



Sanctity of life Sunday

Ashe Pregnancy Care Center stands up for the unborn, infants and children in its community. Read about this ministry and opinions about the day. **Pages 11, 16 and 17**

Rebirth of a church

A dying church in High Point gets a second chance at life through a merger with a nearby thriving church – Life Community Church in Jamestown. **Page 8**

BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

JANUARY 21, 2012 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • VOLUME 178 NO. 2 • **BRnow.org**

Supreme Court sides with churches

By **MICHAEL FOUST** | Baptist Press

In a landmark decision for churches, the U.S. Supreme Court has for the first time ruled that a “ministerial exception” allows congregations and religious groups to hire and fire ministers free of federal employment discrimination laws.

The unanimous ruling Jan. 11 in a case closely watched by religious liberty organizations involved a teacher who had been fired from an Evangelical Lutheran Church school in Michigan. The teacher, the equivalent of a minister in the school’s employee classification, sued the school after she was fired, and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in her favor.

Although the case only involved one employee at a Christian school, the constitutional principle in the case could have impacted churches. Observers considered it one of the most significant religious freedom cases to reach the high court in decades.

The Sixth Circuit’s decision worried religious groups who feared that a ruling against them would strike a blow to their hiring freedoms. The Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and International Mission Board signed a brief urging the high court to side with the Lutheran school.

The Supreme Court, with no dissenters, said that the First Amendment is clear in preventing government interference.

“The Establishment Clause prevents the Government from appointing ministers, and the Free Exercise Clause prevents it from interfering with the free-

See Supreme Court page 7

‘THERE IS LOVE OUT THERE’

N.C. Baptist Men complete 4 homes for tornado victims

By **SHAWN HENDRICKS**
BR Managing Editor



Sharon Bond hugs Billy Layton at the dedication ceremony of Bond's new home in December. (BSC photos by Mike Creswell)

The tornado scattered nearly everything they owned across the road outside their once standing mobile home and into a nearby field.

Terry and Sharon Bond and their three teenagers lost their home in Harrellsville on April 16, 2011.

That day tornados hit North Carolina, claiming 24 lives. Hundreds of homes were destroyed and thousands were damaged.

Fortunately the Bonds remained safe in the home of Sharon’s mother just down the road.

“Nothing was left standing,” Sharon

Bond said. “I felt like the story of the three little pigs when the wolf blew the house down. I lost my home, but I thank God, ... [we] just lost material things.”

Her brother’s home also was damaged in the storm, and both families moved into their mother’s three-bedroom house.

“There were 10 of us living in the same house,” she said.

“We stayed there for a while and then [the Bonds] moved into a FEMA trailer.”

With limited income, the Bonds weren’t sure when their family would find a permanent place to live.

A few months later they were notified that N.C. Baptist Men were building them a house.

In December, the Bonds were one of four families in Bertie and Hertford Counties to receive newly built homes.

“I thought, ‘Is this for real?’” Bond said. “I was just overjoyed, teary eyed – all I could do was cry. When they gave us the key it was unbelievable.”

Two of the houses were dedicated Dec. 16.

The Bond’s house and one other were completed a few days later – just

See Baptist Men page 4

Church planter reflects on journey, God's provision

By **BUDDY OVERMAN** | BSC Communications

Bryon Lamb knew God was calling him to plant a church that would intentionally engage the unchurched people in his community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But Lamb was not trained in church planting, had never started a church, and he wasn't even sure he had the means to start one.

Lamb soon learned that when God leads, God provides.

Lamb was serving as a bivocational pastor in what he described as a traditional church when he first felt God calling him to church planting. "There was an unchurched person who kept coming but did not fit in wearing blue jeans and Crocs," Lamb said. "It was obvious they did not feel comfortable because everyone else was wearing suits and ties."

That experience ignited a passion to start a new church where everyone would feel comfortable regardless of their appearance. "People need to know there is a place they can come no matter what they are wearing and feel accepted and loved," Lamb said.

Lamb talked with his director of missions, Jeff King, about his idea for a new church. King put him on track to receive church planting training through the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

The BSC trains more than 100 church planters in North Carolina each year. After passing an initial assessment, potential planters are eligible to receive basic church planting training through the BSC.

Lamb said the BSC training provided everything he needed to launch a new church. "I learned so much during basic training that I went back to our 10-member church plant group and we went through the material together," Lamb said. "It has really blessed us."

It was not long before the team was finalizing plans to launch LifeSpring Community Church in Franklin. They needed some help renovating the facility they rented as their worship center, and they wanted advice from an established church before finalizing the bylaws.

King arranged a meeting between Lamb and Davis Hooper, pastor of Coweeta Baptist Church, to see if Coweeta would consider partnering with LifeSpring during the launch period.

At first, this seemed like an unlikely pairing.

"We are two polar opposite church families," Lamb said. "Coweeta is probably the most traditional church in the association. I never thought they would consider sponsoring a church such as ourselves."



Bryon Lamb, left, pastor of LifeSpring Community Church in Franklin, participates in an observation exercise with other bivocational and small church pastors. Lamb approached his director of missions when he saw a visitor at his church looking uncomfortable because of his attire. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina provides training to more than 100 church planters each year. Coweeta Baptist Church in Otto has been assisting Lamb with planting LifeSpring Community. (BR photo by Dianna L. Cagle)

The generational gap and different worship styles were not a concern for Hooper. He knew Lamb had a passion to see people come to faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

"I had no reservations about helping Bryon," Hooper said. "We were eager to help."

Coweeta did everything LifeSpring needed them to do. They helped LifeSpring finish their bylaws, and when LifeSpring had less than 30 days to complete the renovation of their worship center, they were there to help.

"Davis Hooper showed up with 25 people from Coweeta and they got more work done in one day than we could have done in a week on our own," Lamb said.

The relationship formed between Coweeta and LifeSpring is one that has continued to grow. The two congregations have held joint worship services together, and Lamb and Hooper have invited each other to participate in ordination services at their respective churches.

"Coweeta has been wonderful for our church family," Lamb said. "They are a much older congregation than we are, and their commitment to us has really taught our younger people how important it is to be committed to your church family."

Hooper's congregation has also benefited from the partnership. "Our partnership with LifeSpring has taught us that you don't have to be traditional to reach people for Christ," he said.

LifeSpring held its first service December 12, 2010, with 20 people in attendance.

Although not quite the beginning they expected, Lamb and his team did

fire for God during the past year," he said. Lamb believes a threefold emphasis of boldly preaching God's Word, intentional discipleship, and a contemporary worship style is making a positive impact.

"It has changed the way people view church," Lamb said. "I had a young man ask to be baptized recently, and he told me he did not know church could be this fun."

Part of the fun for Lamb is not being tied to a traditional set of rules. For example, the Sunday before Memorial Day, "we decided to go camping," Lamb said. "We put a sign on the [church] door telling people to meet us at the local campground and to bring their flip flops and chairs."

With LifeSpring growing numerically, and its members maturing in the Lord, Lamb and his team are preparing to plant more churches. "We want to start churches out of our church," he said. "We just want people to be reached for Christ."

Planting new churches might seem impossible to others, but Lamb knows all things are possible with God.

"Church planting was a whole new animal," he said. "I never thought it would happen." **BR**

not give up. One year later, LifeSpring is averaging 50 to 75 people during Sunday morning worship.

It's the life change, not the numbers, which excites Lamb. "I have seen people who were never church members become on

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Speaker Pam Gibbs

Girls Ministry Specialist, LifeWay Christian Resources

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CHURCH NEWS



Dublin First Baptist Church

For the past three years, residents of one small rural North Carolina community have come together to kick off their New Year worshipping their Lord. Dublin First Baptist Church once again played host to this annual event. Over a dozen congregations from the surrounding area gathered Jan. 1 to enjoy a night of music, preaching, praise and fellowship. Being a three-day holiday weekend, some worried the event might not meet past year's expectations, however by 5:30 the church's Family Life Center was nearing capacity. By 6, the gym was packed and many were left standing. Pastor Cameron McGill and friend Danny Lesane, a singer with The Mighty Echoes began talking a few years ago about a joint Anglo- and African-American service. The first Sunday of 2009 more than 400 people attended the first gathering. Several church choirs and two groups – The Glorybound Quartet and The Mighty Echoes – led the singing.

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

CHARLES “PREACHER” HENRY PIERSON died Dec. 30, 2011.

A former offset printer at *Transylvania Times*, he was called to the ministry in the 1960s.

He led Blue Ridge Baptist Church for more than 25 years. He also was pastor at Lusk Chapel in Spring Creek, Green River Baptist in Henderson County and Calvary Baptist in Sanderson, Texas. He was a chaplain for Duke University's football team for 30 years.

He is survived by sons Kenny of Brevard, Jeff of Hendersonville, Randy of Jackson, Tenn., and Jud; 15 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

JOHN FRANCIS ROBINSON, 92, died Dec. 27, 2011.

He was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II. He received the Purple Heart and was involved in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a graduate of Mercer University in Georgia and Southern Seminary. He also worked for the Seaboard Railway and served as a minister for 61 years.

An active member of Snyder Memorial Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Robinson

had served as an associate chaplain at the VA Medical Center in Fayetteville. He led churches in Georgia, Kentucky, Virginia and North Carolina, including Pittsboro Baptist Church. He served as an interim pastor for 19 churches.

He is survived by his wife, Annie M. Chason Spears Robinson; a son, John Timmons Robinson of Raleigh; two stepsons, Philip Y. Spears of Stedman and Gregory C. Spears of Fayetteville; four grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.

Memorials to Snyder Memorial Baptist Church or the Chason Spears Robinson Scholarship fund of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth Texas.

Staff change

Advance First Baptist Church, Advance, has called **RODNEY C. HELLARD** as pastor. He was previously the pastor of Hickory Mountain Baptist Church, Siler City.



