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SANCTITY OF *Life*

not just an idea,
but a call to action

By **SETH BROWN** | *BR* Content Editor

phrase
“Sanctity of
Human Life” is a
compelling call-to-action.

Three decades ago U.S. Presi-

dent Ronald Reagan issued a proclama-
tion designating Sunday, Jan. 22, 1984, as
National Sanctity of Human Life Day.

In the statement he mourned the
millions of unborn lives destroyed by
abortion since *Roe v. Wade*, the Jan. 22,
1973 Supreme Court decision to legalize
the practice nationwide – “a tragedy of
stunning dimensions.” He also called on
Americans to use the day as an opportu-
nity to express thanks for the gift of life
and reaffirm the value of all humans.

Ebbs and flows of ‘Sanctity of Human Life’

Since Reagan’s proclamation, the Sun-
day on or nearest Jan. 22 has fallen in and
out of federal recognition, depending on
the personal views of the presiding U.S.
president.

Some churches and other pro-life
organizations continue to commemorate
the date each year with special events,
sermons, literature and other resources,
but the mobilizing power of the day
in the life of evangelical congregations
seems to have been waning.

Declining interest turned upward
mid-2015 when graphic, undercover
videos revealed that Planned Parenthood

Federation of America, the largest abor-
tion provider in the country, had been
selling aborted fetal parts. People across
the country reeled at images of Planned
Parenthood employees haggling over
prices and examining dismembered fe-
tuses. The emotional jolt heightened the
urgency for evangelicals to use political
means to end the practice of abortion.

“The church of Jesus Christ should
recommit ourselves to speaking out for
human dignity,” said Russell Moore,
president of the Ethics and Religious Lib-
erty Commission (ERLC), in a blog post
shortly after the videos were released. “It

See Sanctity page 6

As Sanctity of Human Life
Sunday approaches, Jan. 17,
Christians across North Caro-
lina are mounting an effort to elect public
officials with pro-life values. The move-
ment signals a resurgence in the political
engagement once associated with the
annual memorial.

Some evangelical congregations have
allowed the day to become routine, but
for many Southern Baptists in 2016, the

Evangelism in the SBC

The fact that we recognize Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is a profound statement on the lostness of North America. Whether a Christian is a Democrat or a Republican, this conversation should not be necessary. But it is, because too many have a higher allegiance to political preferences than to the truth of scripture. The bottom line is lostness exists at every level of society – voters and leaders are blinded by man’s unredeemed sin nature.

Southern Baptists have been talking about pervasive lostness and decreasing baptisms for decades. What are we doing about it? More talk is meaningless, even if that talk is lamenting the demise of personal evangelism.

I want to offer some encouraging signs.

North Carolina native Dennis Nunn leads “Every Believer a Witness” (EBAW) training events in churches across the Southern Baptist Convention. Now based in the Atlanta area, Nunn is one of the strongest, most effective equipers of church-based witness training. Many North Carolina churches have used EBAW effectively.

In a recent e-newsletter to supporters and friends of his ministry, Nunn pointed to the low number of baptisms in our churches. He said, “Not since 1947 have Southern Baptists baptized so few a number of people! ... and that is not good. What can be done? We have three choices: do nothing, do the same things we’ve been doing or do something new.”

What are we doing to help the people in our churches reach their friends, family and acquaintances? I fear that we are leaning heavily on “choice one” and “choice two.”

Clayton King is a widely used communicator in Baptist life. He is uniquely gifted to reach young audiences with the gospel and motivates them to share Christ in their circles.

On Tues., Dec. 29, Clayton sent a text message to me with great news about the response of teenagers where he spoke the day before. I called him to get more information.

For at least five years the Georgia Baptist Convention has sponsored a year-end youth evangelism conference. King was the keynote speaker at three of these. This year the conference was labeled “Move15” and was held in the Macon CentrePlex. The sold-out event drew 7,500 youth and church leaders.

King said, “We saw a tremendous response to the gospel. I think everybody was surprised at the youth and adults

that responded.” Early estimates by youth pastors who served as counselors said 1,000 to 1,200 made first-time commitments to follow Christ.



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

The message he preached addressed addiction, depression, identity and other issues that students face. In the first of two sermons he preached on the subject “Stronger,” which is the title of his recently released book.

“Our weakness can push us to our knees and help us see how much we need God, so I preached from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10,” he said. “*Our weakness is a pathway to God’s strength.*”

A few days later on Jan. 1, King sent another text to me. He said on New Year’s Eve at Liberty University’s Winterfest in Lynchburg, Va., 975 students responded to the gospel. He wrote, “God has saved over 2,000 people in the past 4 four days. It’s been the biggest harvest I’ve ever seen. Over 22,000 people responded to the gospel in 2015.”

This is very encouraging. We may be seeing a new movement among younger generations. I hope so – I pray so.

Todd Houston, senior pastor of Beach Road Baptist Church in Southport, invited me to participate in a very unique church event that was born out of a vision for personal evangelism.

The church’s pastors were looking for a way to launch the new year with a focus on personal evangelism.

“In our planning we kept coming back to the understanding people must have – that everything is based on the Word,” Houston said.

“Also, we wanted to emphasize to those who struggle with personal evangelism, that the power is not in our performance of delivering the gospel. The power is in the message of the gospel itself – it’s in the Word.”

Since the foundation for evangelism is the truth scripture, they asked the church family to do two things.

First, everyone should read through the Bible in one year. That is not unusual, but the second part of the strategy is different. The church reserved 77 consecutive hours for the public reading of the entire Bible beginning Thursday, Jan. 7 at 7 a.m. and concluding on Sunday morning, Jan. 10 in the 10 a.m. worship service. They called it “Rise 2016.”

Houston said, “The Bible emphasizes the reading and the hearing of the Word. We recruited the readers, and we asked the church to sign up to come and listen. For 77 hours someone was reading the Word, and we had people in the sanctuary hearing the Word.”

The goal of the church leadership is to have a specific biblical principle as the target of every ministry and event.

“This was more a focus on getting God’s attention than getting the church’s attention,” Houston explained. “We tried to say to God, ‘We are consecrating ourselves – setting ourselves apart – to be committed to Your Word this year.’”

The pastor preached only one sermon – the Sunday before – to introduce the event. He said Mark 2:1-5 reports that Jesus went into a house in Capernaum and large crowds gathered to hear him. The large crowd caused some men to pull the roof back and lower their sick friend into the home.

When the people heard that Jesus was in the house, so many people gathered that everyone could not get in the house. Houston said, “So many times in church we get focused on filling the house. That should never be our focus. We should focus on the verse that says, ‘Jesus was in the house.’ When He is in the house, the house is filled. The people weren’t drawn to a place; they were being drawn to a person.”

The result was that sins were forgiven, lives were changed. That’s evangelism, said Houston.

The pastors asked, “How will people know that Jesus is in the house? How do we experience the manifest presence of Christ?”

“The most tangible way we can do that is to fill the place with the Word of God,” Houston said. “So, that’s what we did.”

They began by reading Psalm 119, then went to Genesis and read through the

Bible with the exception of two segments. The letter of Ephesians and the last chapter of Revelation were read in the Sunday morning worship service as the conclusion of Rise 2016.

James Zik, Beach Road’s pastor of discipleship, evangelism and administration, said, “The purpose was for us to come into 2016 to give an offering to the Lord; to let Him know that we are unashamedly committed to His Word, and we want to align our lives with it.”

He said Rise 2016 was all about “God’s Word and the lost.”

When the invitation went out for “readers” to cover the 77 hours, 75 men responded. He said, “As we were talking through this, we thought that men should lead out because for so long, men have abdicated their spiritual roles in the home,” He said it wasn’t that women couldn’t participate, but that it is “time for men to step up and lead.”

Houston added, “One thing we did not anticipate is how this has emboldened the men.” Many men that were not heavily involved in the church volunteered to be a reader. Their wives came to support them as they read the Bible.

“Many women wept and said, ‘I have never seen my husband do anything like this before.’ It really encouraged the men,” he said. “It moved them from being spectators to being participants.

“I don’t think I have ever personally been involved in anything where the church was more excited. The church and the community will be talking about this for a long, long time.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Contact Todd Houston at Pastornth@gmail.com.) **BR**

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Relationships help reveal the gospel to others

As I have reflected on 2015, I was reminded just how great of a year it was for North Carolina Baptists and the strides we have made in creating a disciple-making culture across our state.

When we first launched the strategy of impacting lostness through disciple-making in January 2014, we knew that we had quite a bit of work ahead of us. We knew that this would greatly change the way we approached and engaged in ministry. Yet as I travel across North Carolina, I am finding that more pastors and church members are more intentionally engaging in disciple-making efforts as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

I am finding that more and more people understand their calling as personal disciple-makers. This calling is about more than growing the institution of the Church. It is about the people of the Church growing to become disciples who will share the gospel with others, see others come to faith in Christ, help those individuals grow into mature follow-

ers of Christ and then make even more disciples.

The disciple-making process involves taking time to develop and build genuine relationships with others. It involves investing time with them and pouring our lives into theirs. This is what the Apostle Paul expressed in his words to the church at Thessalonica that he not only shared the gospel with them, but he also shared his very life with them.

Those words of Paul expressed in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 serve as the theme and the theme verse for this year's disciple-making conference, which is titled "Reveal." It is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 29 at Lawndale Baptist Church in Greensboro. This year's conference will have a special focus on how to invest our lives in others and view our relationships through the lens of disciple-making.

The conference features an exciting lineup of speakers including Chuck Lawless of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Bruce and Lori Frank of Biltmore Baptist Church in Asheville; Dhati Lewis, a pastor and



church planter in Atlanta; and Jerry McCorkle of Spread Truth Ministries. In addition to the main sessions, the conference will include a number of practical equipping sessions to help you disciple others within your sphere of influence.

I hope to see you at this year's disciple-making conference as together we prayerfully seek to be used of the Lord to share the gospel and our lives with others in order to make disciples of all nations. This will be a great opportunity for both staff and lay leaders to receive information that will help them become more effective in discipling others as together, we work to create a disciple-making culture.

"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us" – 1 Thessalonians 2:8. **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

IN FOCUS A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Great Commission families

Last words are meant to be lasting words, words that make an impact – and Christ's Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 certainly does that!

As a Southern Baptist, I am committed with my brothers and sisters in our convention to obeying the Lord Jesus' last words. As a Great Commission people, we rightly focus on the "outer edges" of lostness, the underserved and unreached people groups of the world.

We are told that there are 7.3 billion people on planet Earth, with 11,489 distinct people groups.

Of these, 6,832 are "unreached people groups" totaling a shocking 3.78 billion persons who have either inadequate access or no access to the gospel. Such people will likely be born, live, die and spend eternity separated from God without ever hearing a clear presentation of the gospel.

It is right, even imperative, for us to

See Families page 13



DANNY AKIN
Guest Column

Is gun control a Christian issue?

President [Barack] Obama has announced his intention to tighten the nation's gun control laws through executive action. This action, of course, comes in the wake of the terrorist attack in San Bernardino, Calif., as well as numerous mass shootings over the past several years. I am often asked, "Is gun control a Christian issue?" After all, some might ask, if we are truly pro-life should we not also be as adamant about gun control as we are about abortion control? Is the gun control debate simply one that we should ignore?

First, let me in full disclosure say that I hold to traditionally conservative views on the Second Amendment as a personal and individual right. Like every other constitutional right, this right is not unlimited or all expansive, to be sure. We rightly do not allow private citizens to own surface-to-air missiles, for example. But I'm suspicious of gun control measures as naïve and ineffective, if not counter-productive, preferring to combat gun violence with strict enforcement of laws against gun crime and murder rather than with measures to impede the ability of law-abiding citizens to own weapons.

