

Longhorn BSM dedicates new facilities

April 27, 2021

The Longhorn Baptist Student Ministry dedicated its new building in Austin on April 17, dedicating the space to God and celebrating the legacy of the longtime ministry to students at the University of Texas.

In-person attendance at the event was limited to fewer than three dozen participants due to COVID-19 restrictions, but the event also was livestreamed on the [Longhorn BSM Facebook](#) page.

The BSM celebrated its new facilities, the first two floors of a high-rise student apartment building close to the UT campus. The building sits on the site of the former BSM building, on land sold to the apartment complex in 2017. The Longhorn BSM was founded in 1919 and is one of the oldest Baptist collegiate ministries in the state.

The sale of the previous building and land provided an endowment fund that will pay for the full operations of the new building and for other BSMs around Texas.

“We celebrate God’s provision in this space where we’ve been doing ministry for 100 years and we get to see the vision and the plan for the next 100 years,” said Cody Shouse, director of the Longhorn BSM.

Attendees included former Longhorn BSM directors, local church pastors, Texas Baptist staff, current and former students, and others whose lives had been impacted or who had made an impact there.

'Great cloud of witnesses'

Mark Jones, director of the Texas Baptists' Center for Collegiate Ministry, honored Joyce Ashcraft, associate director of the Center for Collegiate Ministry, and thanked her for her hard work in orchestrating the new building.

Jones presented to Ashcraft, who will retire this summer after more than 44 years in collegiate ministry, a watercolor painting of the mural at the Longhorn BSM, which depicts iconic Austin scenes and the BSM.

Ashcraft recognized those who came before to lay the foundations of the BSM, citing Hebrews 12:1-3 as she described "the great cloud of witnesses" who have made the BSM possible.



Joyce Ashcraft, associate director of Texas Baptists' Center for Collegiate Ministry, tells the history of the Longhorn BSM. (Texas Baptists Photo)

"While this building is new and contemporary and dedicated to engaging students to reach people around the world, it's because of the people that came before that we are able to be here today," she said.

Ashcraft particularly pointed to Richard "Rick" Spencer, who served with

the BSM 45 years and died in 2017. The prayer room in the new building is dedicated in his memory, and his wife Vicky attended the dedication.

“His love for God’s word he instilled in all the students. ... He is an example to us and we want all students to know that he was one of the great cloud of witnesses that came before,” Ashcraft said.

The prayer room also features a stained-glass window from the former BSM building that was stored at Woodlawn Baptist Church two years until it could be installed.

‘A blessing ... for years and years to come’

Former BSM director Dan Crawford, who served from 1976 to 1982, spoke fondly of the old building. A group of alumni and former BSM staff gathered at the old building the night before the demolition, sharing memories and reminiscing about the past, he said.

Everyone who had been a part of the BSM in the past prayed for a bright future for those who would come after them, he said.

“We, as alumni and former staff, wish for this building to be even more of a blessing for them than it was for us, for years and years to come,” he said.

Speakers also included Marcy Martinez, associate director of Longhorn BSM; Craig Christina, associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; Brian Lightsey, lead pastor of Life Church; Daniel Gao, elder at Austin Christian Fellowship; David Kemerling, director of Longhorn BSM 1990-1999; and Russell Allen, lead pastor of Woodlawn Baptist Church.

Shouse emphasized the prayer of churches, staff, alumni and students is

the reason Longhorn BSM has been blessed throughout its ministry.

“Why do we have a 100-year-old ministry? Why do we have the space that we have and the proximity so close to campus?” It’s because people have prayed for us. For a long time, people have been praying for us,” Shouse said at the end of the service.

“So, I ask you to continue praying for us so that we can continue doing the great work that God has called us to do on these 40 acres here in Austin.”