RODNEY C. HELLARD

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

2012 N.C. Baptist Missions Conference set

The North Carolina Baptist Missions Conference will be April 13-14 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. “Glory to God” is the theme with keynote speakers Leonard Sweet, Henry Blackaby and David Nasser.

The Annie Moses Band will lead worship. Other activities include mission action conferences, mission fair exhibits, volunteer suppers, and mission testimonies.

Registration is \$10 per person. Contact Lynn Tharrington for more information: ltharrington@ncbaptist.org; (800) 395-5102, ext. 5599. Register online at ncbaptist.org.

International student invited to Fort Caswell

On April 13-15, experience rich cultures of the world in one place: Fort Caswell, located on the eastern tip of Oak Island. This will be a weekend for international students from across North Carolina to come together with the theme “Family Portraits.”

Each will be able to share unique aspects of their own cultures as well. The cost is \$75 per person, which includes five meals and two nights of lodging. To register, contact your Baptist campus minister or Rick Trexler at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5560; rtrexler@ncbaptist.org. A \$20 deposit is due to your Baptist campus minister by March 25.

State Evangelism Conference reaches culture

“Culture Reach,” the state evangelism conference, is Feb. 27 at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. Starting at 9:30 a.m. the conference will have three sessions about youth and culture, the gospel in culture, as well as popular culture and media for evangelism. Speakers include three actors from the movie “Courageous,” several Baptist State Convention leaders, Southeastern Seminary professor Alvin Reid and others. For more information call (800) 395-5102 or e-mail evangelism@ncbaptist.org. Visit ncbaptist.org.

Ministerial tax, compensation seminars offered in February across the state

For pastoral staff, secretaries, treasurers and church committees involving budget and finance, come to a ministerial tax issues and compensation planning seminar offered Feb. 20-23.

Seminars will be taking place in six locations: Ahoskie, Louisburg, Reidsville, High Point, Sanford and Rose Hill. Visit ncbaptist.org for information on locations and times. Register by Feb. 13.

Contact Betty Pleasant at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5595, or bpleasant@ncbaptist.org.

WMU-NC to host Missions Extravaganza

The 2012 Missions Extravaganza will be April 20-22 at Lifeway Ridgecrest Conference Center. The theme is “Challenged ... Prepared ... Equipped” based off Joshua 3:5. The Bible study and theme interpretation will be led by Phyllis Elvington while Bud and Barbara Lee will lead in worship. Registration forms are available at wmunc.org, and forms can be mailed to Ridgecrest Conference Center.

Sunday School training available

All-Star Sunday School training is set Feb. 17-18 at First Baptist Church in Indian Trail. Led by three authors – Steve Parr, Sunday School that Really Works; Allan Taylor, Sunday School in HD; and Josh Hunt, You can Double Your Class in Two Years or Less – the cost is \$25; \$20 if registered by Feb. 1. Contact Patti Cardwell at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5635, or pcardwell@ncbaptist.org. Visit allstarsunday-school.com.

Convention offers statewide prayer event

Pray 2 Go, a Kingdom focused prayer gathering, is scheduled March 6-7 at Mud Creek Baptist Church in Hendersonville and Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute.

Cost is \$20 per person. Contact Betsy Roland at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5513, or broland@ncbaptist.org.

How's your Lottie Moon Offering?

The *Biblical Recorder* is asking churches to share their final results of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. We are looking for churches to share ideas about how they promoted the offering as well as how much over or under the goal you were. Please notify the BR staff at editor@BRnow.org or call (919) 847-2127. Send items by Feb. 8 for possible inclusion in the Feb. 18 issue.



Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Please send information as soon as it happens to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Have questions? Call (919) 847-2127.

Only 46% of children grow up in intact home, study says

WASHINGTON (BP) – Only 46 percent of children in the United States will reach age 17 having grown up in a home with biological parents who are married – a figure that has a significant impact on the nation's graduation, poverty and teenage birth rates, according to a new report.

"We have never faced anything like this in human history," said the Family Research Council's Pat Fagan, one of the co-authors of the study.

Compiled by Fagan and psychologist Nicholas Zill and released by the Family Research Council's Marriage & Religion Research Institute, the data shows that:

- The intact family rate is highest in the Northeast (49.6 percent) and lowest in the South (41.8)
- Minnesota (57) and Utah (56.5) have the highest intact family rate among all 50 states, with Mississippi (34 percent) the lowest.
- Asians (65.8) have the highest rate

among ethnic and racial classes, blacks (16.7) the lowest.

The authors call their report the index of family belonging, and they say there is a direct correlation between a low "family belonging" rate, and high poverty and low graduation rates. A north-to-south trip on the Mississippi River, from Minnesota to Mississippi, is a good example of this correlation, the authors say.

The percentage of children who reach age 17 with married biological parents

falls drastically as one travels down the river, from 57 percent in Minnesota, to 49 percent in Illinois, 40 percent in Tennessee and 34 percent in Mississippi. At the same time, the graduation rate also falls significantly (Minnesota, 86 percent; Mississippi, 64 percent).

Likewise, the child poverty rate is closely tied to the breakup of the family. The child poverty rate in Minnesota is 14 percent. It then climbs during the trip down the Mississippi River. **BR**

Baptist Men Continued from page 1

in time for Christmas. Each house was 1,400-square feet, with three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Each house also included a fully decorated Christmas tree to welcome the new homeowners.

The families hung signs on their front porches thanking North Carolina Baptist Men for building them a new house.

A crowd of volunteers, family and friends gathered outside the houses to celebrate the project's completion.

"I would just like to thank everyone [who] had a part in building our home," said Dorothy Earley, who moved into a new house with her daughter, Crystal.

"The number one person to thank is God," she added.

"I would like to thank Him and [North Carolina Baptists].

"It's been a blessing to me and a blessing to my daughter."

"We never asked for this but this is what we got," added Harriet Williams, 87.

"It's so pretty, A rich person doesn't have a prettier house than this. I'm so proud of it."

The project wouldn't have been completed on time without God providing the needed volunteers, said Billy Layton, project coordinator with N.C. Baptist Men.

In August, Hurricane Irene delayed the project for several weeks after it damaged houses along much of the East Coast.

Layton, however, remained faithful that God would provide – even when he wasn't sure how it would happen.

"People came in every day," he said. "People were helping from all over. We had 25 to 30 people a day, and we were expecting six."

A total of 300 to 400 volunteers assisted with the project.

On the Layton's blog – *missiontripadventures.blogspot.com* – he and his wife, Ann, shared photos and their thoughts on how the project impacted their lives.

Ann, – who worked alongside her husband – wrote the following message:



"Some days I feel like I'm missing Christmas ... the baking goodies, decorating the house and Christmas shopping.

"But then we get the privilege of dedicating a brand new house to a grateful family and handing them the keys to their home.

"Then I know that we are where God has placed us and just where we belong."

In addition to the volunteers, all of North Carolina Baptists who give through the Cooperative Program and to the North Carolina Missions Offering have helped contribute to the project.

"I want to thank [N.C. Baptists] for giving ... for praying," said Gaylon Moss, who helps coordinate disaster relief and volunteers for N.C. Baptist Men, "and for participating in helping us to build these homes ... and what [they] do [for] North Carolina missions."

For Sharon Bond, it was a Christmas gift she and her family will never forget.

"I thank God for [North Carolina Baptists]," Bond said.

"There is love out there."

For more photos and the latest up-



Harriet and Albert Williams, at left, share a moment during a December key ceremony that allowed Harriet to be in a new home for Christmas. Above, Billy and Ann Layton give keys to Dorothy and Crystal Earley. The Earleys and Williams lost their homes in the April 2011 tornadoes that ripped across North Carolina. North Carolina Baptist Men worked to get these families into their new homes before Christmas. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

dates on N.C. Baptist Men, check out their page on Facebook at NC Baptist Men's Disaster Relief Ministry.

Call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5599 or visit baptistsonmission.org.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Mike Creswell, Baptist State Convention Communications, contributed to this story.) **BR**

Tornado recovery

North Carolina Baptist Men responded to a tornado Jan. 11 that struck in Burke and Rutherford counties.

Visit baptistsonmission.org for more information, or call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5599.

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Ministers encouraged to take compensation survey

DALLAS (BP) – Southern Baptist Convention church ministers and employees are encouraged to take the 2012 Compensation Survey at guidestone.org/compensationsurvey. The deadline is May 31.

Each completed survey benefits participating churches by providing an accurate baseline of compensation among similar-sized churches in their state convention. Because of the surveys, administrators, personnel/finance committees and minister search teams are able to receive customized reports that allow them to better determine adequate compensation for ministers and staff.

This year's survey has been simplified for the convenience of participants and can be completed in only five to eight minutes on average. As usual, survey participants need to have access to infor-

mation regarding their salary, benefits, their church's estimated weekly worship or Bible study attendance, resident membership and annual budget. All information is kept confidential and no individual answers will be reported.

The compensation survey is provided through the joint efforts of Baptist state conventions, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources. GuideStone and LifeWay compile the submitted data and provide all users with access to the results. Survey results will be released this summer.

A printed version of the survey may be obtained by contacting GuideStone at 1-888-98-GUIDE (1-888-984-8433) between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. CST Monday-Friday or by calling your state convention office. **BR**

Jan. 31 deadline for nominations

North Carolina Baptists still have time to submit recommendations for people to serve on the Baptist State Convention's (BSC) Board of Directors, the boards of the Convention's agencies, institutions and committees.

The Convention's Committee on Nominations seeks diversity among the recommendations that will represent churches of various sizes, various professional and educational backgrounds, ethnic and racial diversity, geographical areas, different age groups, lay persons and ministers.

Input from North Carolina Baptists regarding nominations of individuals to serve is essential for the ongoing missions, ministries and evangelistic endeavors of the BSC.

BSC bylaws require the Committee on Nominations to recommend to the Convention nominees from both small and large churches (over/under 400 members), limit churches to no more than six individuals from a single church serving on all Convention boards and committees, and limit BSC Board of Director membership to one member from any church.