That said, I recognize that there are many, including orthodox evangelical Christians, who disagree with me on my general opposition to more gun control. This should not divide us.

I hold my Second Amendment views for different reasons and with different conviction than I hold my First or Second Commandment views. My views on the issue are informed, I hope, by my conscience as a Christian, which is to be shaped by scripture and the church. But it is not a "Thus saith the Lord" command with the authority of scripture.

I do not think that our debates over gun control are debates over whether or not we will be pro-life. The question of gun control is a different question than the question of gun violence itself. The gun control debate isn't between people who support the right to shoot innocent people and those who don't. It's instead a debate about what's prudent, and what's not, in

solving the common goal of ending criminally violent behavior. That's why orange-vested National Rifle Association members and Birkenstock-wearing vegan gun-control advocates can exist, as the Body of Christ, in the same church without excommunicating one another.

Wherever one stands on gun control, no one is denying the personhood of gun victims or their right to be protected from

violence. Whatever one thinks about gun control, no one in the American debate today supports selling guns to those who intend to kill. The question instead is how to prevent guns from being used criminally. Some think gun control measures are a necessary way to do this; others think such laws are averting the real issue. This is quite different from the abortion debate where one side denies the personhood of those subject to lethal violence.

Just because the gun control debate is different from, for instance, the abortion debate, and just because Christians disagree on guns for law-abiding people, this doesn't mean the debate itself doesn't

pose real lessons for the church. Consider why, for instance, gun control continues to be so divisive as a culture war issue.

The parts of the country that are most like the context of most of revolutionary America, rural and agrarian, are also the parts of the country most resistant to gun control legislation. That's certainly not just a "southern" thing. Metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia, Chicago and Seattle tend to support rigorous gun control. But rural Pennsylvania, Illinois and Washington state are almost as pro-gun rights as rural Alabama. Even socialist U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders often opposed gun control legislation in his career, because his rural Vermont constituency wouldn't have it any other way.

If one lives in a community where people know one another, trust one another, and can call an neighbor (armed, if necessary) to help where needed, crime rates tend to be lower. This

See Gun page 13



RUSSELL MOORE
Guest Column

WMU-NC names former missionary as new leader

Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina

Amy Pardue Boone, pastor's wife and former church music minister and missionary, has been elected executive director-treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC). Most recently, Boone was adult ministry consultant for National WMU in Birmingham, Ala., where she worked with churches to start WMU organizations, wrote curriculum materials, led conferences across the nation, and wrote two of the new online courses offered by WMU.

Boone, a graduate of Samford University with a bachelor of music education, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with a master of arts in religious education, served with husband Mike as an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary to Mozambique and South Africa for 14 years.

"We are elated to welcome Amy aboard during this exciting time for WMU NC," says Barbara Hill, Chairperson of WMU-NC's Search Committee. "Our goal was to find the person whom God wanted for WMU-NC, and I believe we accomplished this goal. Amy has a passion for missions and an energy that is contagious."

While in Mozambique, she led a weekly WMU group and a weekly English fellowship, taught literacy classes, organized a baseball evangelism ministry, and led a Bible correspondence course in the local prison. Amy became fluent in Portuguese and compiled and recorded local hymns which were distributed to new churches, which she and her husband helped start. Amy is the author of *Stones from the Riverbed: Experiencing God's Grace in Mozambique*.

In South Africa, she worked in a special needs school, writing curriculum, training teachers and leading weekly Bible lessons. She was instrumental in raising funds and coordinating the construction of a school to move the handicapped children out of the tin shacks in which they were meeting. Amy worked among the amaXhosa people and studied isiXhosa for one year.

Each school holiday, she led in many Vacation Bible Schools for which she wrote curriculum. She also worked in the local elementary schools teaching Life Skills classes and leading music in the weekly worship service in the public school. She trained Sunday School teachers and taught music and ministry at

Cape Town Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition, she was involved in many human needs programs for the poor in the townships.

Prior to her missionary service, Amy was minister of music at Ephesus Baptist Church in Raleigh, minister of youth at Salemburg Baptist Church and music and Bible teacher at Harrells Christian Academy.

Born in Louisiana, she spent many of

her formative years in North Carolina, where her father, James Pardue, served as pastor at Lillington Baptist Church and First Baptist Church in Clinton.

In addition, during the Boones' last missionary furlough, they served as missionaries-in-residence at Gardner Webb University in Boiling Springs. Although not born in North Carolina, this is where

Amy has spent a great deal of time. She claims N.C. as her "adopted" state.

Upon resignation from the IMB due to family health issues, Boone served as an Indian education instructor for the Lawrence County (Ala.) Board of Education and ministered through her church, Mount Hope Baptist, as children's ministry team leader, part-time minister of music and served with her husband who has been pastor.

The Boones have two grown children, Timothy and Grace. Both are recent graduates of Carson-Newman University. Her son is on staff at First Baptist Church in Knoxville.

He will begin seminary in the fall to pursue a degree in pastoral counseling with his wife, Miranda. Her daughter, Grace, is preparing to go to graduate school to study social work.

"WMU-NC is blessed to have been God-led to an executive director-treasurer whose array of missions experience aligns with our mission 'to challenge, prepare, and equip Christian believers to be radically involved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission,'" says WMU-NC President Dee Dee Moody. Amy will begin her ministry with WMU-NC this month. **BR**



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Abortion is the anti-gospel

By DANIEL RITCHIE | Guest Column

You are going to have a healthy baby boy.

Those are the words every expectant couple wants to hear. But what happens when a couple gets the most stomach-churning news imaginable – news that there’s a medical issue with the tiny little baby growing in his mother’s womb? Parents start to ask questions. Will my baby be okay? What will our little boy’s life be like? How will this boy’s health affect our lives? Will it all be worth the struggle?

A set of parents I know had the same questions race through their minds. They brought a tiny little boy into the world – born without arms.

In the face of all those fears, these parents were told the little boy would be helpless and entirely dependent on their care for the duration of his life. The news was grim as doctors painted a picture of

toil and frustration in the life of this boy.

Fear and worry flooded their hearts, but for all the bad news, these parents were resting on good news. God loved this little boy. God fearfully and wonderfully made this little boy. God had a plan for this little boy. They shoved fear and doubt to the side and embraced the little boy God had given them.

Parenthood as the gospel

The realities of the gospel are intoxicating in the book of Romans. In Romans 5:6, Paul writes, “*While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*” Christ died for us when we were spiritually helpless. He takes those who are helpless and broken and redeems us. And not only does he rescue the spiritually helpless, but the physically helpless as well.

While the gospel reveals a Savior who lays down his life for those who ran from him, abortion reveals humans extinguish-

ing a life we were meant to love and protect. As you scan the pages of scripture, it is clear that abortion is the anti-gospel.

Abortion says,

- Unborn babies have value only as expendable commodities.
- Each baby is only a clump of tissue, devoid of any purpose or life.
- There’s not a place for you in my plan right now.
- Disability limits a chance at any manner of a quality of life.

But the gospel says,

- We have tremendous value as God’s image-bearers (Genesis 1:27).

See Abortion page 9



Daniel Ritchie, seen here with his wife, was born with no arms. He rejoices he is made in the image of God. (Contributed photo)

N.C. abortion accountability measures took effect Jan. 1

By SETH BROWN | BR Content Editor

New provisions in a North Carolina abortion law took effect Jan. 1. Those provisions require doctors to submit reports to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) whenever a pregnancy is terminated after 16 weeks.

The Women and Children’s Protection Act of 2015, signed into law by Gov. Pat McCrory, says that doctors performing an abortion after the 16-week threshold must provide ultrasound images and measurements that verify gestational age to DHHS.

North Carolina bans abortions after 20 weeks, except in the case of a medical emergency. In such cases, the law requires doctors to record and submit reports that determine a medical emergency existed.

Other provisions of the law have already taken effect, including a required

72-hour waiting period before an abortion can be performed.

Those in opposition to the law cite privacy concerns, due to the requirements for data collection and transfer. Melissa Reed, director of Planned Parenthood Votes! South Atlantic, said the new demands for women’s personal medical information are “completely inappropriate,” according to *The News & Observer* of Raleigh.

The information in the reports “shall be for statistical purposes only,” according to the law, and will remain confidential under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, commonly known as HIPAA.

Supporters say the reports allow regulators to hold abortion doctors accountable.

Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the North Carolina Values Coalition, told Raleigh’s WRAL that she believes some doctors are illegally performing abortions after the state’s 20-week threshold.

“The state is guaranteeing that the abortion industry is abiding by that law, that babies past 20 weeks have the right to live unless there’s a medical emergency,” she said. “Any time a child is murdered past 20 weeks, this law will make sure that the abortion industry is held accountable.” **BR**

EVERY CHURCH AN ACTS 1:8 CHURCH

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8 ESV).

Those familiar words of Jesus have resonated in our ears during the Christmas season when most of us have focused on giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. But how about as the New Year begins?

Are we willing to consider that we have a task bigger than giving in order to enable others to go?

Imagine if your local church were the only church on the earth. If that were true, how much more urgent would the command of Jesus be for your congregation? Who in your church would be responsible for developing a strategy for reaching the world with the gospel? How would your budgeting priorities change? Who would be training others for making disciples and sharing Jesus? What activities are you doing that would suddenly take on less importance? What are you not doing that would suddenly become a priority? What greater role would prayer take on in the life of your congregation? How would you see the world around you differently in terms

of the lostness we encounter every day?

This is exactly where the early church was when Jesus gave the command of Acts 1:8. These new disciples were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and experiencing the power of God in their lives. They were not equipped to accomplish this command on their own, but from the beginning God promised that His power flowing through them would be enough for the task. As we read Acts it is amazing to see how quickly and powerfully the gospel spread. By the time we come to Acts 17, it is interesting to see that when Jason is taken before the city leaders of

Thessalonica, the charge from those who were upset was simply, “*These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also*” (Acts 17:6 ESV).

I suspect that if every church were an Acts 1:8 church the world would take notice the same way the people of Thessalonica did, and the world would truly be different than it is today. Our goal should be for every church to be an Acts 1:8 church.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Steve Hardy is a contract worker for the Office of Great Commission Partnerships with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact him at shardy@ncbaptist.org or (800) 395-5102, ext. 5654.)



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Sanctity

Continued from page 1

is time for the reborn to stand up for the unborn.”

Despite the recent uptick in attention, the value of human life is not a new idea for Christians. It has a rich theological foundation in Christian history, as some Baptist leaders have illustrated. (pages 10-11) The doctrine of the *imago Dei* – an ancient Latin phrase that means “image of God,” referring to the belief that all people are created in God’s likeness – provides the framework through which Christians understand human life, according to Tony Merida, pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh.

“Because God made all people, all people matter,” said Merida. “They are worthy of dignity, value and love.” It’s with that understanding that Merida goes on to say, “The unborn should matter to us – we should defend them and advocate for them.”

Pro-life advocacy as political engagement

Given the socio-political climate in America – 40 years after *Roe v. Wade* indefinitely attached legal issues to the abortion debate and only seven months since the provocative Planned Parenthood videos – many evangelicals think about defending and advocating for the unborn primarily in terms of legal and political restrictions on the widespread practice of abortion.

The United States will hold national elections in November, and the president of the country holds a position of influence in the cultural battle over abortion. Understanding the election’s importance, a group of Christians in North Carolina, including many Southern Baptists, is mobilizing to help elect a presidential candidate that shares their values regarding unborn children.

The North Carolina Values Coalition (NCVC) and the Susan B. Anthony List (SBA) have joined together in an effort to rally a large number of North Carolina voters to cast their ballot in favor of pro-life candidates. They are organizing a team of paid field directors and canvassers to knock on 675,000 doors across the state, asking voters questions and disseminating information about pro-life issues.

