

THE **WORD**
AND
THE **WORLD**

Article No.39

BY COREY ESTEP

Pastor, Liberty Baptist Church

►► Recently, some men from our church and I went to repair a few soft places in the floor of our church building. We expected it to be a three-hour task, at most. When we began pulling up carpet, we discovered that the perceived problem was only the beginning. Beneath the carpet we found the subfloor and joists to be infested with termites. A three-hour fix had officially turned into a weeks-long project.

From the surface, things looked fine. But underneath, deterioration had been quietly spreading.

That same sort of thing can happen in our lives.

Because so much of life runs on routine, it's possible to keep going through the motions without ever stopping to examine what's happening within us. We learn how to maintain the outward patterns and keep up appearances. We put on a smile, go to work, attend church, care for our families, and tell people that everything is fine. Yet beneath the surface, we are anything but fine. For many, the smiles and the activity become a layer that is used to mask the bitterness, guilt, pride, fear, or hidden sin that's slowly eating at us.

The Bible does not encourage us to ignore what is hidden. Psalm 139:23-24 records David's prayer: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

This passage is what one preacher called a "dangerous prayer." It's not dangerous in the sense that it poses some threat to our well-being; it's dangerous to our pride, because we may not like everything God reveals when He does His search. The fact is, it's easier to cover a problem than to confront it. But in the same way that covering damaged wood doesn't make it sound, concealing the problems of our heart doesn't make the heart whole.

Jesus repeatedly warned against concentrating only on outward appearances. In Matthew 23:25-26, He confronted people who carefully cleaned the outside while ignoring what was within. Jesus wasn't interested in just making people *look* respectable. He came to transform people from the inside out.

The good news of the gospel is that we do not have to repair our hearts by ourselves. In fact, we can't do it ourselves. Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again so that forgiveness and new life could be offered to us. When we confess our sin, we're not telling God anything He doesn't already know. We are bringing our brokenness to the One who can cleanse and restore.

Maybe there's something beneath the surface of your life that needs attention. Don't keep trying to cover it up. Deal with it by bringing it honestly before God. Meet with a trusted Christian friend or pastor. Take whatever steps obedience requires.

Surface appearances may fool other people, but that isn't healing. Invite God to search your heart, then trust the grace of Jesus Christ to address what He reveals.

Corey Estep is the Pastor at Liberty Baptist Church, located at 1714 W 20th St., Pittsburg, KS 66762. He can be reached by email at pittlibertybaptist@gmail.com or by phone at (620) 392-3247. The church holds services on Sunday Morning Worship Service - 11 am; Sunday Evening Bible Study - 5:30 pm; Wednesday Night services - 6 pm.

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Crawford County certifies primary election results

GIRARD CITY COUNCIL MEETING - AUGUST 14, 2026

BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► Crawford County commissioners began Friday morning as the Board of County Canvassers, certifying the results of the August 4 primary election before returning to regular county business that included a proposed subdivision street improvement district, financing for two Sheriff's Department vehicles and another discussion about gravel road maintenance.

County Clerk Lisa Lusk, serving as county election officer, walked commissioners through challenged and provisional ballots before the final results were certified.

Voters had until the canvass to "cure" certain problems with provisional ballots, such as providing identification or correcting voter information. One voter came in on the morning of the canvass to complete a change of address, raising the number of provisional ballots recommended for acceptance to 86.

Of those, 52 involved voters who had moved within their voting district, two involved name changes, 10 resulted from office, clerical or technical errors, seven involved voters who received the wrong party ballot, 12 were cast at the wrong polling place and three involved voters who had been mailed an advance ballot but instead voted at the polls.

The seven voters who received the wrong party ballot received only a partial count, allowing their votes on the constitutional question to be counted but not votes cast in races for the incorrect party.

Another 73 ballots were recommended for rejection. Those included 43 advance ballots returned as undeliverable, three postmarked after Election Day, four with missing or mismatched signatures, four involving office, clerical or technical errors, two in which the voter failed to provide identification and 17 involving voters who were not registered or had moved out of the jurisdiction.

Commissioners unanimously accepted Lusk's recommendations.

Lusk also reported that the required bipartisan post-election audit found no discrepancies. As directed by the state, selected races and precincts were hand-counted, including the Democratic U.S. Senate race in Frontenac Fourth Ward, the Republican County Commission District 1 race and Republican Kansas House District 2 race in Girard First Ward, the constitutional amendment vote in Beulah and the Democratic governor's race in Frontenac Fourth Ward.

"Everything came out perfect," Lusk said of the audit.

The county recorded 7,116 ballots before the accepted provisional ballots were added. Lusk said turnout at that point was 25.5%, which she described as higher than normal for a primary.

Commissioners reviewed the zero tapes showing that voting machines began Election Day with no votes recorded, along with results tapes from polling places, early voting and advance ballots. Election staff then opened and scanned the accepted provisional ballots before producing a final report.

The Board of Canvassers unanimously accepted the final results, making Crawford County's August 4 primary results official. No change in the outcome of any race was announced during the canvass.

After closing the Board of Canvassers meeting, commissioners Bruce Blair, Tom Moody and Carl Wood opened their regular commission meeting.

During public comment, Becky Willard provided commissioners with proposed language prepared by her group addressing data centers, cryptocurrency and Bitcoin operations. Willard said data centers and nuclear facilities had been left out of the proposed county zoning regulations, though the material she presented Friday dealt specifically with data centers and cryptocurrency-related operations.

Representatives of several organizations serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities also thanked commissioners and county taxpayers for mill levy funding.