An individual may only serve on a single committee or a single board at one time, whereas in the past individu-

als could serve in more than one place at one time. Therefore, it is essential for North Carolina Baptists to recommend more individuals to serve on the Board of Directors and Convention committees.

Nominations are due Jan. 31. To make a nomination, visit recommend.ncbaptist.org or use the form at left. Recommendations received after the Jan. 31 deadline will be considered the following year.

For questions related to the recommendation process, contact Cynthia King at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5501, or cking@ncbaptist.org.

When making a recommendation keep in mind these vacancies:

- Baptist Children's Homes of N.C. – nine trustees
- N.C. Baptist Hospital – two trustees
- *Biblical Recorder* – four directors
- NC Baptist Foundation – five directors
- BSCNC Board of Directors (Board of Directors vacancies are based on information from annual church profiles) – all 10 regions
- Committee on Convention Meetings – six vacancies
- Committee on Resolutions and Memorials – three vacancies
- Historical Committee – four vacancies **BR**

North Carolina Baptist Hospital employee Christmas

North Carolina Baptist Hospital, a part of Wake Forest Baptist Health, used its facilities to host several celebrations during December. An outdoor Moravian star lighting service was held Dec. 1. Around 300 employees and members of the community gathered to watch the lighting of one of the world's largest Moravian stars on the hospital. There were also three Christmas love feasts in Davis Memorial Chapel. More than 200 employees, patients and families attended the services. Employees provided Christmas for 25 indigent patients and their families through Angel Tree. Most of these patients were children who received care at the center during the year. Carolers also traveled the halls to nursing stations, patient rooms and family waiting areas.

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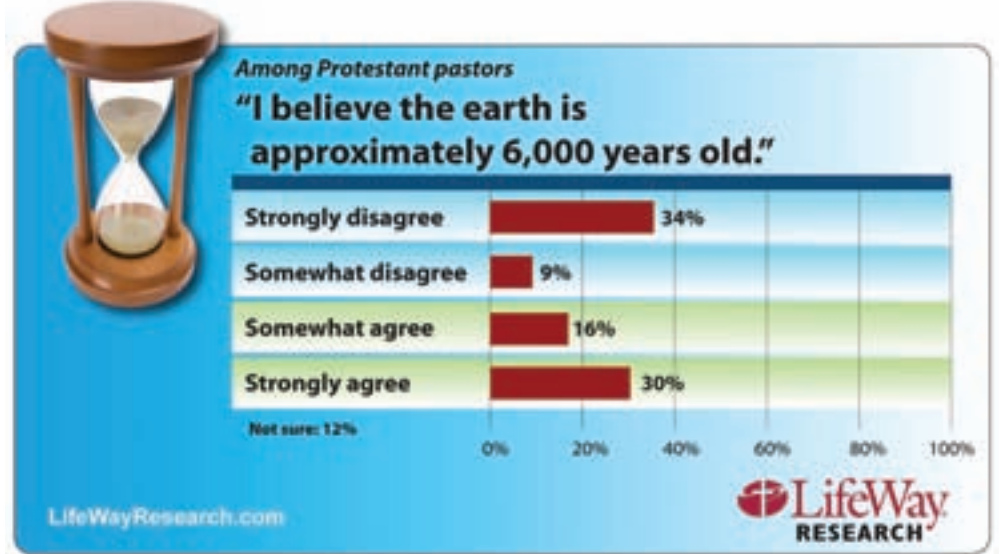
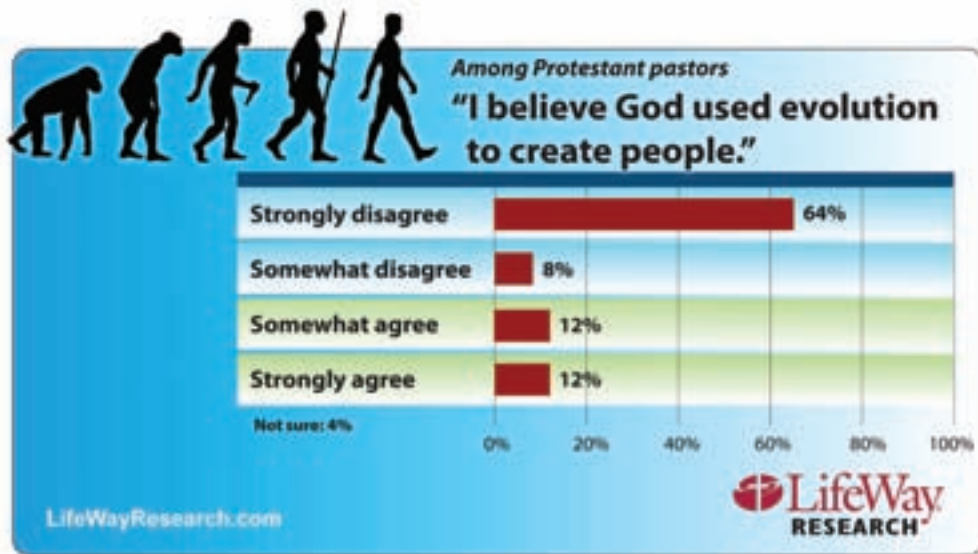
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Pastors unconvinced about evolution, split on earth's age

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

Pastors overwhelmingly believe that God did not use evolution to create humans and think Adam and Eve were literal people, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

The survey of 1,000 American Protestant pastors, released Jan. 9, also found that ministers are almost evenly split on whether the earth is thousands of years old. When asked to respond to the statement, "I believe God used evolution to create people," 73 percent of pastors disagree, with 64 percent strongly disagreeing and 8 percent somewhat disagreeing. Twelve percent each somewhat agree and strongly agree. Four percent are not sure.

In response to the statement, "I believe Adam and Eve were literal people," 74 percent strongly agree and 8 percent somewhat agree. Six percent somewhat disagree, 11 percent strongly disagree and 1 percent are not sure.

"Recently discussions have pointed to doubts about a literal Adam and Eve, the age of the earth and other origin issues," said Ed Stetzer, vice president of research and ministry development for LifeWay Christian Resources. "But Protestant pastors are overwhelmingly creationists and believe in a literal Adam and Eve."

Based on a Gallup poll from December 2010, pastors are more creationist (referring to the belief that all things were created substantially as they now exist as recounted in the first chapter of Genesis and not gradually evolved) than the

American public at large. Forty percent of Americans believe God created humans in their present form, 38 percent say God used evolution to develop humans and 16 percent think man evolved with God playing no part in the process.

In the LifeWay Research survey, about one in five pastors agree that most of their congregation believes in evolution. That includes 10 percent who strongly agree and 9 percent who somewhat agree. A majority (62 percent) strongly disagree and 13 percent somewhat disagree.

Only a third of pastors (36 percent) teach on creation and evolution more than once a year. Among the statistically significant differences:

- Pastors in the Northeast are more likely than their counterparts in any other region to strongly agree that God used evolution to create people. While 25 percent of Northeastern pastors strongly agree, only 13 percent in the West, 12 percent in the Midwest and 8 percent in the South feel similarly.

- Pastors of larger churches are less likely to believe in evolution than those in smaller congregations. Only 4 percent of pastors in churches with 250 or more in attendance strongly agree that God used evolution to create humans. In comparison, 13 percent in churches with attendance of 0-49, 14 percent with 50-99 and 12 percent with 100-249 feel the same.

- Pastors who consider themselves mainline Protestant are more likely than evangelicals to believe in evolution. Among those identifying themselves as mainline, 25 percent strongly agree that

God used evolution to create humans.

- Pastors who indicate they are evangelical are more likely than their mainline colleagues to strongly agree that Adam and Eve were literal people (82 percent vs. 50 percent).

- Pastors with graduate degrees are more likely to strongly disagree that Adam and Eve were literal people than those whose highest level of education is a bachelor's degree (16 percent versus 2 percent).

- Geographically, pastors in the South are most likely to strongly disagree that most of their congregation believes in evolution. While 69 percent of Southern pastors strongly disagree, 47 percent in the Northeast, 60 percent in the Midwest and 56 percent in the West feel similarly.

Age of the earth

In response to the statement, "I believe the earth is approximately 6,000 years old," 34 percent of pastors strongly disagree. However, 30 percent strongly agree. Nine percent somewhat disagree,

and 16 percent somewhat agree.

"Earth's age is the only issue in this survey on which pastors are almost evenly divided," Stetzer said. "But to many of the pastors, belief in an older earth is not the same as belief in evolution."

The only statistically significant difference was that younger pastors are the least likely age bracket to strongly disagree that the earth is 6,000 years old.

Methodology: The phone survey, conducted in May 2011, sampled randomly selected Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called and responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of Protestant churches. The completed sample of 1,000 phone interviews provides a 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.



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Supreme Court

Continued from page 1

dom of religious groups to select their own,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court.

The two clauses are found in the section of the First Amendment pertaining to religious liberty: “The Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Although lower courts had sided with the ministerial exception, the Supreme Court had never ruled on the matter.

“We agree that there is such a ministerial exception,” Roberts wrote. “... Requiring a church to accept or retain an unwanted minister, or punishing a church for failing to do so, intrudes upon more than a mere employment decision. Such action interferes with the internal governance of the church, depriving the church of control over the selection of those who will personify its beliefs. By imposing an unwanted minister, the state infringes the Free Exercise Clause, which protects a religious group’s right to shape its own faith and mission through its appointments.”

Roberts added: “According to the state the power to determine which individuals will minister to the faithful also

violates the Establishment Clause, which prohibits government involvement in such ecclesiastical decisions.”

In his 22-page decision, Roberts set forth historical background, noting that the Puritans fled to New England in order to “escape the control of the national church.” After the First Amendment was adopted in the late 1700s, Roberts said, the federal government made clear its understanding of the amendment’s meaning.