The team is undertaking the mobilization effort in three phases, according to Kami Mueller, director of communications for NCVC. First, they’re using voting records and other information to identify households likely to describe themselves as pro-life. Canvassers then

fan out across cities and neighborhoods, meeting residents and asking a series of questions to help determine whether or not the residents are indeed pro-life.

At time of publication, the group has already initiated the process, contacting nearly 70,000 North Carolina households.

After primary elections in early 2016, where voters will nominate preferred candidates from their respective political parties, the second phase includes

public advocacy by the canvassing team to inform voters about the views of the two presidential candidates on the pro-life issue. The SBA endorses and supports multiple campaigns, which are listed on their website, sba-list.org/candidates.

The team of canvassers will return to neighborhoods across the state in the third phase of mobilization to encourage residents to exercise their right to vote.

Mueller said high voter turnout in North Carolina for 2016 will likely secure a pro-life candidate, but that doesn’t make the canvassing effort easy. Planned Parenthood is paying canvassers to blanket the state as well, she said. They held a rally Jan. 5 in Raleigh to encourage opposition to a congressional bill that could defund their organization. President Barack Obama vetoed the bill Jan. 8 that would have cut 90 percent of federal money allocated to Planned Parenthood.

Tami Fitzgerald, NCVC executive director and board member for the ERLC, said, “Informing voters so that they elect a pro-life president is one of our top priorities. And that is why our organization is out there knocking on doors of pro-life voters who don’t think their voice matters. As we meet with people at their doors across the state of North Carolina, we are seeing them get motivated to vote, realizing that they can make a difference.”

She continued, “As Baptists, we don’t often act on our belief that because our Father God is the Creator of all life, life is precious and sacred. We are offering opportunities for Baptists and all believers to act on their pro-life beliefs by knocking on the doors of their neighbors, so they will get out and vote in November. We do this in a strategic and highly effective way. We ask you to join us as we take proactive steps to protect the vulnerable unborn babies who are needlessly murdered in the womb.”

To make the pro-life campaign as effective as possible, field directors create strategies for canvassers using new technologies to streamline the process.

“Everything is digital,” said Mueller. Canvassers use a smartphone app to input questionnaire answers and other logistical information.

Answering the call-to-action

Mueller emphasized that opportunities are still available for Southern Baptists to get involved. The group is currently hiring full-time and part-time field directors and canvassers from now until election day, Nov. 8.

There are other upcoming events organized by evangelicals to mobilize voters on behalf of the unborn as well.

The ERLC and Focus on the Family are hosting a first-annual pro-life conference for evangelicals Jan. 21-22 in Washington, D.C. The event will complement the longstanding pro-life rally March for Life that will take place Jan. 22.

Since 1974, the year after *Roe v. Wade*, Christians have marched in the nation’s capitol to advocate for the unborn. March for Life began with 30 concerned citizens but drew hundreds of thousands of people in 2015.

“The value of human life isn’t just an issue for Congress or activists or ethics professors,” said Moore on the Evangelicals for Life website. “It’s an issue for

every single Christian and every single local church.”

One popular North Carolina Baptist, Franklin Graham, is touring the country “to challenge Christians to live out their faith at home, in public and at the ballot box” in a campaign called Decision America Tour. (see page 12) The tour aims to visit all 50 states, and has already stopped in Iowa, Florida and Louisiana.

The Cultural Impact Tour (CIT) is a series of events organized by Mark Harris, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte, that began in 2015 and will continue in 2016. The tour calls pastors and church leaders to spur Christians into action. Harris told a crowd in November about a tool CIT is offering that helps churches discover – using publicly available information – how many people in their congregation are registered to vote and how many actually voted in the last election.

NCVC and SBA have also organized a gathering Feb. 15 called the Carolina Values Summit to provide voters an opportunity to hear from state and national candidates. The event will be held in Halton Arena on The University of North Carolina at Charlotte campus. Visit CarolinaValuesSummit.com for tickets. **BR**



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God ranks high in New Year's resolutions

By LISA CANNON GREEN | LifeWay Research

When Americans make New Year's resolutions, a better relationship with God ranks almost as high as better health, according to a study by LifeWay Research.

And for many groups, faith actually outranks health. Older Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics and Christians are all more likely to say they've made resolutions about God than about health.

Overall, 57 percent of Americans report making health-related New Year's resolutions in the past while 52 percent say they've addressed their relationships with God. Those were the top two responses in a LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 Americans.

"We don't hear a lot of talk about it, but a relationship with God is still something people want," said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research. "They have time at the holidays to think, and they realize what they didn't do last year – things they value but are not living out. So they start the year with an aspiration to change."

Topics of resolve

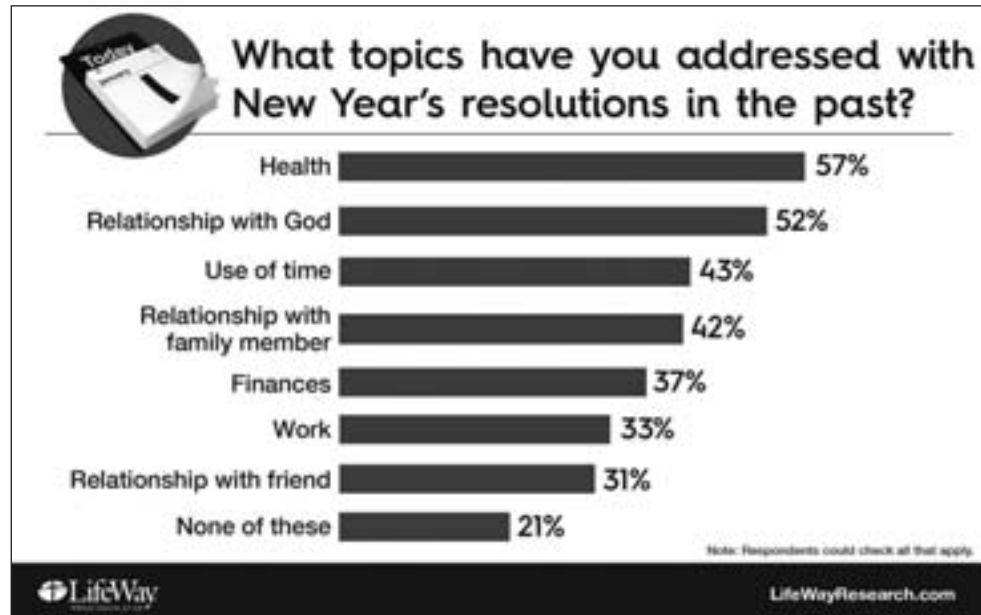
While health and faith are the leading topics for New Year's resolutions, Americans also report addressing their use of time (43 percent), relationships with family members (42 percent), finances (37 percent), work (33 percent) and relationships with friends (31 percent).

Many of the issues overlap as people aspire to improve themselves, McConnell said.

"Use of time is probably the best measure of priorities," he said. "And investing in a relationship with God may encourage people to address other priorities as well, such as spending time with family or fixing their finances."

More than one in five Americans (21 percent) say they haven't made New Year's resolutions on any topic mentioned in the survey.

Men appear less resolution-minded than women, according to the survey. A quarter of men report no resolutions, compared to 17 percent of women. Mean-



while, women are more likely than men to say they've made resolutions about their health (62 percent vs. 52 percent), relationship with God (58 percent vs. 47 percent) and use of time (47 percent vs. 39 percent).

Resolutions of faith

Americans with evangelical beliefs are among the most likely to make New Year's resolutions about their relationships with God. Faith trumps health by a wide margin for them: 72 percent say they have made resolutions regarding God while 56 percent have addressed their health.

Most evangelical believers (51 percent) also report having made New Year's resolutions about their use of time.

"For an evangelical, faith should be integrated into every area of life," McConnell said. "Not every resolution will be about having a relationship with God, but their relationship with God should be affecting what they do in other areas."

In contrast, only 43 percent of those who do not hold evangelical beliefs have made New Year's resolutions about their relationships with God, and 39 percent have addressed their use of time.

Resolutions about a relationship with God are widespread among African Americans (73 percent) and Hispanics (63 percent). In addition, 61 percent of Christians, 59 percent of Southerners and

56 percent of Americans 55 and older say they have made resolutions regarding God.

"In January we always hear about health-related resolutions. We don't hear as much about people's concern for their relationship with God," McConnell said.

"But this research shows faith has a prominent place in New Year's resolutions. Many people want to take steps to make God a greater part of their lives."

Methodology: The phone survey of Americans was conducted Sept. 14-28, 2015. The calling utilized random digit dialing. Fifty percent of completes were among landlines and 50 percent among cell phones.

Maximum quotas and slight weights were used for gender, region, age, ethnicity and education to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.6 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. Evangelical beliefs are defined using the National Association of Evangelicals LifeWay Research Evangelical Beliefs Research Definition based on respondent beliefs.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Lisa Cannon Green is senior writer for Facts & Trends magazine, factsandtrends.net, published by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.) ■■

Spend month in prayer

By ART TOALSTON | Baptist Press

January is a distinctive month of prayer across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). It is a time when a readiness to pray can gain new traction in churches, large or small, urban or rural.

Listed as the "Call to Prayer" on the SBC Calendar, it gained momentum from the 2010 Great Commission Task Force report adopted by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., and was placed on the SBC calendar as an annual focus during the convention's 2011 meeting in Phoenix.

This year's theme is "In All Things Pray," drawn from the familiar 2 Chronicles 7:14 passage, the journal *SBC LIFE* of the Executive Committee noted in its Winter 2015 issue.

The theme and key emphases for this year's Call to Prayer were developed with input from the PrayerLink network of state convention and SBC entity prayer leaders. The website *inallthingspray.net* provides numerous prayer resources developed in concert with PrayerLink partners, including downloadable artwork for this year's emphasis.

Key points of prayer for January are family, community, church, nation and world.

"My heart is thrilled that thousands upon thousands of Southern Baptists will begin 2016 in prayer," said SBC President Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas.

"Never in my lifetime have we needed to call out to God more than today. In my own church, we are entering into a major 21-day journey in prayer and fasting. Therefore, we stand with you to pray for ourselves, our churches, our nation and world. Our greatest need is the next Great Spiritual Awakening in the United States."

Frank S. Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, commented, "From time to time, I have wondered if it is a sign of health or weakness to have to remind people to pray. However, after reading scripture, I see constant reminders and calls to prayer, so I am convinced it is a healthy practice!

"As we enter into this new year, I cannot think of a more appropriate thing to do than to pray more, and more passionately, than ever before. Our world is in need of prayer and we are in need of praying." ■■

Iranian pastor Fathi freed from prison

Baptist Press

Iranian pastor Farshid Fathi has been freed after five years imprisonment in Tehran because of charges linked to his Christian faith, Middle East Concern announced Dec. 22, estimating nearly 100 Christians remain imprisoned there.

Fathi was released Dec. 21 from Rajai Shahr prison, five months after prison authorities informed him he would be due for early release, although no reason for the early release has been reported. Previously, he was scheduled for release in December 2017, after authorities arrested him Dec. 26, 2010,

for "acting against national security through membership of a Christian organization, collection of funds and propaganda against the Islamic Regime by helping spread Christianity in the country." Sixty other Christians were arrested on the same day.

Still imprisoned in Iran is American pastor Saeed Abedini, serving an eight-year sentence since January 2013 on charges he threatened national security by planting house churches in Iran years earlier. He had been under house arrest there since July 2012. His wife Naghme Abedini, continues to request prayer for her husband's release even though she recently revealed abuse in their marriage. ■■

Evangelical witness in an age of mass incarceration

For many evangelicals, the question of our nation's penal system is one largely unconsidered. Our vast and growing prison system operates behind a curtain, mostly hidden from view. And yet, for many of our communities, it has a profound and long-lasting impact.

