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Retreat! Robert Lee Baptist Church hosted a Ladies Retreat on Saturday, August 19. Attendees were able to listen to speaker Heather Johnson as well as music provided by Amber Bosworth.



The Meaning of Education

By James M. Decker

I'm writing this after the first day of school at Stamford ISD. It is also the first day (or near to it) for many other communities in my readership. I have previously written that the first day of school is a New Year's Day of sorts in a community. For our family, it is a New Year of larger proportions, because our oldest daughter just started kindergarten.

We cannot separate the topic of improving rural communities from the topic of education within those communities. Public education has been a political flashpoint in the last few years, both in Texas and elsewhere. I rarely engage with that discourse, because most of it nauseates me and little of it actually concerns the improvement of education in rural communities.

Several years ago, I wrote about a semi-viral conversation on Twitter in which a rural business owner lamented that few graduating seniors planned to stay in his local community. This person treated it as a grievance: the local taxpayers had paid for the education and the inconsiderate youths didn't care enough to stick around and thank their elders for the gift of their education. I took a different approach to that topic. I asked whether local businesses and community leaders had created job opportunities, promoted the type of skills that would keep those students, or given them any reason at all to stick around or return one day.

I turn to our frequent friend Wendell Berry. To no one's surprise, Wendell has written many times on the topic of education. His perspective never fits within any "Republican" or "Democrat" notions of the education question. In an essay entitled "Thoughts in the Presence of Fear," Berry writes:

"The complexity of our present trouble suggests as never before that we need to change our present concept of education. Education is not properly an industry, and its proper use is not to serve industries, either by job-training or by industry-subsidized research. Its proper use is to enable citizens to live lives that are economically, politically, socially, and culturally responsible. This cannot be done by gathering or "accessing" what we now call "information" – which is to say facts without context and therefore without priority. A proper education enables young people to put their lives in order, which means knowing what things are more important than other things; it means putting first things first."

Berry has often referred to the "industrial education" model, which churns out masses of new workers for The Economy without care or concern for the places in which those workers originate. It's a core part of the emptying of rural America after World War II. We built an economic system that couldn't care less about the roots in place and community. To supplement it, we built an education system to serve that economic system. As a result, workers (which is to say "people") gather en masse in the places that the economic system has determined to be

winner of The Economy. Then our politicians wonder why the remaining places have declined.

I am thankful that in places like Stamford, we have school teachers, administrators, and staff who care about their place. Many of them grew up in Stamford, have family roots here, or have chosen this as the place to raise their own family. That matters to the future of a place. I am glad that our daughters will be educated by those people. I do not think that rural public education could survive without folks like them.

As community leaders, we should be ever mindful that the larger education forces are not designed to serve our communities. State and federal policymakers and the special interests who back them are rarely interested in places like Stamford. To the extent our schools are the collateral damage of their larger goals, them's the breaks. They are certainly not interested in enabling the youth of Stamford to "live lives that are economically, politically, socially, and culturally responsible."

It is incumbent on the local community to ensure that we do just that, through every facet of

education—at school, at home, at our cultural institutions, and in the community. By doing that, and by uplifting our local educators who truly care about those notions, we can properly educate the next generation in the important manner that Berry describes. We can raise something more than a mass of new workers for The Economy. We can strengthen the tie between education and place. In doing so, we can build a community that is worthwhile for an educated youth to stay or return.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and

the Rural Church and State and West of 98 podcasts. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.

Governor, TxDOT announce transportation investment

Governor Greg Abbott announced a record \$142 billion in total investment for Texas' transportation infrastructure. The record investment includes the unanimous adoption of the \$100 billion 10-year statewide roadway construction plan with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for

Area Churches Invite You to Worship

Bronte

Bronte Church of Christ

PO Box 346
118 S. Jefferson • Bronte
Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm

Central Baptist Church

324 S. Franklin • Bronte
(325) 473-4811
Dale Patterson, Pastor
Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am & 5 pm Worship

First Baptist Church

424 S. Washington • Bronte
(325) 473-2331
firstbronte@gmail.com
Pastor George Cooper
Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
10:30 am Worship
Wednesday 6 pm - 8 pm
Children and Youth

Bronte Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
Bronte • (325) 650-4836
Pastor Keith Fletcher
Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship

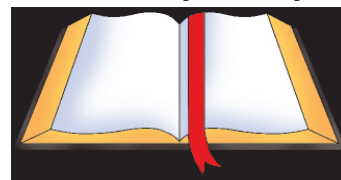
St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte
(325) 365-2687
Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor
Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am
4C Cowboy Church
Drawer R • Bronte • (325) 895-4080
Robert Lemmond, Pastor
Sunday, 10:30 am - Texas Theater
Wednesday Bible Study 6 pm -
4C Feedlot Youth Building

Coke County

Pecan Baptist

PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of
Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy
(325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor
www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am & 7 pm, Worship



Robert Lee

Bible Baptist Church

PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin
Sunday 10 am Sunday School,
11 am and 5 pm Worship,
Wed 5 pm Bible Study

Emmanuel Pentecostal

PO Box 794 • 1004 Hillcrest
Pastor Brantly Robertson
(972) 841-2009
Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm

First Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am Worship,

Iglesia Bautista Betel

101 Houston • Robert Lee
Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School
11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm

Southside Church of Christ

PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston
Robert Lee (325) 453-2176
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am Worship

Northside Church of Christ

PO Box 508
9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee
(325) 453-2685, (325) 763-2118
or (325) 473-1053
Services: Sun. 10 am

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

601 W. 10th, Robert Lee
(325) 365-2687

Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor
Saturday Vigil Mass 6 pm

Robert Lee Baptist Church

PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th
(325) 453-2724
Chris Walls, Pastor
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
11 am Worship
Wed. 6:30 pm, Prayer Meeting
Victory Assembly of God
(325) 453-2208, PO Box 638
202 E. 6th Street, Robert Lee
Rev. Rocky Youngblood, Pastor
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship
Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study

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