For example, when the first Catholic bishop in the U.S. asked President Jefferson in 1806 who should be appointed to direct the affairs of the Catholic Church in the Louisiana Territory, Secretary of State James Madison responded that it was an “entirely ecclesiastical matter” for the church to decide. Roberts also quoted an 1872 Supreme Court opinion in which the justices refused to decide whether slavery or anti-slavery factions

controlled Walnut Street Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Ky.

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty represented the Lutheran school.

“The message of today’s opinion is clear: The government can’t tell a church who should be teaching its religious

“The message of today’s opinion is clear: The government can’t tell a church who should be teaching its religious message.”

— Luke Goodrich

message,” said Luke Goodrich, deputy national litigation director at the Becket Fund. “This is a huge victory for

religious freedom and a rebuke to the government, which was trying to regulate how churches select their ministers.”

The Department of Justice had urged the high court to reject totally the “ministerial exception.”

The Lutheran school in question divides teachers into two categories: “called” and “lay.” Called teachers have to satisfy several requirements in order to fit into that category, including taking theological study courses and obtaining the endorsement of the local synod. Lay

teachers work on one-year contracts and don’t have to meet those requirements, and are hired only when there aren’t enough “called” teachers. The teacher in question, Cheryl Perich, was a “called” teacher.

Perich began the 2004-05 school year on disability leave with a sleep disorder. In January 2005, she notified the school she would be returning to work in February but was told that the school had hired a lay teacher to fill her role. The school, Hosanna-Tabor, believed that she was physically unable to return to work that year or the next, and they offered to pay a portion of her insurance premium in exchange for her resignation. She refused to resign and showed up for work on Feb. 22, refusing to leave until she had received a document stating that she had showed up for work. She told the school that she had spoken with an attorney and intended to file suit. The school fired her on April 10, 2005, due to her “insubordination” and the damage she had done to the “working relationship” by “threatening to take legal action.” The case was *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*. ■

Supreme Court examines TV nudity, profanity

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

U.S. Supreme Court justices challenged lawyers for major networks Jan. 10 to explain why the federal government should not be able to establish a “safe haven” from nudity and obscene language on television.

The high court heard oral arguments in what has been described as the most important broadcast indecency case in more than three decades.

Afterward, supporters of the federal government’s authority to regulate indecency on broadcast television and radio said they were encouraged at prospects the justices would reverse a lower-court ruling that supported the networks.

The arguments came in a case, *FCC v. Fox Television Stations*, that has bounced up and down the federal court system for years. In the latest development, the high court is reviewing an opinion from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York that overturned federal indecency rulings against prime-time telecasts that included nudity and profanity, as well as the policy on which they were based. The case involves penalties by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) against Fox stations for telecasts of the 2002 and 2003 Billboard Music Awards programs in which various obscene words were used briefly and against ABC stations for showing female nudity during ... “NYPD Blue.”

The FCC’s indecency policy applies between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., so networks do not have any restrictions on broadcasting offensive material during the other eight hours of a day. Backers of the federal government’s

indecency policy have said the Supreme Court’s failure to uphold the rules would unleash a flood of graphic nudity and harsh profanity on broadcast television in prime time.

In briefs for the Supreme Court, Fox, ABC, CBS and NBC called for the justices to overturn one of their own rulings – the 1978 *FCC v. Pacifica* opinion, which said the government has the authority to regulate indecent language on the airwaves. That case involved comedian George Carlin’s “seven dirty words” routine.

Lawyers for Fox and ABC told the justices Jan. 10 that the FCC’s policy on profanity and nudity is arbitrary, as well as outdated in a regime in which cable networks are not regulated by the FCC. The federal law on which the FCC’s indecency policy is based applies only to broadcast television and radio. Carter Phillips, Fox’s lawyer, argued the networks would regulate themselves. The FCC “enforces the indecency ban in a starkly inconsistent manner,” said Seth Waxman, ABC’s lawyer and a former U.S. solicitor general under President Clinton. Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg pointed to inconsistency as what she understood to be the primary problem while questioning Solicitor General Donald Verrilli, who argued for the FCC. “[T]he major objection is that one cannot tell what’s indecent and what isn’t.”

Verrilli acknowledged “there is not perfect clarity in this rule.”

He said the Supreme Court suggested in the 1978 *Pacifica* opinion the “context-based rule may well be what the Constitution requires here, and that’s going to result in ... something less than absolute precision.”

Phillips asked the justices, “How is it permissible to

allow the FCC to regulate the broadcast networks on standards that are fundamentally different than cable, the Internet and every other medium that exists?”

Chief Justice John Roberts told Phillips the “proliferation of other media” seems to work against his argument. “People who want to watch broadcasts where these words or expose their children to broadcasts where these words are used, where there is nudity, there are 800 channels where they can go for that. ... [W]hat the government is asking for is a few channels where you can say ... they are not going to hear the S-word, the F-word [and] they are not going to see nudity,” Roberts said.

Associate Justice Antonin Scalia said if “these are public airwaves, the government is entitled to insist upon a certain modicum of decency.”

Studies demonstrate the content of prime-time broadcast television has coarsened in recent years. The Parents Television Council (PTC) filed a brief supporting the FCC policy and quoted its own research showing a 69 percent increase in profanity in prime-time programming from 2005 to 2010. If the high court strikes down the FCC’s policy, television indecency will only increase, the PTC said. Despite the popularity of cable television, broadcast TV has 90 of the top 100 primetime shows on TV, the PTC said in citing data from *BusinessWire.com*. The percentage of Americans who rely solely on broadcast television – and therefore don’t subscribe to cable or satellite – has tripled since 2003 to 15 percent of the public, according to the PTC.

The opinion in the case is expected before the high court adjourns in the summer. ■

Rebirth of a dying church: Congregation finds new life through merger

By **SHAWN HENDRICKS** | BR Managing Editor

Lexington Avenue Baptist Church in High Point, was about to close its doors – for good.

Over a year ago, during an average Sunday service, there were about 30 to 40 in attendance. Nearly everyone in the building was around the age of 70 – with the exception of a young grandchild or two. The church didn't have a pastor to lead them, and there was barely enough money coming in to pay the bills.

"We looked at getting a new pastor but we couldn't afford one," said Benny Taylor, 73, a long-time member of the church with his wife, Joyce.

"We didn't have any young couples ... children and youth running around," he said. "Our future was gone."

Through the years, the church budget and membership had steadily declined from a congregation of more than 200 members, full of families and children. One factor for the decline, Taylor said, involved economic challenges that caused some key businesses in the community to shut down. Many in the community moved away to find jobs.

By the fall of 2010, the last of the remaining younger families with children had left the church.

"There was a quiet," Taylor said. "It was really kind of depressing."

Another factor of the decline, Taylor added, was the churches inability to connect with new people, – of all generations, ethnicities and incomes – who were moving into the community. All of that, however, was about to change.

In the spring of 2011, the church invited Paul Reginaldi, to serve as an interim pastor. Reginaldi was a member of Life Community Church in Jamestown. He had served as a pastor and in other ministerial roles in various churches through the years. He agreed to help Lexington Avenue during their time of transition – or until the church shut down.

In contrast to Lexington Avenue, Life Community was, and is, a growing congregation that now has 1,200 people regularly in attendance each Sunday. It also averages about 80 baptisms annually.

While preaching at Lexington Avenue, Reginaldi developed a friendship with the members.

"God gave me a love for these seniors," he said. "We really bonded."

Reginaldi led the church through a survey that confirmed the church's failing health and lack of impact on its community.

He told the members that they'd be the generation to close the church if they didn't make a change soon.

"There were no real ministries in evangelism, community outreach," Reginaldi said.

"They were, in most cases, physically not able to do much because of their ages and health limitations. They really had a heart to reach their community ... they just didn't know how to do it. They needed leadership."

Lexington Avenue had become, Reginaldi contended, one of the 80 to 85 percent of Southern Baptist churches that are plateaued or dying. Some studies show that more than 60 percent of them are in rapid decline.

Reginaldi asked the remaining members of Lexington Avenue if they would be willing to pray about merging with Life Community.

See Rebirth page 14

Church merger brings hope to community

By **MELISSA LILLEY** | BSC Communications

Ray Johnson wasn't sure if East Albemarle Baptist Church would really go through with it, and he wasn't exactly sure about how his congregation at High Rock Community Church would react.

High Rock is a 2,000-plus member multisite church based in Salisbury that has launched five campuses since it began in 2004 with four families. Campuses have been started in renovated grocery stores, and car and boat dealerships.

East Albemarle is a congregation of about 26 that wants to grow, but is struggling to reach its community. Crippled financially with debt from a building program, the congregation thought they would have to sell.

"East Albemarle came and visited High Rock services, and it was a shock to them. But they recognized that although the contemporary style wasn't what they were used to, they were willing to give it a try to reach people for Christ," said Johnson, High Rock's lead pastor.

One contemporary church, one traditional church, both used to doing things a certain way. But when decision time came, it came down to one thing: getting the gospel to lost people. Instead of launching campus number six as they had done the others, High Rock joined forces with East Albemarle to help the church reach its community.

Since Hal Bilbo became director of missions for Stanly Association six years

ago he has seen three churches close their doors, and he didn't want that to happen again. "East Albemarle had tried to do ministry, but they weren't gaining any ground," Bilbo said. "A leader told me he thought they'd have to sell. I knew then that they realized they were on a dead end road."

Two of the three churches in the association that closed simply aged out. For one church, the youngest deacon was 79 years old. Churches will always be in the process of losing members, Bilbo said, whether because of death or members moving out of the area. "It's a natural flow. But if churches aren't gaining new members, then they are dying," he said.

Bilbo had been talking with East Albemarle about what to do, and when he heard that High Rock wanted to start a campus in the Albemarle area, he called pastor Johnson. "It wasn't the easy way to launch a campus here," Bilbo said. "This reflects the heart High Rock has not to be in competition, but they are concerned about the Kingdom of God."

In March, High Rock leadership will help with an associational training. They will share how to effectively welcome visitors in church. "They're not in it for themselves," Bilbo said.

Bilbo prays the merger will inspire other churches in the association to be more proactive in reaching the lost.