Biblical revelation forms the foundational reality for Christian thinking. We should be leery of jumping into any moral or ethical dilemma without first considering the biblical parameters for righteousness and justice.

Beyond that, faithful Christians can have a variety of opinions and convictions, even disagreements, as we all strive to submit to biblical authority. I know this is the case with discussions about incarceration, criminal sentencing and justice. Perhaps we can seek to find some common ground though.

As Christian citizens in a democracy, we understand that the “*power of the sword*” in Romans 13 has been entrusted to us, the people. And it is we who will give an account to God for how we have stewarded that power. So we cannot choose to look the other way when it comes to incarceration.

American justice and the current crisis

While the United States comprises five percent of the global population, our nation houses 25 percent of the world's prison population. That's a staggering number that tells a story.

For instance, look deeper into those numbers, and you will find that black men are disproportionately incarcerated. Take a second look, and you will see that the rate of incarceration for women has surged dramatically in the last three decades.

All of this comes at a moral cost and brings measurable implications to our communities and churches. Unfortunately, evangelicalism's silence on this urgent moral issue is deafening.

Faithful Christians can and will disagree over a host of policy questions when it comes to how to ensure a just and equitable penal system in this country. We need to be able to have civil and gracious dialogue even when we see things differently, especially among our Christian communities.

But surely we can all agree that the status quo is woefully unacceptable. Not only is it inefficient, it is also immoral. So let's at least agree to have the conversation. Let's agree to start talking about this. Let's commit to listening well, learning, and then seeking ways in which

our churches and communities can be faithful.

Here are three areas where an evangelical social ethic must be brought to bear on our American prison system.

First, the racialization of American incarceration raises troubling questions about enduring racism.

Right now in the United States, the statistical odds suggest that one out of every three black men will likely be incarcerated at one point in his life. In contrast, only one out of 17 white men will. The disparity also exists for Latino men, one out of six who will likely be incarcerated.

Why is this? Some will suggest that black and brown men are just more likely to commit crimes, especially drug related offenses that comprise so much of the surging incarceration rates.

But Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* documents the various

ways in which the American penal system is structured in an inherently inequitable way. Evangelicals can and should have healthy dialogue and even disagreement on what might prove to be the best solution to the problem. But surely we can agree that a prison system that is incarcerating this many of our nation's black men is scandalous.

Second, the dramatic increase in female incarceration comes at a tremendous cost.

One of the neglected realities of our incarceration is the way women have entered into the system. In fact, between 1980 and 2010, the number of women in prison increased by 646 percent. The racial disparity that is endemic among male prisoners is also at play here. The lifetime likelihood of imprisonment for black women is one in 19, while it is one in 118 for white women.

This brings a host of ethical and moral problems. For example, women can be shackled during labor and delivery in 13

states. While the Federal Bureau of Prisons ceased shackling pregnant inmates, these states have not addressed the issue in their respective systems. And the majority of children born to imprisoned women are immediately separated from their mothers. Only a handful of states have adopted creative models to provide continued opportunities for qualified inmates to stay with their children. The National Women's Law Center reports that only thirteen states provide a prison nursery system for qualified mothers, and of these, only two allow children to stay beyond the age of two.

Third, we should be leery of any system that profits on the misery of another.

It can never be Christian to profit from another's misery.

Throughout the Bible, God makes clear to his people that righteousness and justice never bow before the idols of profit.

Southern Baptists have rightly spoken in the past against predatory systems that profit from the misfortune and suffering of others. For example, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a strong resolution in 2014 rightly lamenting the prevalence of payday lending operations that prey upon the poor and vulnerable.

While there may be a number of creative solutions in privatization, we should at least give due consideration to the inherent challenges in the commercialization of our nation's prison systems. While a free market is right and good for economic development, it is a horrible model for serving justice.

Private prison companies now take in a combined \$3.3 billion in annual revenue, while the federal prison population has more than doubled between 2000 and 2010. What if the financial incentives for these companies were not tied to capacity – the number of inmates housed – but to demonstrated success in rehabilitation and lowered recidivism rates? Surely we could leverage the economic interest in a better and more productive way.

As it stands now, nearly two-thirds of these private prison contracts require that state and local governments maintain a fixed occupancy rate, usually of 90 percent, producing a system built to incentivize incarceration. Most often, if they fail to meet those thresholds, taxpayers are expected to foot the bill for empty beds. This system has produced its fair share of scandals too.

Perhaps the most notori-

ous was the “Kids for Cash” scandal where two judges were convicted of receiving \$2.6 million in kickbacks from private prison companies for sending more minors with unusually large sentences.

In many of these private prisons, inmates receive as little as 17 cents per hour for labor of up to six hours a day. In contrast, inmates in federal prisons can work more hours and earn \$1.25 an hour. What often goes untold is how many Fortune 500 companies are now reliant on low-cost prison labor. Of course, there is moral and economic complexity involved in an issue like this. We should be leery of simplistic generalizations or solutions. But, by and large, Americans in general, including evangelicals, are not even involved in the conversation.

This only scratches the surface of some incredibly complex moral questions regarding the American penal system. Surely, there's more to say about how we treat prisoners while incarcerated, the challenges posed by incarcerating more and more of our nation's children, and questions as to the democratic rights of prisoners, particularly those convicted of felonies, to vote.

These issues require more conversation from the broad spectrum of evangelicalism and they need not polarize our churches. Surely we can learn and listen together, as a people marked by both grace and truth.

So where do we go from here? What does it mean to make disciples of Christ in the age of mass incarceration?

God's care for the prisoner

You might be tempted to think that the incarcerated are “the scum of the earth.” And don't forget those “violent offenders.”

They're the worst sort, right? Well, have you considered Moses? Here was a man who saw his fellow citizen being abused by an Egyptian supervisor and intervened. However it happened, when everything was over, Moses was guilty of murder and ended up a fugitive, a violent offender. There's no small irony that years later, on the backside of a mountain, God revealed his law to this same murderer, commanding, “Thou shalt not kill.”

And what about David? Here's a man who sees a woman who is not his wife one night and lustfully desires her. She's married to another man, so David conspires to have him killed. His plan is successful, and he eventually takes the woman as his wife. It would take the prophet Nathan, not a district attorney or grand jury, to indict this conspiratorial killer.

See Witness page 19



MATTHEW J. HALL
Guest Column



Darrington is a maximum security prison within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system. The United States houses 25 percent of the world's prison population. (SWBTS photo by Matthew Miller)

Abortion Continued from page 5

• Each one of us is “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:14).

• We have lovingly “*received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’*” (Romans 8:15).

• God’s glory and grace shine even, and especially, in those with physical limitations or weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Abortion is an assault on the image, character, grace, gospel and glory of God. For the Christian to see it as anything less than that is to reject a biblical view of God’s gospel and God’s glory. John 9:1-3 shows us how God himself, in the person of Christ, viewed human life as he walked among us, as one of us.

“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind.’ Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”

While the disciples saw the man’s blindness as a direct result of sin, Jesus saw him as a vessel of God’s grace and glory. Every life is uniquely formed by God to be powerfully rescued and redeemed in Christ for the glory of the Father. Every child in the womb is a masterpiece shaped by the master craftsman.

All human life with a gospel lens

That baby boy born with no arms is me.

Thirty-one years later, God has crushed the professional opinions of skeptical doctors. I’ve been in student ministry for nearly a decade, I have a remarkable wife of nine years, and we have a beautiful three-year-old boy, with a little girl on the way.

I thank God I had parents who willingly and joyfully embraced me with all the challenges that came with having a baby with a disability. They could have chosen to give me up for adoption, or put me in state care or they could have chosen to abort me. For my parents, abortion would have never been an option. The realities of me being made in the image of God and being wonderfully made in the womb by the Father were forefront in their minds.

Human life is the physical handiwork of God – created in God’s image for God’s glory. Every man or woman that is formed in the hands of the faithful Father has value, purpose and grace. Never determine the value, quality or sanctity of a life on the basis of socio-economic background, family structure, ethnicity or any sort of disability. View human life through the lens of the gospel – that the work of God might be displayed in every single life.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Daniel Ritchie is the student pastor at Lake Norman Baptist Church in Huntersville, N.C. This article appeared at DesiringGod.org.) **BR**



52 Sundays prayer resources available

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Churches can pray for missionaries and ministries they support through the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention throughout the New Year with the latest edition of the 52 Sundays prayer resources that are now available. 52 Sundays provides resources for individuals and churches to pray each week in 2016 for a different missionary serving around the world, throughout North America and across North Carolina.

Resources include: PowerPoint slides for use in church services that includes information on 52 different international, North American or North Carolina missionary your church supports through the Cooperative Program; corresponding text files for each slide so missionary information can be shared and used with prayer leaders or small groups; bulletin inserts to print for each Sunday; powerful, Bible-based devotional thoughts for each Sunday that are focused on missions, discipleship, stewardship and more.

North Carolina Baptist churches should also receive a 52 Sundays compact disc in the mail. For more information about 52 Sundays or the Cooperative Program, visit ncbaptist.org/cpemphasis or contact Mike Creswell at mcreswell@ncbaptist.org or (800) 395-5102, ext. 5541. **BR**

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Clay Smith
SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Matthews

Albert Einstein said, “The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.” For every murderous act commissioned upon the helpless life of an infant, we too, as the church, should examine our own sinful acts of omission regarding the denunciation of this murderous practice. I say this not as judge and jury, but as one convicted. I believe abortion is murder. I believe every life – no matter the circumstances of his or her conception – is made in the image of God and worthy of the dignity thereof. Yet, my tongue has too often been silent. It is time to speak up. It is time to make a difference.



Steve Scoggins
SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Hendersonville

One of my favorite pro-life verses is found in the Christmas story in Luke 1:41, “*when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb.*”

Elizabeth was expecting John the Baptist. Mary was expecting Jesus. When John inside Elizabeth came into the presence of Jesus inside Mary, he leapt with joy! Notice the passage didn’t say that a mass of cells attached to the uterus jiggled. Inside Elizabeth was a person rejoicing in the presence of Jesus inside of Mary.

If a person is not pro-life when they consider that inside of every mother is a baby, then they must not understand what is happening inside. It could be that someone has tried to deceive them that they are simply getting rid of a problem. But if they see an ultrasound image, if they hear the beating of the little heart within weeks of conception, they will know, it is a baby! Babies need to be cherished and protected. That is the message of the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.



David Horton
PRESIDENT

*Fruitland Baptist Bible College,
Hendersonville*

The 21st century secular worldview has great difficulty differentiating the value of human life from animal life and plant life. It is not uncommon to see bumper stickers that endorse “A Woman’s Right to Choose,” “Save the Whales,” and “Say ‘No’ to Clear-Cutting: Boycott Georgia Pacific” – all on the same vehicle! Over a century ago, one of Oscar Wilde’s characters, Lord Darlington, quipped about those who “know the price of everything and the value of nothing.” In regard to understanding the value of human life, many of our friends and neighbors have bought into a cheap philosophy peddled by anti-God secularists who know little of the value of human life.

If we are to make an accurate assessment as to the value of human life, we must start with the inception of human life. In contrast to the creation of plant and animal life, when human life was created, Genesis 1:27 states, “*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*” Genesis 2:7 adds, “*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” The creation of human life was not an accident; it was God’s idea. God elevated the position of human life by creating humans in “His own image” and by breathing “the breath of life” into His human creation. A proper assessment of the value of human life must begin with these distinct truths or an inevitable devaluation will certainly occur.

“The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.”

