Grow Retreat, Lanier Theological Library, Houston, Texas, June 1-3, 2026.

Member, D.Min. Committee, 2025-26.

Banquet speaker for the ADME annual meeting at Truett Seminary on April 17, 2026.

Served as part of the Truett Black Student Association “Seven Last Words of Christ” service on March 30, 2026.

Represented Truett during a meeting for the Center for Public Faith in Washington, D.C., March 26-27, 2026.

Attended Truett Preview Dinner on March 5, 2026.

Taught D.Min. “Integration of Theology and Practice” for DMIN 7330 for two combined Waco cohorts and again for Amarillo cohort (Both Fall 2025 and Spring 2026)

Participated in a Truett recruiting webinar with Matt Berry and Alan LeFever, December 2, 2025.

Attended Texas Baptist Annual Meeting in Abilene, Texas, November 16-18, 2025.

Taught D.Min. “Theological Writing and Reflection” for incoming D.Min. students (Nov 5, 2025)

Assisted with Parchman Lectures October 27-28, 2025.

Attended Truett Preview Lunch on October 17, 2025.

Invited Speaker for Pine Cove Forge while on Truett/Baylor recruiting trip October 13-14, 2025. Topic: “Kingdom Living.” Coordinated a visit with Matt Berry and Recruiting during that visit on afternoon of October 13.

Participated in D.Min. Interview for Prospective Student on October 10, 2025.

Attended weekly Truett chapel services.

Co-facilitated a weekly covenant group with other Truett faculty and staff members.

Hosted two prospective Truett students in my office for individual Q&A sessions.

Baylor Service

Helped lead/facilitate a multi-faith immersion trip to Houston with John Barton and the Office for Spiritual Life, October 8-11, 2026.

Participant, Interfaith Missio, Institute for Faith and Learning, Fall 2026.

Helped facilitate a multi-Faith retreat for Baylor undergraduate students at Camp Greene with Andre Basea and the Office for Spiritual Life on April 18, 2026.

Attended President's Prayer Breakfast, Truett Great Hall, August 12.

Church Service

Led College Bible Study, First Baptist Church, Waco, March 4 and 18, 2026.

Civic Service

Attended LaPuerta strategy luncheon on

Attended LaPuerta Fundraiser on October 9.

Board Member, Institute for Global Engagement. Meeting in Keller, Texas, on November 7. (IGE is an organization working with global policy makers to advocate for religious liberty abroad.)

Coordinated GlocalNet Annual Summit for Church Planting in Washington, D.C., November 13-14, 2025.