At High Rock the focus is the gospel. "It's all about being able to take the church to the people. We take the Great Commission very seriously. We are tak-



Eddie Connell and Ron Loflin, who both work with High Rock Community Church, talk to Ray and Phyllis Safrit, the first members of High Rock Community Church. The Safrits have helped start several churches because they see a need to reach a younger generation. (Contributed photo)

ing the church outside the four walls and going into the surrounding communities with the multisite model," Johnson said.

High Rock Community Church has a campus in Denton, Kannapolis, Lexington and two campuses in Salisbury. Although the Albemarle campus will not officially launch until Easter Sunday – Johnson said the church is already drawing a crowd, with 111 in worship on Jan. 15.

When Johnson helped start High Rock six years ago his goal was to target unbelievers and people far away from God. Now, he wants to help the East Albemarle congregation to do that too.

"One of our core values is evangelism. We want to do whatever it takes to reach people for Christ," Johnson said.

High Rock leadership preached a five-week series at East Albemarle on the purpose of the church. They also devoted several months to talking with the congregation about what needed to change for it to effectively reach lost people.

"Often people say they want to change," Johnson said. "The reality is, the change they want is that they want others to change to be like them."

Eddie Connell is one who is truly ready to see change. Connell was called into the ministry at age 47, attended Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute, and went to East Albemarle as a bivocational pastor.

Although the merger has been a learning process, the congregation knows it's not about tradition, but about fulfilling the purpose of the church to evangelize and disciple people.

"The merger came together so easily it couldn't have been anything other than God doing these things," Connell said. He is serving bivocationally on the High Rock staff and is excited to see how God will work. "When God's people come together for one purpose, God can do mighty things. I see great things happening at High Rock," he said. "I feel very fortunate to be a part of that." ■

Trot Nixon: Lunch pail guy aims for ‘hall of fame with Jesus’

Boston Red Sox fans appreciated Trot Nixon as a hard-working, bring your lunch pail to work everyday guy in left field. In a career that spanned from 1996 to 2008, Nixon was always ready to battle opposing pitchers while residing in the outfield at legendary Fenway Park. But it was his late game heroics that set him apart.

In Game 3 of the 2003 American League Division series facing the Oakland A's, Nixon was called from the bench as a pinch hitter in the bottom of the 11th. With the Red Sox facing elimination, Nixon lined a two-run homer over the center field wall for a 3-1 Boston victory. After that famous homerun hit, in front of a national TV audience, he boldly proclaimed his allegiance to Jesus Christ.

In 2004, with help from Nixon's biggest year, the Red Sox won the World Series. Nixon was known for being intense and passionate about the game, and a leader on and off the field.

Today Trot and his wife, Kathryn, and children reside in Wilmington. In his spare time he works with kids at youth baseball camps, and he hosts a regional sports television show about high school football.

Roman Gabriel III, who periodically writes about athletics for the *Biblical Recorder*, caught up with Nixon and talked to him about his faith, family and sports.

Q: As a senior at New Hanover High School in Wilmington, you were named the State Player of the Year in both football and baseball. You competed for the starting quarterback job at N.C. State University. Do you think you could have played both football and baseball?

A: I looked at myself as a good college quarterback, but my heart was more geared towards baseball. I never aspired to be a professional football quarterback

... but I just wanted to be one of those college players [who] went to bowl games every year and won national titles. That was the bigger picture to me.

Q: Did your hard-nosed style of playing football help you in regards to toughness on the baseball field?

A: I think it just carried over. The nature that I was brought up in playing sports was to be very aggressive.

Q: Many pointed to you as a player who led by example. What was the foundation of your strong leadership skills?

A: I learned how to be a leader when I was in high school. We all like to have leadership skills. I think that kind of helped me to understand that this is my profession. I looked up to the hard-working, hard-hat kind of guys.

Q: When did you start your relationship with God?

A: I accepted Jesus Christ in 1993. At that time I really didn't live the Christian life. I went to church, chapel services every Sunday, but [I] really didn't try to take that extra effort to know Jesus Christ and welcome Him into my life.

Q: I always talk about the importance of strong mentors in every person's spiritual development. Who was that influential person in your life?

A: Before I came to Boston, my teammates Mike Stanley, John Watson and others brought me closer to Jesus Christ. I had a Bible my mom had given me, but I hadn't carried a Bible to Sunday School or church.

A key person was Walt Day, our

chaplain. He would say we need to get in the Word.

I know it made me a better person, a better husband and a better teammate. Baseball was No. 1 in my life. There is a huge difference now that Jesus is No. 1 in my life. I realized God had a plan for my life.

Q: You struggled throughout your career with chronic back problems. How did that struggle impact your life?

A: I think most baseball players don't want to think too much about injury and what it could do. It hindered me enough where I probably lost four years of my professional career. I just tried to get back into it and rediscover my swing but those were the times when I didn't know the Lord. I didn't pray. I wasn't in His Word. I was always saying why me? I've come to realize over the years that God is not going to put anything in front of us to do that we can't do or hold up.

Q: Did you ever have aspirations or thoughts about the Baseball Hall of Fame during your career?

A: I wanted to be a good person on and off the field.

I really never thought about the [Baseball] Hall of Fame. There is only one hall of fame for me. All Christians understand the hall of fame that we all can be a part of, the hall of fame with Jesus Christ.

(EDITOR'S NOTE - Roman Gabriel III is president of Sold Out Ministries. He hosts *Sold Out Sports*, which can be heard Saturday at 8 p.m. EST on American Family Radio. Contact him at 910-431-6483 or soldoutrg3@gmail.com, or visit soldouttv.com. The Recorder staff would like feedback on items like this as well as the design of the paper. Email editor@BRnow.org or call 919-847-2127.) **BR**



Trot Nixon, seen here on the cover of this PlayStation3 game, lives in Wilmington and uses his love of sports to teach life lessons to children.

CHURCH RESOURCES

CP prayer guide

Keep your church focused on missions, ministry, stewardship, prayer and evangelism with a PowerPoint download.

"53 Sundays 2012" is a devotional tool to help North Carolina Baptists pray for missionaries serving overseas, across North America and across North Carolina. Every ministry and missionary featured is supported through the giving of local churches through the Cooperative Program.

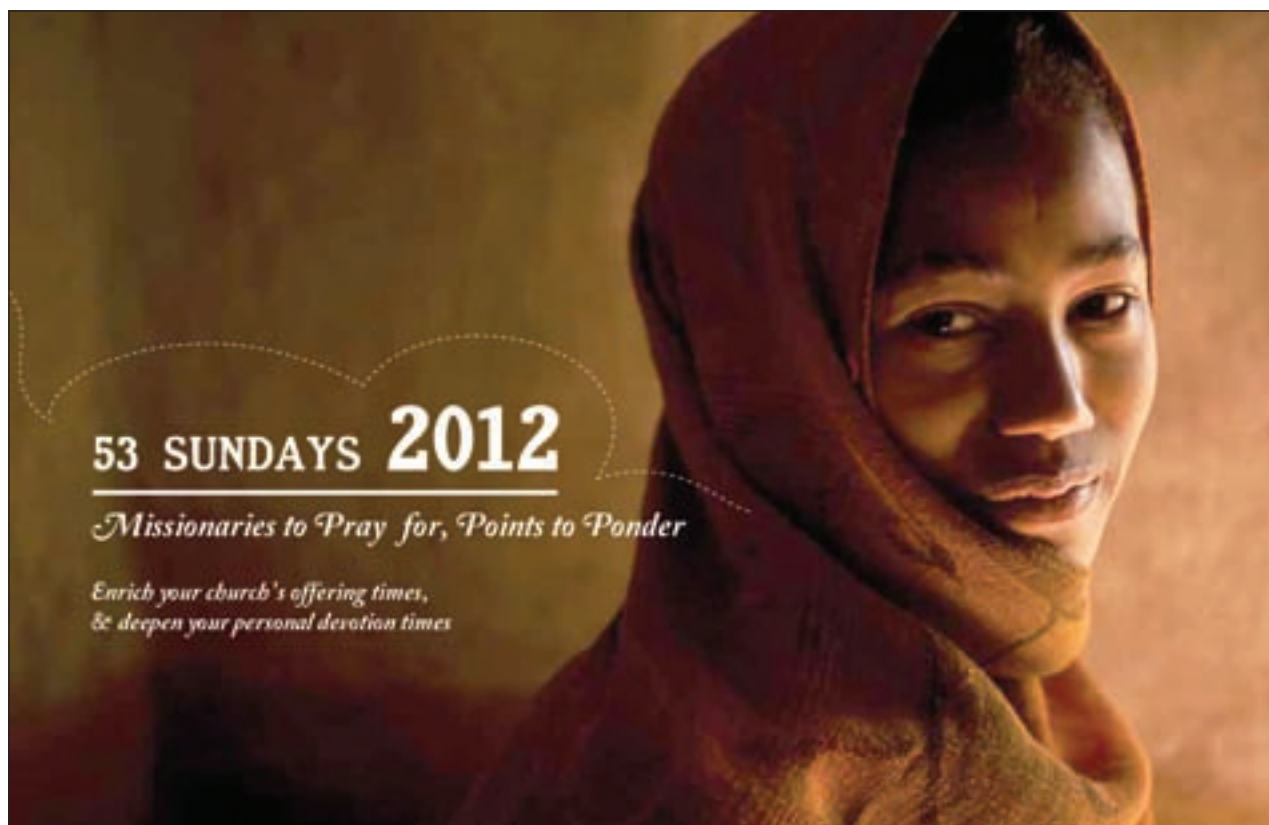
Individuals can use the prayer guide, or pastors and church members can read from the prayer guide every Sunday during worship.

Two slides are provided for each Sunday:

- One slide calls on N.C. Baptists to pray for a missionary or missions cause.
- The second shares a devotional message.

There is also a spiral-bound printed edition of "53 Sundays 2012" prayer guide. Copies are available at the Baptist State Convention. Each church is limited to 10 free copies.