~Albert Einstein

Baptists s *Sanctity of*

Churches across the U.S. mark their calendars each year to celebrate the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, which serves as a reminder of the fateful Jan. 22 Supreme Court decision. Christian leaders use this Sunday to reinforce the biblical teaching that human life is sacred from the moment of conception.

The *Biblical Recorder* asked some North Carolina pastors to share their thoughts on the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Here are their responses.



Speak about *Human Life*

celebrate the value of human life. Jan. 17 is the date for 2016, and it is the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in 1973 to legalize abortion nationwide. Pastors and other leaders share their conviction that all life is precious, even life in the womb.

Ask pastors what the “sanctity of human life” means to them. Here are their responses:



Tony Merida
PASTOR FOR PREACHING
AND VISION
Imago Dei Church, Raleigh

Sanctity of Human Life immediately makes me think of the doctrine of the imago Dei (image of God). This doctrine serves as the basis for the proper treatment of everyone – from the womb to the tomb, from black to white, from the rich to the poor.

Because God made all people, all people matter. They are worthy of dignity, value and love.

- The massive number of inmates in prison should matter to us – we should visit them and minister to them.
- The unborn should matter to us – we should defend them and advocate for them.
- The orphan should matter to us – we should love them, care for them and consider fostering or adopting them.
- The elderly should matter to us – we should visit them and care for them.
- Girls being enslaved should matter to us – we should advocate for the voiceless and provide aftercare to the rescued.
- People of every race should matter to us – we should give all men and women proper respect and equal rights.
- The poor should matter to us – we should be concerned about their situation and seek to alleviate their need.

Think about this. Why is it that people visit Mount Vernon, Va., all the time? It's because George Washington's famous house is located there. We value that home because we value the maker of the home. And we should value people – all people – because we value their Maker. To dishonor any image bearer of God is to dishonor God Himself (Proverbs 14:31).

“I personally believe the Bible is a strong and clear advocate of the sanctity of human life. The word ‘sanctity’ means sacred or holy.”
~Ed Yount



Ed Yount
SENIOR PASTOR
Woodlawn Baptist Church, Conover

When Mother Teresa spoke at the President's Prayer Breakfast in 1994 she said, “But I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child, a direct killing of the innocent child, murdered by the mother herself. And if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another? Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching the people to love but to use violence to get what ever it wants. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion.”

I personally believe the Bible is a strong and clear advocate of the sanctity of human life. The word “sanctity” means sacred or holy. Life is sacred to God and therefore should also be sacred to us. David wrote of God carefully and meticulously forming us in our mother's womb. Life is a miracle of God and is something to be respected, honored, and protected. We must diligently pray for the day when Roe v. Wade will be overturned and America will once again value and cherish that which has been made in the image of God.



Matt Capps
SENIOR PASTOR
Fairview Baptist Church, Apex

Sanctity of life is about the biblical and theological belief that, according to Genesis 1:26-31, God intimately formed humans in His likeness as the crown of creation to reflect His image in the world. This is the basis of human dignity, and the foundation for protecting and nurturing the precious life that God has given to each and every one of us. Implicit in this belief is the conviction that killing, harming or even hating another person is an affront to and an attack upon the living God.

Decision America kicks off in Iowa

Biblical Recorder

More than 2,500 people gathered Jan. 5 in the ice and snow on the steps of the capital in Des Moines, Iowa, to watch Franklin Graham kick off his 2016 Decision America Tour.

Graham, the eldest son of 97-year-old evangelist Billy Graham, heads both the Christian nonprofit Samaritan's Purse, which lends hands and resources to disaster-stricken places around the world, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. It was the first stop of his 50-state prayer tour before the 2016 presidential election.

Graham will not be supporting any specific candidates or parties, as he has in the past. In fact, he left the Republican party in late 2015 in favor of an independent status. He felt it was best not to align with either party so he could more effectively unite all Christians, regardless of political affiliations, to begin praying for the nation.

Instead, Graham's goal is to encourage Christians to engage in politics, vote and pray. He told the crowd that an estimated 20 to 30 million Christians stayed home in the 2012 election. He wondered what our country would look like if city councils, school boards and mayor seats were filled by believers in the next two or three elections.

The Daily Signal quoted him saying, "No political party is going to be able to turn this around. I have no hope in the Democratic Party. I have zero hope in the Republican Party. I have no hope in [the] tea party or any other party. My only hope is in Almighty God and his



"The most important thing we can do as Christians is pray," Franklin Graham said in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 5. (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association photo)

[S]on, Jesus Christ. The most important thing we can do is pray. God hears prayer and God answers prayer."

The prayer rally began with a time of worship and prayer, then Graham shared a 30-minute message where the gospel was shared and he exhorted Christians to honor God at home, in public and at the ballot box. It ended with an opportunity to make the Decision America Tour pledge – via text message or at *Decision-AmericaTour.com* – to both God and America.

Graham urged Christians to not only vote in next

year's elections but to run for office at every level of public office.

Graham's next stop is New Hampshire, also an early nominating state, and then on to Louisiana. The date and location for his North Carolina visit has not yet been announced.

To get involved now, visit decisionamericatour.com/tour/north-carolina/ and join the North Carolina prayer team.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – This story was compiled by Emily Blake, editorial aide for the Biblical Recorder.) **BR**

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Families

Continued from page 3

focus on and give serious attention to these people.

I am convinced, however, that one of the most biblical and strategic ways to impact the world's lostness is to look closer to home, much closer. For mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, obeying the Great Commission should begin in the home, though it should certainly not end there.

We should begin our obedience to the Great Commission in the home, first, because it is biblical.

Jesus informs us in Matthew 22:37 that the Greatest Commandment is, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*" He is, of course, quoting the *Shema* found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Bracketing the *Shema* is the instruction that this commandment is to be taught to children by their parents and their grandparents. Jesus then notes that the second Great Commandment is like the first: "*Love your neighbor as yourself*" (Leviticus 19:18).

"*All the Law and the prophets,*" He tells us, "*hang on the two commandments.*" Teaching our children all that He has commanded would certainly be grounded in the two great commandments.

The close relationship of the Great Commission to the Great Commandments is clear.

They are interconnected and must not be separated. They are mutually reinforcing.

We should begin our obedience to the

Great Commission in the home, second, because it is strategic.

I am confident most pastors and seminary professors would agree that good theology and good missiology are more caught than taught, though both are necessary.

Therefore, the vital role a father and mother (and grandparents!) play in conveying and modeling a missional life for their children cannot be overemphasized. It is crucial and in many instances decisive.

Most children look up to, admire and follow in their parents' footsteps.

When teenagers are asked to name their number one role model, parents generally top the list.

In January 2015, *stageoflife.com* surveyed teenagers on the topic of "unsung heroes."

Parents ranked number one. In 1998, *Newsweek* magazine reported the same thing.

The fact is, our children do care what we think, they do listen to what we say, and they pay a whole lot of attention to what we do!

So, in the context of the Great Commission, what do they hear you saying? What do they see you doing?

Parents who model and talk about giving their lives for the sake of the lost around the world will likely, by God's grace and for His glory, see their children grow up to follow in their footsteps.

Parents, what you love, they will love. What you value, they will value. What

Principles for building Great Commission families

- 1) Be incarnational in your parenting.
- 2) Love well your mate.
- 3) Spend time with your children
- 4) Learn to listen to your children
- 5) Read missionary biographies to your children
- 6) Expose your children to missionaries and their lives by having them in your home, sharing a meal with them, listening to their stories.
- 7) Go on mission trips and take your children with you modeling obedience to the Great Commission.
- 8) Teach your children what the Bible says about missions
- 9) Pray for the nations and missionaries by name
- 10) Model missional living as a life priority before your children

you have a passion for, they will have a passion for. After all, you are their heroes!

The question before us as parents and grandparents is clear: What will we do to embed the Great Commission into the DNA of our children and grandchildren so that they may have a lifelong passion for making disciples of all nations – the very passion of King Jesus?

I believe there are concrete and even simple steps for accomplishing this weighty task – reading missionary biographies as a family, bringing actual missionaries into your home and praying for missionaries, just to name a few. However, I am convinced of this: It will not happen accidentally. It will require thoughtful and purposeful effort to live

out this submission to Christ in our lives and homes.

Will you join me in thinking and working intentionally to build Great Commission families at home so we can walk faithfully in Christ's last and lasting words: "make disciples of all nations"? It is biblical. It is strategic. Let's get to work!

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, describes "Great Commission families" as "one of the most biblical and strategic ways to impact the world's lostness." He presented a paper at the Evangelical Theological Society on this topic. See paper at danielakin.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ETS-2015-Building-Great-Commission-Families.pdf/.) ■

GuideStone, LifeWay urge ministers, church staff to help with survey

By ROY HAYHURST | GuideStone Financial Resources

GuideStone Financial Resources, along with LifeWay Research and Baptist state conventions, will open the biennial Southern Baptist Convention Church Compensation Survey in 2016. Ministers and church employees are invited to participate in the survey, a resource used by churches of all sizes to determine fair wages and benefits. Survey participants will have the opportunity to enter for a chance to win an Apple iPad device.

The survey and complete contest rules are available at GuideStone.org/CompensationSurvey.

The survey's results will be made available in the early fall, in time for many churches considering their 2017 budgets. The survey is the largest free, church compensation study conducted in the United States. The most recent survey results – conducted in 2014 – have been visited almost 55,000 times.

"GuideStone works tirelessly to be an advocate for pastors and church staff, ensuring that they are compensated fairly," said O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources. "The surveys

can help churches benchmark their own salary and benefits packages against churches of like size within Southern Baptist life."

Survey results are not reported individually. Compensation and benefit information can be contributed anonymously. At the conclusion of the survey, GuideStone and LifeWay will compile the submitted data and provide all users with access to the results. Participants in the survey who provide an email address will have first access to the study's customizable reports.

"This survey, which is one of the most comprehensive of its kind, will help scores of churches as they seek to provide for those who are called to lead their congregations," Hawkins said.

Southern Baptist church ministers and staff have until May 31 to complete the online survey. The winner of the iPad will be notified via email.

Contact GuideStone Financial Resources with any questions or issues. Call toll-free at (800) 98-GUIDE (or 1-888-984-8433) Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST to speak with a customer relations specialist, or send an email to info@GuideStone.org. ■

Gun

Continued from page 3

is not, I suspect, a case of "more guns, less crime" as much as it is "more community, less crime."

This is quite different from some of the big cities in this country, and increasingly our suburbs, where we do not know the people around us, and have no one to turn to but to the government to protect us from criminal enterprises that are often guarded with (usually illegal) guns.

We should listen, I think, to the rhetoric behind the rhetoric of the gun control debate. Both sides are often scared. They are scared of violence, often with good reason. The gun control advocate wants the government to protect him from gun-wielding criminals. The gun-rights supporter wants his gun to protect him from gun-wielding criminals. The gun control supporter trusts an armed government; the gun control opponent trusts an armed community.

Both sides of the debate are longing for the kind of civic community that is

slipping away in a globalizing, urbanizing America. There are some things that government can do to address this, but not much. It is driven more by cultural and economic factors than by political ones.

Into this void must step churches that foster and build real communities built on real love and real truth. These kinds of churches can flourish in rural Oregon and urban Atlanta, in blue states and red states. These kind of churches can seek to create not just individual disciples, but an alternative order in which the citizens of heaven know one another, trust one another, and are able to call on one another when one hears a strange sound at the window. This will not end the gun control debate, but it can start to bear witness to one of the aspects of this debate we are too afraid to have.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Russell Moore is president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. This column originally ran on his website, russellmoore.com. It is reprinted with his permission.) ■

Martin Luther King's advice to pastors called key to revival

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

Sixty years ago, the Montgomery Bus Boycott famously catapulted Martin Luther King Jr. to national leadership of the civil rights movement and led to the end of segregated public transportation in Alabama. Less commonly known is that the boycott occasioned advice to pastors by King that some Southern Baptists say they still take to heart.

