

Local leaders discuss, pass policy at annual meeting

Coke County was represented at the meeting of the state's largest farm organization in December. Four delegates from Coke County Farm Bureau traveled to Corpus Christi where they helped shape the future of Texas Farm Bureau (TFB). They included John Ross and Meredith Copeland, John E. Stephens, and Hal Spain.

"Texas Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization. Every county matters, and the needs of the entire state are considered by the voting body," John Ross Copeland, Coke County Farm Bureau president, said. "We're proud to send people to the TFB Annual Meeting each year to ensure Coke County voices are heard and our concerns are addressed."

Voting delegates at TFB's 85th Annual Meeting focused their attention on food labeling and regulatory control of

imitation meat and dairy products. The discussion concluded with delegates believing cell-cultured protein should not be labeled as meat, nor should any mixture of cell-cultured and live-animal meat. Eminent domain and electronic logging devices also topped the list of issues discussed by delegates.

The TFB Annual Meeting includes district meetings for members, a business session, exhibits from each company offering TFB members benefits and young farmer and rancher competitions offering prizes and scholarships to TFB member-families.

"It's more than a meeting. It's the gathering of farmers and ranchers from across Texas," John Ross said. "In some ways, it's a family reunion. But the most important actions are those that promote and strengthen Texas agriculture."

out there, and some churches that you feel the presence of God before you walk in. But if you are feeling that church is just something we do and not getting anything from it or if you have stopped going or if you have never gone, I am talking to you. Pray up, let God have all of you, seek Him in all you do, and maybe you will be the one that sparks the fire of the next great revival in your city. Jesus is waiting. I love y'all. To be continued...



On Town Halls and Tocqueville

by James M. Decker

Why has the American experiment persisted and thrived for so long, even in spite of our society's flaws and missteps? Why have other nations attempted to copy the American system, only to see it fail to launch or struggle to sustain it in a stable manner?

In part, it's the uniquely American concept of local government and town meetings. Some nations have imposed an American model from the top down, resulting in abject failure. From the beginning, the American model was built from the bottom up. The term "United States of America" is not accidental. We are not a single nation divided into arbitrary state-level jurisdictions; we're a group of states who banded together to form a larger nation.

In 1831, French diplomat and political scientist Alexis de

Tocqueville embarked on a tour of American society. This tour spawned his classic two-volume work, "Democracy in America," which is essentially a study of how and why America works. After witnessing town meetings in New England, Tocqueville wrote, "a nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions, it cannot have the spirit of liberty."

He went as far as to say that "town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it."

On February 7, 2019, the spirit of liberty was on display in Stamford, Texas. A group of community leaders organized a town hall meeting to discuss the future of healthcare in Stamford (stemming from our hospital closure and the nationwide rural hospital train wreck, as discussed in my last essay). Using a Q&A format, this meeting brought the elected hospital board to the citizens at a neutral location that would be welcoming to all.

We can all think of stereotypes of local town hall meetings. One stereotype is of leaders showing up to face an empty room, while citizens are too busy or uninterested to attend. Then there's the stereotype of an incensed room full of people, asking angry questions and ranting against their town and/or their elected officials, usually in front of television cameras.

In Stamford, over 200 locals attended and submitted questions for an hour and a half. There were supportive questions. There were skeptical questions. There were hard and

unhappy questions. No one walked away with a final solution, but I walked away thinking that the community wants to fix its healthcare struggles.

A town's problems aren't solved by rants and angry clashes that divide a town into warring factions. Problems aren't solved by a detached, disinterested populace that doesn't bother to show up to meetings and waits on someone else to fix the mess. I've written of the perils of a lukewarm attitude—a disinterested group of citizens is the embodiment of that lukewarm attitude.

Where are a town's problems solved? They're solved in the town meetings described by Tocqueville and exemplified by the citizens in Stamford on February 7. They're solved by leaders who care and who communicate to the citizens and who listen when the citizens communicate to them. They're solved by citizens who care to show up, who express their opinions, and who hold their leaders accountable. Town meetings are not always fun for leaders. Sometimes you get hard questions. Sometimes the citizens evaluate your job performance in a very public manner and it can be uncomfortable to hear. And yet, all of it is vitally important. Tocqueville's findings in 1831 remain accurate in 2019. By bringing liberty into the people's reach, town meetings make us all better and embody the spirit on which America thrives.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and city councilman in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

Just Jesus Folks

by Rev. Brandon Broadbent
Bible Baptist Church,
Robert Lee

If Jesus came to your church and told you "I'll be here next week" and you and your members told everyone you knew, because it's Jesus the Lord of Lords, King of Kings and the media got a hold of it and sent a crew. Either way they would have a story. The people would come, some desperate to meet Him, some needing healing, hurting people praying it's true, others just to scoff and laugh. But, they would come. The Bible says in 1 John 2:6, "He that say He abides in him ought himself also to walk, even as He walked". If we are Christians, then should we not mirror our Lord? So, if we do where are the people?

People are still looking for Jesus. They may not realize it, but if you look at what society is searching for it's a connection to the spiritual. They no longer seek it in the church but with psychics and crystals and the occult. A true move of God stirs things so deep and true that it strips away the traditions of men and the hardened facade that we have hidden ourselves behind so no one will see the true, small, broken people that are trying to portray something that we have little understanding of.

We can play church all day, but it is time that we get to know God. Not just know about God but to know God. If you just know facts about something you still have no relationship. It is just one sided. The person that you know all the facts about still might not know you. I beg you to get in a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is

easily summed up. "I LOVE YOU." It is written to you, He has done all these things that you may come to Him and that He can save you, change you, protect you, heal you. It's not just for the other guy...it's for you.

So, if we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love our neighbors as ourselves as Jesus commanded, will the people not come to see Jesus. We can have real power, real change, and real love in ourselves. Then the church will be His church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

I know that there are a lot of true men and women of God

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