Also, watch for 2012 PowerPoint slides to accompany the new guide. Download these to use each Sunday — lead your congregation toward prayer support for missionaries and greater focus on prayer, stewardship and missions concepts.



India's brothels need God's love

By KATE TAYLOR | Baptist Press

A white-haired American woman sits in the corner seat of the train as it rattles along its tracks through the skyscrapers and the slums of a large city in India. Kathleen Jones* chats with a street boy hawking nail polish, a friendship she has acquired during her frequent train rides.

At the end of the line, Jones weaves through the throngs of people in the station and out into the sunlight. She keeps a steady pace along trash-covered sidewalks and across busy streets until she reaches her destination: a small, dilapidated building, partially obscured from the street. It's a brothel.

A woman runs out to greet her and, taking her arm, pulls her excitedly toward the others waiting in the shelter of the building's overhang. Women crowd eagerly around Jones as she distributes eggs for their lunch and gives them each a welcoming hug and a smile of friendship.

Jones comes to this brothel five days a week to share Christ's love with the women working here. She is 69 years old and has been ministering in the red light districts of India for more than three years. With four children, 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren at home in the United States, coming to India was not an easy decision, but Jones says she knew it was what God called her to do.

"I am living proof that God can use anybody at any age," Jones says. She has no plans to pack up and head home any time soon.

Jones serves through the ministry of Rahab's Rope, a faith-based nonprofit organization fighting human trafficking in India through prevention, rescue and aftercare.

"My heart just broke for [the women here]," Jones says. "It seems that God has just put a burden in my heart for women in need."

In society, Jones says, "these women are scum of the earth. No one wants to talk to them, be their friend, associate with them. They are outcasts."

She spends time with them, offering her friendship and teaching them basic knowledge and practical skills, since most have not had the opportunity for education.

"They don't see anything beyond where they live, how they get to where



Lack of education and lack of job skills further enslave women in the sex industry. "Once they get in, they can't get out," one Christian worker says. Even among India's caste system, women who have been exploited aren't even recognized. (BP photo by Kate Taylor)

Babies 'dedicated' to temple prostitution

By KATE TAYLOR | Baptist Press

Imagine living in a society in which you are judged by your station in life, determined by your birth, rather than by your individual worth or accomplishments. As a member of the lowest rung of society, you can barely keep food on the table for your wife and two daughters.

When your wife becomes ill after giving birth to a third daughter who, unlike the son you had hoped for, will be an unbearable financial burden, you have only one choice: You must



The "Dalit" are India's untouchables. They are the most marginalized of Indian society. Some Dalit parents dedicate their daughters at an early age to gain one of the Hindu goddess' favor. These girls become temple prostitutes. (BP photo)

dedicate your daughter to the goddess as a devadasi, a temple prostitute.

By dedicating your baby, you have given her a profession and a way to obtain food for her family. Perhaps the goddess will now show favor to your family, sparing your wife's life and filling her womb with the long-awaited boy child. Your daughter's sacrifice is small compared to your entire family's alternative fate of starvation. If her body is the price the goddess asks, it must be paid.

In India, the devadasi (day-vah-dah-see) system, a Hindu practice of temple prostitution, has existed for more than 5,000 years, says David Dass, executive director of the India Gospel League. In the state of Karnataka, where he and his wife live, starving families dedicate hundreds of girls each year to the goddess Yellamma. The children are forced to begin a life of prostitution at age 11 or 12.

"From the very beginning, they're being exploited as babies," says Annette Romick, a humanitarian aid worker in India. "Then, when they hit maturity, their bodies are exploited by men. Even when their bodies are no longer desirable to men, they are still exploited and abused because that stigma is on them. They can never escape from it. It's a trap that they're stuck in; it's a living hell that they're experiencing."

The word devadasi literally translates to "god's female servant." Parents usually choose to dedicate their daughters as infants to the goddess Yellamma, in hopes of gaining the goddess' favor or easing a financial burden.

Poverty, unemployment factor in pregnancy crises

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Managing Editor

In Roger Newton's five years leading the Ashe Pregnancy Care Center he has seen the need for pregnancy ministries rise – not only in Ashe County, but across North Carolina.

The economic downturn has made unexpected pregnancies even more of a crisis for many. He has seen more families as well as grandmothers raising children.

"The thing that I've seen grow is the need to help in these first three critical years" of childhood, Newton said. "It's hard for moms to go back to work after having a baby."

The center averages between 30 and 50 clients a month. While most of the clients are women, Newton has seen a good number of men over the years through counseling and parenting classes.

The center began in the mid-1990s because leaders in the area saw a need, "even in our little county to provide information and to provide alternatives to abortion," Newton said.

While abortions are not performed in Ashe County, Newton said 35 abortions were reported for Ashe County more than five years ago when he became director of the center. That number has dropped by 10 since then. Women head to Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Raleigh or other cities for abortion services.

Newton stressed that Ashe County still has a big need for this type of ministry.

While Ashe County doesn't top the list of the most impoverished counties, it ranks several percentage points above some of the more metropolitan areas, where donations tend to be higher.

Jobs are also sparse. Ashe County has a high suicide rate because it is a difficult area to live in because there are not many jobs, said Newton.

"We've seen more husbands and boy-friends out of work," Newton said.

The center helps not only with counseling about abortion alternatives but offers incentives – called baby bucks – to people who watch or attend parenting classes or videos. The center provides diapers, formula and supplies up to age 3. They offer a Bible study and one-on-one peer counseling.

One of the seven board members is a 15-year-old girl who was a client.

"So many want to help after they've been helped," Newton said.

The center is affiliated with the North American Mission Board and works closely with local churches and Ashe Missionary Baptist Association. The center also works with Ashe Really Cares, a ministry associated with the local Baptist association. Together they help clients



One of the biggest fundraisers each year for the Ashe Pregnancy Care Center is its walk. Each October, individuals and families come out in support of the center. Some of the participants are not old enough to walk but they are the same age as some of the babies the center helps. (Contributed photos)

get housing, food, and other supplies.

Newton said he prays Sanctity of Life Sunday Jan. 22 will help "get the word out" for his center and for others across the state who are reaching out to this underserved section of the population.

Sanctity of Life Sunday, as well as public service announcements on the radio, spread the word about the pregnancy center. Newton emphasizes that word of mouth continues to be the best way people find out about the center and its services.

The center hosted an event inviting the public to attend a bazaar for people with home businesses to share about their ministry.

The center's biggest fundraiser is the first Saturday in October when they host a walk for life. Newton, a minister and former IMB missionary looks for opportunities to speak in churches about the ministry and occasionally fill in for pastors who need someone to preach.

New programs

The center recently partnered with Wilkes Community College's Ashe campus to help clients get their GED. Directed by the college, Newton said clients are tested by someone from the campus. Center volunteers then tutor the clients

to get them ready for the GED exam.

Newton said a high school degree or the equivalent GED is required to even work in a fast food restaurant. Twelve students are currently preparing for the GED.

Another recent offering is cloth diapers. One of the center's board members makes cloth diapers, and the center has purchased some to make available for those who request it.

Stories of hope

One of the common misconceptions about pregnancy centers is the kind of clients they see, said Newton. Many mistakenly believe that most clients are teenagers, but Newton said the pregnancy center sees women mainly in their mid-20s. The youngest client is 14. The oldest are grandmothers raising their grandchildren. With teenagers, they usually get help from parents or the school they attend. But the early to mid-20s is the "most abortion vulnerable" age, Newton said.

"It's much more of a

crisis, at least an inconvenience," he said. This group usually no longer has a parent helping them.

One woman with five children sought help from the center after her second set of twins.

Her husband, who worked in the building trade, developed breathing problems and was unable to work.

"She's now going back to school," Newton said, "and she's gotten into a church. Christ has changed her life."

Another married mom who was a bank teller lost her job. Her husband lost his job. She was feeding her baby sugar water to try to get by, but Newton said Ashe Pregnancy Care Center was able to help by providing counseling as well as food, diapers and other supplies.

"Sometimes we are just a bridge over the crisis that they have," he said.

Planning for the future

Through the local Baptist association, the Ashe pregnancy center created an account with the North Carolina Baptist Foundation.

"We don't have very much in it yet," said Newton, but he hopes the interest will begin contributing to the ministry soon. "Some people like to give money that will help for years and years to come."

The center is also waiting on word about a bank loan to purchase a place. Currently it is located in a strip mall. Newton said the current, rented location has allowed them to help a church plant that started in the same shopping center. Members used the center for the church's nursery. The center is now located in a larger building. He believes finding a permanent place will allow the center to spread its ministry even further and help give families in the county a better chance.

The center is open three days – Tuesdays through Thursdays from noon to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Contact Newton at (336) 846-4100 or visit <https://sites.google.com/site/ashepregnancycarecenter/>.



A group performs in front of the Ashe Pregnancy Care Center in Jefferson. The group was part of the center's annual walk for life.

Lowest

Continued from page 10

Once dedicated, a girl is considered to be married to the goddess and is never allowed to marry a man. When the girl reaches physical maturity, she is forced to begin her life as a prostitute.

“Since 1982, the devadasi system has been banned by the government of India and Karnataka,” says Joseph Paul, a Christian pastor ministering among devadasis. “But there are underground practices – nobody knows how they practice and how they dedicate.”

Because the devadasis practice has gone underground, the women work mostly from their homes, only visiting the temple to beg money from worshippers. Many of the prostitutes are trafficked to the red light districts of Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore and other large cities. “Our parents gave us birth and threw us on the street. Men come and use us, finish their job and go,” says Sugandha, a former devadasi receiving assistance from a non-governmental organization.

In the Hindu religion, devadasis have hope for a better life only through the cycle of rebirth. Few devadasis have ever heard the name of Jesus Christ who offers hope for this life and for eternity.

“Their lives have been ruined, and they feel like trash that’s just been used over and over again and just discarded,” Romick says. “They need to know the love of Christ and the only way that they’re going to have that is if we go and tell them.”