King, in this 1958 book *Stride Toward Freedom*, recounted the struggle in Montgomery, then asked, "Where do we go from here?" Pastors, he concluded, were an important part of the answer.

"The important thing is for every minister to dedicate himself to the Christian ideal of brotherhood, and be sure he is doing something positive to implement it," wrote King, then pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. "He must never allow the theory that it is better to remain quiet and help the cause to become a rationalization for doing nothing. Many ministers can do much more than they are doing and still hold their congregations."



JAY WOLF

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church in Montgomery, told Baptist Press (BP) "biblically-oriented pastors" took such advice to heart, noting that his predecessor, longtime First Baptist Montgomery pastor J.R. White, spoke "powerfully against the sin of racism." White "pushed against the dark currents of his day with Christ-centered truth that eventually prevailed," Wolf said.

Wolf said King's call for pastors to be "moral and spiritual guardians within a community" remains "a compelling standard for a pastor's ministry."

The Montgomery Bus Boycott began Dec. 1, 1955, when African-American seamstress Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a crowded bus and subsequently was arrested for failing to obey the driver's seat assignments. The arrest sparked a year-long boycott of city buses by blacks that ended Dec. 20, 1956, when a U.S. Supreme Court order took effect declaring segregated buses unconstitutional.

Reflecting on next steps following the boycott, King said some pastors are called to preach so boldly against racism that they may face persecution. He lamented that during the boycott, "the white ministers, from whom I had naively expected so much, gave so little" despite the fact that "racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we have in Christ."

Terry Turner, pastor of the predominantly African-American Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church in Mesquite, Texas, told BP King's counsel is still relevant.

"Today we are 52 years after the abolition of the Jim Crow laws and our churches continue to experience segregation weekly," Turner, a former president of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, said in written comments. White pastors must preach "to convert any prejudiced hearts that possibly exist within their congregations while black pastors have to preach against racism to comfort their congregations from the evils of racism they experience weekly."

Although the United States no longer makes blacks second-class citizens by law, Turner said, "America has ... perpetuated the shame of racism by not teaching ev-

ery person to love every people group as their own and has kept the races divided. The process of integrating the church must be intentional."

'The present segregated conditions'

During the 1955-56 boycott, few Southern Baptists were proactive in seeking to integrate their churches.

Leon Macon, then editor of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper, wrote on May 3, 1956, "As for our churches, the present segregated conditions were brought about by the expressed desire and wish of our colored brethren." Any move to integrate the South's social institutions should occur gradually and not "through sudden decisions and acts," which "would cause violent repercussions."

A 1956 report from Alabama's Christian Life Commission noting the ongoing bus boycott criticized both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and pro-segregation White Citizens Councils as "extreme groups."

The report, adopted by the state convention, said outlawing segregation was not the answer to racial strife and advised "the more independent negro ministers to meet with their neighboring white minister to discuss ways and means of eliminating the untoward tension." Heated rhetoric on both sides without a moderate middle ground, the report said, was pushing white Christians to align themselves with extreme viewpoints.

W.A. Criswell, then pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, is an apparent case in point. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott's third month, Criswell told the South Carolina Baptist Convention's evangelism conference he was astonished at ministers "whose forebears and predecessors were martyrs and were burned at the stake" but who themselves refused to speak about "this thing of integration," a message he later called "a colossal blunder and mistake on my part."

In his address, Criswell said mandatory desegregation was "a denial of all we believe in." Those in favor of government-mandated integration were "a bunch of infidels dying from the neck up."

At the invitation of South Carolina's governor, Criswell delivered a modified version of the same address before the state legislature the next day, according to news reports.

In a 1973 interview, Criswell said the heated segregationist rhetoric he used at the time "did not represent my heart." Criswell said he became caught up in the moment because he "just seethed on the inside when those people up there [from the North] tell us how to solve racial problems."

The heated rhetoric eventually gave way to a change of tone. In 1968, Criswell preached a sermon embracing racial integration at First Baptist Dallas, a message he said was symptomatic of an "an about face" in his manner of speaking, though his "soul and attitude" remained constant.

Criswell, who was elected Southern Baptist Convention president in 1968, told the SBC Executive Committee that year, "I've never had a battle in my heart ... as I have these last several years. Nobody on earth knew that was going on in my soul. And I came to the firm conclusion that I had to change."

'Christ-centered truth' prevails

Apparently other Southern Baptists were experiencing similar transformations.



Martin Luther King Jr. preached in Southern Seminary chapel in 1961 to a warm reception by faculty and students. King met with professors (from left to right) Henlee Barnette, Nolan Howington and Allen Graves. (SBTS photo)

Rick Lance, current executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was only five when the Montgomery Bus Boycott took place. In a 2013 interview with SBC LIFE, he recalled an African-American church bombing in his hometown of Birmingham seven years later. Four African American students about his then age of 12 were murdered while at church. "What happened in 1963 made an indelible impression on me," he said.

"Early on in my ministry, I tried to lead my churches to open their doors to all people," he said. "Some resistance remained to such efforts, but in the main, my church families began to see people as individuals of worth created in the image of God. They became more receptive to people from all backgrounds and all walks of life. This was no small victory for Southern Baptist churches in the Deep South."

Wolf told BP that First Baptist Montgomery eventually integrated despite some disagreements among the congregation over admitting African-Americans, and Wolf has participated in prayer gatherings involving black and white ministers in Montgomery.

A church that does not speak against racism loses its moral and spiritual authority within its community, Wolf said, and likely will not be effective in evangelism.

"A great detractor from evangelism is racism," Wolf said in written comments. "If people within the body of Christ cannot connect to each other in unity, then we prevent God's electrifying Spirit from moving through us to generate our desperately needed spiritual awakening."

"In the same way electricity cannot travel over a broken wire, God's Spirit cannot move through the sin of division, racism or classism," Wolf said. "Therefore, we must clearly call people we influence to adopt the attitude of inclusion and acceptance prescribed by Christ: 'Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God' (Romans 15:7)."

As Americans commemorate what would have been King's 87th birthday, Turner urged pastors to continue following the civil rights leader's admonitions to speak out against racism.

"We must work to make our churches look like heaven," Turner said. "Christian men, women and children must reach across the aisle and befriend and love people of other races. We are all praying for revival. However, Christians must work to abolish the problem of racism in America before God will send revival." ■



RICK LANCE

Alabama player turned actor considers ‘Woodlawn’ powerful

Young actor Caleb Castille, a former two time University of Alabama football national champion, sat down with Roman Gabriel III to talk about faith, football and his recent role in the movie “Woodlawn.”

Castille plays former Alabama and Miami Dolphins running back Tony Nathan in the hugely successful Erwin Brothers film.



ROMAN GABRIEL III
Sports Q & A

It recently played nationwide to sell-out crowds, rated one of the top movies of the year by American audiences.

The true story takes place at Woodlawn High School in Birmingham, Ala., amid racial strife and segregation in the Deep South.

The movie portrays how a high school football team and their commitment to faith in God, family and football transforms a city and a state.

Gabriel said it’s “the best faith-based sports film I’ve ever seen – the Erwin brothers do it right!” He interviewed Castille about the deeply moving story and the impact of the film, which releases on DVD Jan. 19.

Visit woodlawnmovie.com.

Q: What was it like to put the uniform back on?

A: It was great. We had a lot of fun making this movie, and it taught me a lot of lessons. It made me a better person overall just diving into the story. I learned a lot about Tony Nathan and the city of Birmingham.

Q: The movie has a lot going on: football, faith, family, the racial strife of the early ’70s and more. Which part of the film compelled you?

A: I think it was the story. I grew up in Birmingham, Ala., so for me to step into a story that took place in my own backyard was special. It was an honor to play a hero in Birmingham and the legend of the University of Alabama.

Q: You played on a national championship football team at The University of Alabama, and so have other members of your family, right?

A: I played cornerback for Coach Nick Saban, and I was on two national championship teams at Alabama. Both of my older brothers and my father played football in Alabama. It’s kind of in



Q: our blood. What was it like, on your first acting job, to work with Sean Astin (who played the director of Fellowship of Christian Athletes) and academy award winner Jon Voight (who played famous Alabama coach Bear Bryant)?

A: Both those guys are absolutely professional in every aspect of the way they operate on a daily basis on set. It was incredible to be around them, to work with them, to be coached by them in and out of scenes.

For me as a young guy, having no acting experience, I was just soaking up everything from those guys to give the performance I needed.

Q: Being a former football player yourself, tell me about the authenticity and the quality of the football scenes in this movie?

A: The football scenes are crazy. They take the audience right into the middle of the game. It’s one of the most incredible football movies, in my honest opinion. Jon and Andy Erwin had a plan, along with our football coordinator Mark Richt, to create scenes in which the audience feels like they’re in the middle of the play.

When you watch football on television, it’s filmed from the outside-in; it’s created to be a spectator sport. But what we wanted to do was put the spectator inside the game. All of the shots are from the inside-out. They’re making the runs with me; they’re seeing the sweat; they’re seeing the pain on my face when I get hit – bone crushing hits; they’re seeing me take the handoff like they’re taking the handoff. The audience is right in the game, and it’s awesome!

Q: What was the toughest part of shooting the football scenes?

A: The toughest were definitely the rain scenes. People don’t realize

it gets real cold in Alabama. We were shooting in 23 degree weather. That was tough.

Q: Woodlawn is all about faith, family and football. Prayer was such a big part of turning things around. How do you feel about many schools trying to remove prayer from sports on high school and college campuses?

A: Prayer is something that’s positive and brings healing. Am I forcing it on anyone? No. What I’m saying is what it’s done for me personally. For me, prayer is something that we need, especially in this younger generation. We need to learn how to forgive and learn how to love. I’m all for it.

Q: Caleb, how can viewing this film alter or change a viewer’s life?

A: I feel like the film speaks for itself. I think one of the most powerful things we have is testimony. This film is filled with so many testimonies of how people allow Jesus Christ to change their



Caleb Castille portrays Tony Nathan, a Birmingham, Ala., high school football player who was recruited by The University of Alabama and later played for the Miami Dolphins. (Woodlawn photos)

lives, changing them from the inside out. When you view the film I think it’ll make you ask questions, analyze your life and your thought process. I think whatever your flaws are, it will make you think about those things. It’s an inspiring film; it’s a family film; it’s a motivating film; it’s a special film overall. I’m just so grateful to be part of it.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Roman Gabriel III is an evangelist and motivational speaker. Hear his Sold Out Sports Talk Radio program on American Family Radio in 200 cities nationally or streaming live at afr.net. Visit his website: soldouttv.com; Facebook: Roman Gabriel III; connect on Twitter: @romangabriel3rd. Contact at (910) 431-6483 or email: sold-outrg3@gmail.com.) **BR**

“Prayer is something that’s positive and brings healing. ... What I’m saying is what it’s done for me personally. For me, prayer is something that we need ...”
– Caleb Castille



Caleb Castille, right, talks to viewers of a rough cut of “Woodlawn” in June 2015 during the Southern Baptist Convention in Columbus, Ohio. Kevin Downes, left, was one of the producers of the film and played a Birmingham reporter in the movie. Castille and Downes joined Jon Erwin, one of the writers and directors, and Michael Catt, senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., for a question and answer time about the movie. (BR photo by Dianna L. Cagle)

Share Lottie Moon offering story

The *Biblical Recorder* has been hearing of generosity among our North Carolina Baptist churches with the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions.

One church had a goal of \$100,000 and surpassed it by almost \$50,000. Another church sold some property and gave the proceeds to help with the annual International Mission Board offering.