Leslie Lackamp, area director for Mosaic in Southeast Kansas, said most of Mosaic's county funding supports its community-based day services, allowing clients to participate in activities, develop interpersonal skills and work toward community employment.

Erin Fletcher of Special Olympics Kansas reported continued growth in Southeast Kansas. Regional bowling participation increased from 250 athletes and 28 volunteers in 2025 to 320 athletes and 47 volunteers this year. Fletcher also said Special Olympics Kansas received a Rural Transformation Grant that will allow the organization to hire a person in Southeast Kansas focused specifically on athlete health, screenings and navigating health care services.

Rosie West, director of New Hope Services in Pittsburg, said county funding helps pay for day-service activities and transportation. Bob Davis of CLASS LTD. said its allocation also helps with transportation and allows the organization to supplement services for private-pay clients who otherwise could not afford all of the assistance they need.

County Counselor Jim Emerson presented a petition to establish a street improvement district in the First Replat of Trowbridge's 2nd Addition. The subdivision contains eight lots, and seven of the eight property owners had signed the petition. Emerson said organizers had been unable to contact the remaining owner before submitting it. The preliminary cost was estimated at approximately \$23,000.

Emerson explained that approval begins a formal process in which property owners will receive notice and have 20 days to protest. If owners representing more than 51% of the affected property protest, the district would be defeated.

The existing road is gravel. County officials said Road and Bridge staff inspected it and found the base to be in good condition, requiring relatively little additional work before asphalt could be placed. Property owners would pay the material costs, either up front or through assessments over as many as five

years, and the county would eventually take the completed road into its maintenance system.

The proposal also prompted another discussion about whether the county should continue providing its own labor and equipment at no charge for similar subdivision improvements.

Wood said rising fuel, labor and equipment costs make the current practice increasingly difficult to justify and suggested the county establish a point after which future developments would also have to cover those expenses.

Blair agreed that a policy discussion is needed, particularly to avoid developers creating subdivisions with private roads and later leaving homeowners to ask the county to improve and maintain them.

Commissioners approved the resolution necessary to begin the street improvement district process.

Commissioners also approved the lease-purchase financing for two Dodge Durangos for the Crawford County Sheriff's Department. Emerson said several financial institutions submitted bids, with Labette Bank offering the low rate of 3.95%. The agreement is for 36 months and includes the county's standard non-appropriation language. Commissioners approved Resolution 2026-029 authorizing the chairman to execute the lease-purchase documents.

Blair reported that discussions continue through the regional planning committee regarding potential funding for local infrastructure projects that do not fall under traditional KDOT programs.

He also updated commissioners on the Materials Alliance Zone of Kansas proposal presented to the commission earlier this summer by Tim Dawsey. Blair said the effort to encourage polymer-related manufacturing and employment opportunities in Southeast Kansas appears to be gaining interest from other counties and state officials. The commission previously provided a letter of support for the effort.

Blair also said he is gathering additional information about data centers as the county continues reviewing its proposed zoning regulations. A western Kansas county dealing with proposed data center development was preparing to hold a town hall meeting, and Blair said he may either attend or obtain information directly from officials involved.

Wood asked whether regional planning resources could help the county pursue grant funding for a major road project he has been discussing. Commissioners agreed to connect county representatives with regional planning staff, noting that the scale of some rural road projects makes outside funding necessary. The discussion again touched on heavy truck traffic on county roads. Wood said trucks using rural roads as bypass routes can damage roads that were not designed for that type of traffic, an issue commissioners have discussed repeatedly in recent meetings.

McCune-area resident Glen Peak again addressed Blair about the condition and grading of gravel roads in Blair's

"Everything came out perfect."
— **County Clerk Lisa Lusk said of the election audits.**

commission district. Peak has previously questioned the county's grading practices and again argued that gravel washed into roadside ditches should be pulled back onto the roadway with graders.

Blair said Road and Bridge crews are working throughout a large district while dealing with staffing shortages, mowing, asphalt work and lingering repairs from storm washouts.

"I don't think I'm going to be able to make you happy today," Blair told Peak. "I can't tell you anything except if you want me to lie to you... They're doing the best they can with the staffing I have at this point."

Peak continued to argue that the current grading method was ineffective. "You've got to change the way you're doing it," Peak said. "What you're doing is not working. That's all I can say."

Blair said the county is moving employees from location to location as needs arise and that crews are performing ditch work, though not necessarily in the specific locations Peak is observing. "We've had this conversation countless times, and I understand," Blair said. He also pointed to similar road maintenance challenges in surrounding counties, saying the basic problem is a large rural road network and too few employees to address every location as quickly as residents would like.

Commissioners held several closed executive sessions during the meeting. One 15-minute attorney-client session involved legal advice concerning mental health. Commissioners also met under attorney-client privilege regarding budget matters and a property-related issue. The board later held a 15-minute executive session under the non-elected personnel exception to discuss an employee's job performance with County Counselor Jim Emerson and Register of Deeds Sandy Casey. No action was announced following the executive sessions.

Commissioners scheduled an August 18 work session with Zoning Administrator May Smith to continue work on the county comprehensive plan and zoning regulations. The commission also has an 8:30 a.m. work session that morning to sign mid-month bills and payroll vouchers.

A work session with Bukaty is scheduled for 9 a.m. August 25, followed by a 9 a.m. budget work session August 28.

Commissioners also announced that more than one commissioner may attend a "Speed Planning" session from 8:30 a.m. to noon August 27 at Block22 with Explore Crawford County Executive Director Sarah Runyon and Greenbush.

The county's 2027 budget hearing remains scheduled for 10 a.m. September 15.

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