Devadasis come mainly from impoverished families of the untouchables class, the lowest rung of Hindu society. They are used and exploited by men. Sometimes they receive compensation for their services, sometimes

not. A vulnerable population, the devadasis are susceptible to HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

“Not only are they shunned because of their profession, but they’re shunned by society because of their status,” Romick says. “They’re the lowest of the low. They’re not even in the caste system – they’re outside the caste system.”

A number of human needs organizations are working to prevent the continuation of the underground devadasi system, but the practice is still widespread throughout India; estimates range from tens to hundreds of thousands of devadasis in the country.

A devadasi who discovers a relationship with Christ, Dass says, becomes a powerful witness in her community: a witness against the practice that enslaved her and for the Savior who set her free. “It’s like the woman at the well,” Dass explains.

“Jesus asked questions and finally she realized, ‘Hey, here is the person whom I know that He is the Messiah.’ Then she goes out, calling other women and bringing



When young girls sacrificed under the devadasi system reach maturity, they are exploited by men. “They can never escape from it,” says one humanitarian aid worker. (BP photo by Miriam Snodell)

them and telling, ‘Here is the answer for our problem.’”

Education and awareness are essential components to bring about the end of the devadasi system. Of the women themselves, Dass says, “Equip them, empower them, mentor them, train them, disciple them and put them back [in their communities] and you’ll see what the Lord does.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Kate Taylor writes for IMB, International Mission Board.)

Brothels

Continued from page 10

they work and their workplace,” Jones says. “They don’t know the possibilities that are out there in the world. They don’t even know how big the world is because they have lived in such a limited and controlled environment.”

Many of the women were sold into the sex trade at a young age by a family member. About half of the women in Jones’ ministry have been trafficked from India’s neighboring countries. None of them come by choice.

“Once they get in, they can’t get out,” Jones says. “They have no skills; they have no education; they have nowhere to go.”

Though the women do not earn very much money – just over \$2 a customer – they make far more by working in the brothel than by doing any other kind of unskilled labor.

“A lot of them would like to get out [of their work in the brothel] but they have families to support,” Jones says. “They get trapped by the money because they couldn’t go wash floors and make as much money as they make in the brothel. That becomes a problem. It perpetuates the situation.”

Jones tries to teach the women about the hope that is free to them in Christ.



Many of the women Kathleen Jones meets were sold into the sex trade at a young age by a family member. None are here by choice. (BP photo by Kate Taylor)

Since many of the women are practicing Hindus, their only hope for a better life lies in an almost endless cycle of rebirth. Jones fights to show them hope for this life and for eternity.

“There’s as much hope for them in

Christ as there is for [any of] us,” she says.

A huge part of the ministry is meeting the basic needs of the women, Jones says, reaching them physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. She could

tell the women that Jesus loves them and walk away, or, as she says, “I can go out there and I can spend time with them and I can show them that I love them by trying to teach them and improve their lives in some way. That speaks more to them than what I say.”

Jones ultimately wants the women to know they are loved without any strings or conditions, without anything required of them in return. Deep and unconditional love comes only from Christ.

“There is not enough that I could give them and do for them that would really change their lives without Christ,” she says.

Though it is hard for Jones to be away from her family, it is harder to see the women trapped in a situation from which they feel there is no escape.

Her own heart daily breaking for the hurts and hardships of the women, Jones has chosen a tough ministry.

But, Jones says, “There’s not a day goes by that I don’t thank God for letting me be here.”

For more information about the ministry of Rahab’s Rope, visit rahabsrope.com.

*Name changed.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Kate Taylor writes for IMB, International Mission Board.)

Old Town moves forward in commitment to unengaged, unreached

By MELISSA LILLEY | BSC Communications

During an International Mission Board (IMB) regional training conference Mark Harrison, missions pastor at Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, met Duane, a missionary whose work in a Southeast Asian country got Harrison's attention. So much so, that not long after the conference Harrison visited that same country to learn more about ministry in that part of the world.

Now, three years later, Old Town is working with Duane and his wife, Jeanne, to engage a group of people in Southeast Asia that the church identifies as the "T people." This particular group has had no known church-planting strategy among them, and they have an evangelical presence less than 2 percent. About one year ago Old Town began their journey to engage the T people, and the church has affirmed God's leading in that direction.

Duane and Jeanne, who are stateside for several months, recently participated in a Sunday morning worship service at Old Town that focused on international missions and celebrated God calling them to Southeast Asia to share the gospel with the T people.

We're just people

"There's a lot you can do. More than you can imagine," Duane said. Duane expressed his appreciation for Old Town's commitment to "embrace" – as the IMB describes it – an unengaged, unreached people group.

"We (the IMB) can't get to all the people groups," he said. "We don't have the time or the resources," he said.

Volunteer teams are crucial because many missionaries serve in places where they can't risk too much public exposure

for fear that the government will force them out of the country.

"You can do things we can't do," Duane said. "You can help give our national workers an audience. Everyone wants to hear what the foreigner has come to say."

"Volunteers are an essential part," he added. "We need you to come alongside us."

Jeanne shared how God has allowed her to reach out and serve the women on their missionary team. Some of them spend many hours home alone, caring for children, and the days can get lonely. Jeanne has helped them connect with one another and find ways to minister to those around them.

Forward movement

As Old Town engages the T people they will be participating in what Duane called the "forward movement of the church," that goes back to the book of Acts when the church began spreading out from Jerusalem. Despite persecution and being scattered throughout various areas, Jesus' followers took the message of salvation with them. They were convicted that the gospel must be shared with all people.

"The church was growing, but they were not satisfied," Duane said. "Hearts began to burn for nations around them. Are you satisfied with a world around you that is lost and going to hell?"

Duane told the story of a Buddhist man (98 percent of the T people are Buddhist) who heard the gospel for the first time at the age of 90. After hearing the message, the man asked a haunting question: why have I never heard this story before?

Ready to engage

With their people group identified,



An Old Town Baptist Church flag ceremony is one technique the Winston-Salem church is bringing unengaged, unreached people groups before its congregation. About a year ago, the church began exploring opportunities to reach the T people in Southeast Asia. (Contributed photo)

Old Town is ready to move forward. This month Duane is training the congregation to better understand the culture, worldview and religion of the T people, as well as appropriate evangelism and discipleship methods.

Until recently, the T people were thought to already be part of a larger Southeast Asian people group. Now, as more research is being done about the T people, Duane explained that the T people are their own group of about a half a million.

Very little is known about the T people. Duane said one of the biggest obstacles to T people coming to faith will be Buddhism.

"Buddhism is the whole culture," he said. "You're asking them to forsake everything they've ever known."

With such a high percentage of the population being Buddhist, the T people's government does not yet view Christianity as a threat. However, Duane said, as T people come to faith in Christ, this may change.

Many people in Southeast Asia who

convert to Christianity face persecution from both the government and family.

In February, Harrison and Old Town senior pastor Rick Speas will spend about two weeks cultivating relationships among the T people in Southeast Asia.

In March, a group will participate in the IMB Embrace Southeast Asian People's USA Training event in Dallas, Texas.

Old Town also plans to hold a church-wide celebration/commitment dinner in March to officially launch their work among the T people.

"It's exciting to see all this unfold," Harrison said. "Everything is moving along well, and only by God's design. The things that have come together are not things I – nor anyone I know – could produce by any human means. It's awesome to be part of everything that God is choosing to do."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – This is the fourth article in a series following Old Town Baptist Church's journey to embrace an unreached, unengaged people group. Find links online at BRnow.org.) ■

43 arrested protesting church ban

NEW YORK (BP) – Police arrested 43 New York City pastors and lay people on Jan. 12 who were protesting the city's ban on church use of public schools for worship services.

The ban is scheduled to go into effect Feb. 12.

The arrests came after more than 200

people gathered in the rain outside a Bronx public school where New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was giving his state of the city address.

After singing songs and cheering speeches, protesters prayed and sang songs. Police warned them to leave and then made arrests.

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NEWS BRIEFS

New York Times notes NAMB church planting

NEW YORK (BP) – The North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) Send North America: New York City church planting focus garnered attention from the *New York Times* over the Christmas holidays.

“Seeing City in Need, Southern Baptists Plan Growth,” the headline stated. The article was posted to the newspaper’s website on Christmas evening and ran in the print edition Dec. 26 on page 25 of Section A.

Rich Perez, a native New Yorker and one of two Southern Baptist church planters mentioned in the article, reported that feedback to the newspaper coverage “has been good and plentiful. We’ve had a couple of people say they want to visit because of the article.”

Perez pastors Christ Crucified Fellowship, which meets in two locations in New York City. In addition to featuring Perez, the *Times* article shared the story of Freddy Wyatt, a church planter who moved from Tennessee several years ago to help start a church in New York City.

“I was blown away by the need for churches,” Wyatt told *Times* reporter Meredith Hoffman. Today, Wyatt pastors Gallery Church in Manhattan. The article includes a link to the Gallery Church website and to NAMB’s site.

Send North America is NAMB’s initiative to help existing churches start new evangelistic Southern Baptist churches in regions and cities that are under-reached and underserved in North America. Through Send North America, local coalitions of pastors and Southern Baptist leaders will determine how many churches their city needs and where they should be located. Then NAMB will help find existing Southern Baptist churches that want to partner in those cities to help start the churches. Congregations of any size can participate.

Any Southern Baptist church or individual interested in partnering to start new churches can visit namb.net and click the “Mobilize Me” button.

Report shows Christianity shifting to Africa

(RNS) With 2.18 billion adherents, Christianity has become a truly global religion over the past century as rapid growth in developing nations offset declines in Christianity’s traditional strongholds, according to a report released Dec. 19.

Billed as the most comprehensive and reliable study to date, the Pew Research Center’s “Global Christianity” reports on self-identified Christian populations

based on more than 2,400 sources of information, especially census and survey data.