Do you have a story you'd like to share?

Contact editor@BRnow.org or go to BRnow.org/Contact-Us/Submit-News. Please include name and contact information (e-mail and phone number) as well as photos if available.



OPPORTUNITY CORNER

MISSIONS INTENSIVE

The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham is hosting a Missions Intensive conference for church leaders Feb. 1-2. It will be led by David Platt, J.D. Greear and International Mission Board (IMB) staff. Missions Intensive is a time for pastors and leaders to prayerfully seek God concerning His global mission and the local church's role in that mission. It includes plenary sessions, practical "how-to" sessions and a church evaluation process. The event will equip church leaders to mobilize members to mission. It will provide a framework for the church to intentionally disciple and equip members to make disciples cross-culturally. It will also help church leaders appropriately as-

sess and shepherd members as they seek to be sent to make disciples and multiply churches among unreached people and places. Lead pastors will also have the opportunity of a dialogue session with David Platt and J.D. Greear about the unique role of pastors leading the church in global missions. Participants will discuss God's heart for the nations and how each local church can play their part in fulfilling Christ's commission. The cost is \$109 for pastors and \$89 for students. Registration fee covers all sessions, materials and meals. For more information visit missionsintensive.com. Other classes are planned in Louisville, Ky., Riverside, Calif., and Nashville, Tenn.

Software training

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) is offering software training for churches and associations in 2016. All classes are free. All classes start at 9 a.m. in the lab at the BSC building in Cary (unless otherwise listed). Training for individual church groups can be arranged. If your church needs information on where to by software and hardware at discounted prices please contact Russell Schwab at (800) 385-5102, ext. 5582. To register for classes, visit ncbaptist.org/training or email jautry@ncbaptist.org.

The 2016 schedule is:

- Intro to Google Apps – Feb. 9

- 2010 Excel – Feb. 25
- 2010 Word – March 10
- 2010 Publisher – April 7
- 2010 PowerPoint and MovieMaker – April 26
- AskNed (for associations only) – June 7
- AskNed (for associations only) – June 9
- AskNed (for associations only) – June 21 at Buncombe Resource Center in Asheville
- AskNed (for associations only) – June 23 at Piedmont Baptist Association in Greensboro

Website training

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) is offering website training for churches and associations in 2016. All classes are free.

All classes take place from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. in the lab at the BSC building in Cary. To register for classes, email lsalmonson@ncbaptist.org. Visit ncbaptist.org/website.

The 2016 schedule is:

- Wordpress training – Feb. 16
- Wix training – March 15
- Wordpress training – April 12
- Wix training – May 24
- Wordpress training – June 14
- Wix training – Aug. 9
- Wordpress training – Sept. 13
- Wix training – Oct. 4

N.C. GRADUATES

The *Biblical Recorder* publishes a list of graduate level and above degrees from Southern Baptist Convention seminaries as well as North Carolina Baptist-affiliated divinity schools. The list is usually published after the May and December graduation lists have been obtained and includes students who list North Carolina as their home state.

The College at Southeastern

Master of Arts in intercultural studies – Sean E. Heath, Statesville; Michael Warner Moore, Whittier; David Scott Townsend Jr., Timberlake; and Vickie Ward, Thomasville.

Gardner-Webb School of Divinity

(August and December)

Master of divinity – Brittany Renee Carey, Boiling Springs; Mary Joan Dickson, Fletcher; Timothy Graham, Huntersville; Danielle Maria Goad, Iron Station; Susan Horn Haney, Monroe; Eliza Kathleen Harris, Mooresboro; Gloria Denise Hopper, Monroe; Terrie Hopper, Sherrill's Ford; Esther Littlejohn, Shelby; Elizabeth Ann Maye, Wingate; Mallory E Monroe, Shelby; Anthony Eugene Neal, Charlotte; Michael Christopher Puckett, Boone; Wallace Rutledge, Hildebran; Amber Joy Setzer, Statesville; Lynette James Sills, Asheville; Doris Thompson, Brevard; and Tony Clay Williams, Charlotte.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Masters of arts in counseling – Sherry L. Shaefer, Winterville

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of divinity – Manasseh L. Bewry, Summerfield; Steve P. Chau, Raleigh; and Lang T. Le, Greensboro.

Master of theology – Forrest K. Moss, Greensboro.

Doctor of ministry – Joel D. Angel, High Point; and Jon L. Wixtrom, Fayetteville.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of arts in Christian studies – Kristie Harris Osteen, Wake Forest; and Bowe Clark Butler, Raleigh.

Master of arts in biblical counseling – Lauren Chandler, Franklinton; Allison Bently Creagh, Raleigh; Quinn Tesh Little, Mocksville; Hillary

Meyer, Raleigh; Virginia Nicole Stone, Durham; and Jessica Lisle Williams, Wake Forest.

Master of arts in ministry leadership – Ali Dixon, Raleigh; and James D. Dotson, Raleigh.

Master of church music – Fred Richard Smith III, Youngsville.

Master of divinity with advanced standing – Logan Michael Rogers, Canton.

Master of divinity with Christian ministry – Timothy J. Craig, Mooresville; Alexander James Di-Prima, Mebane; Jeffrey H. Gordon, Elizabeth City; Michael Chan Huh, Raleigh; Matthew Kennedy, North Wilkesboro; John Mark Lindsay, Kannapolis; Craig Stevens Morrisette, Wendell; Clyde Walter Overman III, Kill Devil Hills; Daniel Blake Summers, Raleigh; Diane Austin Tyndall, Chapel Hill; William Allen West, Clement; Nicholas A. Rich, Fayetteville; and Mark Nicholas Smith, High Point.

Master of divinity with expository preaching – Clay Phillips, Youngsville.

Master of divinity with international church planting – Michael Warner Moore, Whittier; and Clinton S. Barefoot, Raleigh.

Master of divinity with ministry leadership – Robert Lewis Spivey, Yanceyville.

Master of divinity with missiology – Aaron Dav-enport, Wake Forest.

Master of divinity with pastoral ministry – Baxter McGuirt, Winston-Salem.

Master of divinity with women's studies – Emily Britte Anthony, Kings Mountain.

Master of theology – Yong Cheol Jung, Raleigh; and Aime Kidimbu, Raleigh.

Doctor of education – Antonio Santos, Wake Forest.

Doctor of ministry – James Stanley Baggett Jr., Durham; Ray Carr, Clayton; Philip Neale Davis III, Cary; Brian Kelly Henderson, Hendersonville; Kelton F. Hinton, Princeton; Kenneth Matthew Jenkins, Hope Mills; Sammy Joo, Raleigh; Brandon Douglas Powell, Asheboro; and Scott S. Talley, Durham.

Doctor of philosophy – Erik Marshall Clary, Durham; Gregory Harrison Powell, Roanoke Rapids; and Jacob Matthew Pratt, Wake Forest.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of divinity – Charles Adam Mallette, Jacksonville; and Austin Lane Rhoades, Clemmons.

Master of divinity in church planting – Robert Anthony Shelton, Waynesville.

Doctor of musical arts – Aaron Michael Rice, Murfreesboro.



CHURCH NEWS



Ives Memorial Baptist Church, Pinebluff

The Men's Brotherhood Project for Ives Memorial Baptist Church, Pinebluff, involved volunteers building a handicap ramp for a man in their community. The build was part of a "Ramp Up" mission project. Pastor Virgil G. Dwyer Jr. said, "My desire is to fan the flame that has started in our community for missions and the church in active service to our communities outside the walls of our 'sanctuaries.'" The annual Operation Inasmuch is scheduled April 30 and/or May 7 for those who want to get involved in building ramps or other mission outreach opportunities within their communities. Visit baptistsonmission.org/Missions/North-Carolina/Operation-Inasmuch or rampinup.org.

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AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

EUGENE STEVENS WARRICK, 82, died Oct. 9, 2015.

His education included Campbell University, Fruitland Baptist Bible College and Southeastern Seminary. He was a pastor in North Carolina from 1962-1974 before moving to Pennsylvania where he pastored Silver Spring Baptist Church (1974-1978). He then led Lakehurst Baptist Church in New Jersey until 1982. He returned to North Carolina where he actively recruited volunteers to serve with the North American Mission Board (1983-2000). He retired in 2000. He and his wife moved back to Pennsylvania where he was a member of Silver Spring Baptist Church.

He is survived by wife of 58 years, Barbara Dupree Warrick; daughter, Gena Fisher of West Hempfield Township, Pa.; son, Joby Warrick of Centreville, Va.; two sisters, Linda Harris of Goldsboro and Betty Best of Grantham, N.C.; and four grandchildren.

Memorials to: Silver Spring Baptist Church, 4001 Marietta Ave., Columbia, PA 17512.

DALE R. MARTIN, 80, died Dec. 17, 2015.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and a master of divinity from Southeastern Seminary.

Ordained to the ministry in 1956 at Oak Hill Baptist Church in Jonesborough, Tenn., he spent more than 42 years serving as pastor of churches in North Carolina and Tennessee, including full-time pastorates at Mount Moriah Calvert, Brevard, N.C.; Churchland Baptist Church, Lexington, N.C.; Clark Street Baptist Church, Johnson City, Tenn.; and Calvary Baptist Church, Reidsville, N.C. He was active in Baptist denominational life, having served as moderator of associations in North Carolina and Tennessee. He also served on the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the Executive Committee of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. In addition to his ministry in local congregations, Dale served as a chaplain at Mountain Home Veterans' Hospital in Johnson City, Tenn., and he was a chaplain for Hospice of Rockingham County in North Carolina. He was a member of First Baptist Church in Radford, Va. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Daris B. Martin; daughter, Darlene M. Lane; and two grandchildren.

Memorials to: First Baptist Church, 215 3rd Ave., Radford, VA 24141, or the Martin Scholarship Fund of Carson-Newman College.

Staff changes

Bearwallow Baptist Church, Gerton, has called **ROBERT CAPPS** as pastor. Capps previously pastored at Trinity Baptist Church, Benson.

BRITTNEY CASSTEVENS has been called as director of children's ministries at Mountain View Baptist Church, Hamptonville. She will graduate with an associate degree in nursing in May and plans to attend Southeastern Seminary in August.

Retirement

STEVE HENSLEY retired from Sandy Plains Baptist Church on Dec. 31, 2015. He was a pastor for 35 years. He and his wife Connie will make their home in Fairview, just east of Asheville. Hensley will be available for pulpit supply and other services. He can be contacted by phone at (704) 813-6368.

Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. We rely on our readers to help us cover the state and beyond. Please send information immediately following an event, or for opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance if possible.

All submissions will be subjected to *Biblical Recorder* styles and guidelines and will be edited for style and length. Include cost and contact information in your email or correspondence.

Send to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.

Have story ideas? The *Biblical Recorder* is interested in your story ideas. Please send to editor@BRnow.org. Include contact information as well as corresponding photos.

Opinions may be published in Tar Heel Voices. Limit is 300 words.

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NEWS AND INFORMATION

January 24

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

January 31

Distinct in My Character

Focal passage: Matthew 5:1-12

Throughout the ages the Church has utilized Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to frame the Christian life. More specifically, one of the essential passages that the ancient Fathers of the church used to catechize new believers was the "beatitudes," which are short statements that summarized the essence of that sermon. These statements are labeled the "beatitudes" from the Latin word *beatus*, which means "blessed or happy." In other words, it is a state of living that is not marked by temporary and circumstantial happiness, but a deep joy that is rooted in one's relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

- The poor in Spirit are blessed because they recognize their neediness for grace from God.

- Those who mourn their sin, also recognize the comfort they find in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

- The meek are blessed because they do not feel the need to assert themselves over others to get what they want, but find rest in God's providential sovereignty over all events on earth.

- Those who long for righteousness, find satisfaction in the deep wells of gospel empowered and Spirit reliant living.

- The merciful are blessed, because they, after receiving mercy from God, can offer mercy to others freely.

- The pure in heart are those who have seen God in Christ, and have received His righteousness as a gift in faith.

- Those who make peace, (or seek the well-being of those around them) receive the blessing of giving the lost a picture of what is to come.

- Even those who are wrongly treated and reviled are counted among the blessed, because their reward in the world to come is certainly worth the trials here.

This is a life lived in the power of the Spirit and in response to God's blessing. We are doubly blessed because we experience God's blessing in obedience (Luke 11:28; 1 Peter 3:9; James 1:22; Revelation 22:7). But even more so, obedience itself is a blessing! Which one of us would be able to live this way in our own power?



MATT CAPPS
Pastor, Fairview
Baptist Church, Apex

Distinct in My Influence

Focal passage: Matthew 5:13-20

As citizens of the Kingdom of God, Christians are expected to live according to high moral standards. However, when we reflect on the ethic that Jesus calls for in the Sermon on the Mount, it can be easy to fall into despair. Who among us can perfectly uphold these holy virtues? If we are honest, all of us fall short more than we'd like to admit.

The Good News of the gospel is that Jesus came to fulfill the totality of the law. In other words, where the Israelites failed, where we fail, Christ has perfectly lived according to every "iota and dot" of God's perfect law.

Though our righteousness has not exceeded the Scribes and the Pharisees, His has. And it is through Him that we are able to enter the Kingdom of heaven by grace alone, through faith alone.

But do not be mistaken! Christ still calls His disciples to not only teach His

commands, but also live according to His commands.

Jesus illustrates this point by using the examples of salt and light. Like salt, Christians are to preserve what is good, and season our lives for the good of the world. As a light to the world, God's people are called to illuminate the world through good works that bring glory to Him.

This is a call for believers to live a life of worship in response to God's saving grace.

The law is for our good because it shapes our life of worship to be offered as a sacrifice of praise. Christ did not abolish the law, He fulfilled it. He also empowers us to live out the law through His Spirit. Oh what amazing grace!

We live in a broken world where all that is good is being corroded away by sin. In His power, we are the salt that preserves God's good presence to those around us.

We live in a dark world where the shadows of sin creep into every area of society. By His power, our lives illuminate the darkness, pointing others to find their way to the light of Jesus Christ.

January 24

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

January 31

Two paths, one choice

Focal passage: Matthew 7:13-21, 24-27

Stephen Curry, the point guard for the defending NBA championship Golden State Warriors, is in the midst of one of the greatest seasons in professional basketball history. Last season he set the record for three-pointers made in a season with 286. This season he is on pace to blister that record with a projected 326 shots from behind the arc. He played college basketball at Davidson College in Davidson, N.C., where he attended a Bible study with some friends of mine, which makes his historic run all the more entertaining for me to watch.

What does all of this information about Curry have to do with the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount? In the midst of Jesus' invitation, he gives one of the most horrifying warnings in all of scripture.

He says that on judgment day *many* people who have performed many religious acts will be rejected because *He never knew them*.

I can tell you a lot of information about Curry. I can quote stats and tell you about mutual acquaintances, but if

you approach the basketball star and ask him about me, he will have no idea who you are talking about. *He does not know me*.

In this warning, Jesus says that many people may know His "stats" as recorded in His Word. Many may have friends who know Him. Many may have done religious deeds, yet on judgment day many will find out Jesus never knew them.

Knowing about Jesus is not the same thing as knowing Jesus.

Jesus concluded his sermon, not by turning down the lights and playing a powerful song so as to create an emotional moment, but instead by making it crystal clear that He is the one narrow way to enter the kingdom of heaven. He must know you.

Going to church, doing religious acts and knowing a lot about Jesus is not the same thing as knowing Jesus. Repenting of your sin and trusting in Christ alone is the only way to know and be known by Jesus. Therefore the most important question you could possibly answer is, "Does Jesus know you?"



CLINT DARST
Pastor, Freedom
Church, Lincoln

Faith demonstrated

Focal passage: Matthew 8:5-13

All too often we read the Bible through self-focused lenses rather than through God-focused lenses. We do this by reading a passage in light of the personal narrative of our lives rather than the meta-narrative of scripture. Often this causes us to miss the main point of a passage because we jump too quickly to personal application.

It is particularly easy to make this mistake when reading about the miracles that Jesus performs in the gospels. Matthew positions nine such miracles in Matthew 8-9. One might read of Jesus cleansing a leper, healing paralytics, curing a fever, calming a raging storm, casting a legion of demons into a herd of pigs, raising a dead girl to new life, healing a chronic bleeder, opening the eyes of the blind and the mouth of the mute, and then ask the question, "Why don't we see these things happening more often today?"

To ask this question is to miss

Matthew's main point. These two chapters are organized like McDonald's notorious hamburger, the Big Mac: There are 3 separate sets of 3 miracles (the bread of the Big Mac) and sandwiched in-between are two calls to discipleship (the meat of the Big Mac).

Matthew, as he does throughout this gospel, is organizing material in such a way that we see Jesus as the Authoritative King. When the Son of David speaks, creation obeys: diseases must leave, destructive storms must stop, demons must exit, death must let go and disciples must follow. This is what we are to see today as we read these texts: Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Authoritative King over all creation.

Therefore let us read these miracles and first rejoice that Jesus, the authoritative King, is the One who came to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

He is a trustworthy and powerful King who is able to defeat the great enemies that wage war against His people. Therefore, like the centurion, let us boldly and humbly present our requests to God believing that Christ is the King over all.

Witness

Continued from page 8

And the scriptures are full of men who were incarcerated. Joseph. Samson. Daniel. Jeremiah. John the Baptist. Peter. James. John. And yes, even Jesus was processed through the judicial system of his day and unjustly convicted and sentenced.

So we might think twice before we casually assume or generalize about the condition of those 2.4 million men and women living in our nation's prisons. These are people, made in the image of God. And every one of them has a unique story.

Have you ever noticed how Jesus launched his public ministry? Luke 4:17-19 tells us how he entered into the synagogue in Nazareth, opened up the scroll, and read Isaiah's prophecy: "*to proclaim liberty to the captives*" (cf. Isa. 61:1).

Most gloriously and wonderfully for Christians, that certainly means liberty from the bondage of sin and death. But it does not mean less than that. It is also good news, right now, to those locked up.

This is also why Jesus specifically identifies the way we treat prisoners as

one evidence of whether or not we truly know him (Mat. 25:36).

The writer to the Hebrews also makes specific mention of our duty to "*Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body*" (Heb. 13:3). While these passages have in mind especially our fellow Christians incarcerated for the faith, it cannot imply that we neglect our unbelieving neighbor in the next cell.

Thank God for ministries like Prison Fellowship. Thanks to the enduring vision of Chuck Colson, evangelicals have

been on the front lines of caring for the men and women who live in our prisons.

Thank God for people like Dr. Harold Dean Trulear, a Baptist scholar and theologian who is helping so many to think biblically on these issues. But there is an overwhelming amount of work to be done.

It is time for the evangelical conscience to be pricked. If we don't lead the effort, who will?

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Matthew J. Hall is vice president of academic services at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.) **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Senior Pastor. First Baptist Church, Clemmons, NC, is prayerfully seeking the senior pastor that God is preparing to lead our church. CFBC is a giving and mission-minded congregation that is dually aligned with the SBC and CBF, and worships in a blended format. We are centrally located in a diverse and growing community. We expect the pastor will have a master's degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school with some years of experience as a congregational minister. Interested candidates are invited to visit our website, cfbctoday.org, and send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 279, Clemmons, NC 27012, or email to: pastorsearchcfbc@gmail.com. Resumes will be accepted until February 28, 2016.

Winton Baptist Church is seeking a **pastor** for an 80-100 member congregation who is comfortable with a blend of traditional and contemporary services. Being involved in our youth ministries is important. Southern Baptist Convention affiliated. Send resume and sample DVD by Jan. 31 to Winton Baptist Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 415, Winton, NC 27986.

West End Baptist Church, Rock Hill, SC, is searching for a **Senior Pastor** of Southern Baptist Doctorial beliefs, who has received God's calling to be a Minister, Teacher and Administrator. Requirements include at least five (5) years of Pastoral experience in a blended contemporary church and have a minimum of a Master's of Divinity Degree. Email resumes to kathyramos@comporium.net or mail by January 31, 2016, to: West End Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 36038, Rock Hill, SC 29732.

Ebenezer Baptist Church of Hillsborough, NC, is seeking candidates for a **full-time senior pastor**. We are a Southern Baptist church affiliated with the Yates Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the Southern Baptist Convention. Qualified candidates must be ordained by a Southern Baptist church of good standing and led by the Holy Spirit in interpreting and preaching God's Holy Word. We prefer that candidates have a seminary degree and 5 years of pastoral experience or an equivalent combination of relevant education and/or experience. Resumes with three references can be emailed to pastorsearch@ebcconnect.org or mailed to Ebenezer Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Team, 1210 Pleasant Green Road, Hillsborough, NC 27278. Resumes will be accepted through February 5, 2016.

West Edgecombe Baptist Church of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, who is a member of the North Roanoke Baptist Association is prayerfully seeking candidates for a **full-time Senior Pastor**. The applicants will possess a strong calling to the pastoral ministry, a degree from an accredited seminary institution and have a minimum of 5 years experience as a congregational minister. Qualified applicants may submit resumes to: WEBC, Attn: Pastor Search Committee, 13841 NC 43 HWY, Rocky Mount, NC 27801.

Memorial Baptist Church, Columbia, MO, is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. We are a mission-minded church, seeking common ground in a diverse community. We affirm both men and women to serve as deacons and we offer blended and traditional services. We desire a pastor with strong preaching skills who loves people and has a passion for connecting with the congregation as well as the community. The candidate will hold a degree from an accredited seminary and have experience as a senior pastor. Applications should be sent to pastorsearch@memorialbaptist.org or Memorial Baptist Church, 1634 Paris Rd., Columbia, MO 65201, and be received prior to April 4, 2016, to ensure full consideration. More info: www.memorialbaptist.org.

Church Staff

Minister of Students. Full time, ministry experience preferred. Church is seeking a godly individual with a strong vision of God's work and missions. Bachelor's degree preferred. Email resume to secretary@abbottscreek.org or mail to: Abbotts Creek Missionary Baptist Church, 2817 Abbotts Creek Church Road, High Point, NC 27265.

Three Forks Baptist Church of Taylorsville, NC, seeking a **full-time Associate Pastor/Youth Pastor**. Please send resume to attention of Dr. Carson E. Moseley, 4685 Three Forks Church Road, Taylorsville, NC 28681.

Green Creek First Baptist in Columbus, NC, is seeking a **full-time Student Pastor**. This individual must have at least a bachelor's degree in church ministry and two or more years experience in student ministry. They will be responsible to oversee and facilitate the K-12 ministries of the church and teach 7-12 Bible studies. Green Creek First is a conservative minded church that partners with the SBC, BSCNC and the Polk Baptist Association. Please send resumes to gcfbpersnnel@yahoo.com by December 31, 2015.

First Baptist Church of Locust is seeking a **full-time Minister to Youth and Children**. For a detailed job description, please contact the church office at (704) 888-2431. To apply, please send a resume, statement of faith and a cover letter to FBC Locust, PO Box 159, Locust, NC 28097.

Miscellaneous

NCBAM encourages you to reach out to a frail-aging adult this winter with a card, phone call or friendly visit. Call 877.506.2226 for a copy of Passport – monthly tips for providing "help for the journey" to aging adults.

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