Findings illustrate major shifts since 1910, when two-thirds of the world’s Christians lived in Europe. Now only one in four Christians live in Europe. Most of the rest are distributed across the Americas (37 percent), sub-Saharan Africa (24 percent) and the Asia-Pacific region (13 percent). The report confirms Christianity’s standing as the world’s largest religion, with 32 percent of the global population. Islam is second with about 23 percent, according to a 2009 Pew report.

Although Christianity traces its beginnings to the Middle East and North Africa, only 4 percent of residents in these regions claim the Christian faith today.

Meanwhile, the faith has grown exponentially in sub-Saharan Africa, from just 9 percent of the population in 1910 to 63 percent today. Nigeria, home to more than 80 million Christians, has more Protestants than Germany, where the Protestant Reformation began.



Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow, an outspoken evangelical, led the religion bestseller lists in 2011 with his memoir *Through My Eyes*. (Religion News Service photo courtesy of Jeffrey Beall/Wikimedia)

Tebow top religion author of 2011

(RNS) Critics have hammered Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow for everything from his throwing style to his trademark professions of evangelical faith. But this much is now beyond dispute: the guy has a gift for selling books.

Tebow’s Christian life story, *Through My Eyes*, has become the top-selling new release of 2011 from HarperOne, a leading religion book publisher. With 220,000 copies sold since its June launch, *Through My Eyes* has even outsold Rob Bell’s best-seller *Love Wins*, which sparked intense debate with its unorthodox views about hell.

As soon as *Through My Eyes* hit bookstores, it was a hit with Christian football fans, especially in the Southeast where Tebow won the Heisman Trophy for the University of Florida. But an uncanny series of late-in-the-game Broncos wins fed a blitz of national attention and fueled curiosity about one of the most outspoken Christian athletes.

HarperOne hasn’t had a book do this well since Sidney Poitier’s *The Measure of a Man* was anointed by the Oprah Book Club in 2007.

NFL wins, however, can do wonders for religion book sales.

When Tebow became the Broncos’ starter in October, weekly sales picked up to about 2,000. With win after win, weekly numbers surged to 6,000, then 11,000. For the week ending Dec. 18 – when the Broncos’ winning streak ended – sales topped 25,000.

U.S. jumps to top of charity index

(RNS) WASHINGTON – Americans: the most generous people in the world. That’s no idle gloat.

According to a new study, the United States tops a massive global charity survey, rising from fifth place in 2010.

The “World Giving Index,” based on 150,000 interviews with citizens of 153 nations, ranks the U.S. highest on a scale that weighed monetary donations, volunteer work, and willingness to help out a stranger.

“In spite of economic hardships and uncertainty in the future, the American spirit is caring and strong, as these survey findings clearly show,” said David Venne, interim CEO of CAFAmerica, the Virginia-based charities consultant that released the results of the index.

Ireland placed second, followed by Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Canada, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Laos.

At the bottom of the list: China, Russia and India.

The survey’s authors noted that charitable behavior is not correlated with wealth.

Of the 20 countries that the World Bank ranks richest by gross domestic product, only five made it into the top 20 of the index.

Rebirth Continued from page 8

Taylor, who had been a deacon at Lexington Avenue for years, admits there was some hesitancy at first among the members to turn the church over to Life Community. They ultimately decided it was the best decision. “The proposal was exciting,” he said. “We didn’t want to be the generation to close the doors.”

The churches officially merged in the summer of 2011, and Lexington Avenue Baptist Church changed its name to Life on Lexington. Life Community now has two campuses that are seven miles apart.

Life on Lexington campus soon began

holding events for the community and developing a strategy to reach those outside its doors. Several families from the main campus joined Life on Lexington to help them reach more people in the community. Since the merger, the church has grown to a total of 175. The church also has seen some professions of faith. The difference is nothing short of a miracle, Taylor said.

“We are so excited we can hardly contain ourselves,” he said. “It’s like a puzzle, and God is just putting all these pieces together. It’s something we can

be excited about. There is nothing better than hearing a child sing [in a worship service].”

Reginaldi became the teaching and preaching pastor for the 11 a.m. service at Life on Lexington’s campus. In the 9:30 a.m. service, Jake Thornhill, the senior pastor of Life Community Church, preaches through a video feed.

Reginaldi is working on a book entitled, *How to Leave a Legacy Church*, detailing the transition and transformation of Lexington Avenue. The purpose of the book, Reginaldi said, is to help other declining

and dying churches. Reginaldi is working with co-author, Amanda Dodson, the daughter of Life Community’s senior pastor. He plans to complete the book by the end of the year or early part of 2013.

“It is our prayer that through ... the book we are writing that other people will see what our Lord had done in preserving one of His churches,” Reginaldi said. “It has often been said that we are one generation away from losing our faith and churches, and I am excited to report that this is one church that will live on to the next generation.”

SBC needs greater focus on revitalizing dying churches

By PAUL ROBERTS | Guest Column

OK, I'll ask the question that no one seems to want to voice. Why is the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and its associated state conventions spending so much energy, printed emphasis, and money on church planting when the majority of the existing member churches are either plateaued or declining? It appears to be some convoluted asset relocation campaign. It's like we're organizationally stating that all the churches who are slowly dying need to send us a higher percentage of their dwindling budgets so we can send church planters into their community to reach all the people that they can't connect with. That just doesn't make sense.

The SBC has dying churches that have people, financial, and real estate assets that are true Kingdom resources. Where is the emphasis for these churches to

examine their methodology and organizational structure to identify where they are falling short in reaching their community? Sure, we do church revitalization at some levels, but what most of our churches need is a systemic, soul-level shift to recognize the disconnect between their presentation of the gospel and the needs of our culture.

It seems that most of the church planters get it. If you pay attention to their approaches to church operation, they are primarily geared to connect with culture where the greatest needs are. There is a consistent theme of home groups with a missional heart, casual atmosphere, contemporary worship, sound biblical teaching, and an openness to every lost soul. Yet, most SBC churches are locked into a deadly means-end inversion that is tradition based and seemingly unbreakable.

I know a lot of traditional churches are adding contemporary services at

8:30 in the morning as long as it doesn't interfere with what has always been done in the past. Some are changing the name of Sunday School to Life Groups. These might be small steps in the right direction, but do not represent the kind of change that is truly needed. What is called for is a total renovation beginning with a biblical view of the challenge to the Church and work of its early leaders.

The work of leading an established congregation through dramatic change is difficult to say the least. The work of planting a church from scratch is equally as challenging. Either way the gospel wins. I am not against church planting. But, I am certainly against planting churches where doing the daunting task of changing a church culture would give new life to existing kingdom resources. I think the SBC could, and should, do both effectively. I just feel that there is a reticence to ruffling the traditional feathers because there is a danger in alienating the congregations that are paying the bills.

The truth is that most of our churches are operating with a methodology designed for a modern world and in some cases even a pre-modern world. Our culture has now shifted post-modern and beyond. The packaging of the gospel has to shift in order to be received by those

shaped by the dramatic shifts in world-view.

I say we work together to encourage our best young leaders to take on the task of leading older churches through change as well as sending some off to plant churches in growing communities. I encourage our seminaries to emphasize effective means for leading through change in the church leadership curriculum. There are too many resources that are being wasted in these dying churches. There are too many people dying without Christ for us to be satisfied with the status quo. We must be driven together to be all things to all people so that by all means we might save some (1 Corinthians 9:22). This means that we might have to have difficult conversations with some church leaders. It means that many people will have to make sacrifices of personal preference in order for those walking in darkness to find the beautiful light of the gospel.

The SBC can be an effective church planting organization while also honestly examining the performance of its existing churches with the intention to take aggressive action toward necessary change for the sake of the gospel.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Paul Roberts is pastor of Quest Fellowship in Garner.)

Submissions

In most instances, letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Occasionally, the editor may run longer submissions. When writing, please be concise, stating your position clearly. Include contact information and send to editor@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127 with questions.

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A tale of two churches

With a nod to Charles Dickens, this is a tale of two churches, one on the west coast, one on the east coast, the former in the last century, the latter in this century. Both are representative of evangelicalism's historic commitment to the authority of scripture.

The west coast church was led by an expository preacher of marvelous ability who quickened the desire of listeners to go deeper into the rich resources of the Word of God. That is why, when I visited the city where his church was located, I was eager to hear him preach on a Sunday morning. I could not find a place to park except at the rear of a massive lot. I got the last place. The pastor's church was one of a growing number of mega-churches with multiple worship services on Sundays.

After a long walk, I got the last available seat in the massive auditorium. Then the doors were locked so the church would not be in violation of the fire code of that city. Latecomers would have to wait for the next service.

Then I entered a time warp. I felt transported back to the 1950s when I attended church as a teenager. As in my home church so long ago, I participated in the singing of the grand old hymns of the faith with their lyrics of theological and devotional content, written by composers like Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts. And the congregational singing was robust as the people sang hymns and spiritual songs with great enthusiasm, their faces bearing witness that they were engaged mentally and spiritually with the message in the songs.

Next, there was a solo by a gentleman who sang like a younger version of George Beverly Shea. This was followed by the taking of the offering which, in turn, featured a rousing rendition of a choral anthem, sung by a choir, great in size and in vocal quality. After that, there came the sermon, an exposition of a biblical passage by one of America's premier preachers.

The scene changes now to the east coast. That church is also led by an expository preacher of extraordinary ability who likewise deepens one's desire to listen closely to the Word of God. As was true of the west coast church, parking places were difficult to find though there were attendants everywhere. And, as with

the other church, this one is likewise a mega-church with multiple services on Sundays.

As I settled into a theatre seat in the massive auditorium, large television screens got my attention with their notices of coming attractions at the church. Then the service began, led by a group of young people playing instruments, swaying and dancing to the tunes and, in some instances, rocking vigorously to the heavy metal beat. The amplification level of the sound was very high.

After a while, I became somewhat adjusted to the sound level but not to the music itself. There was little, if any, theological or doctrinal content in most of the lyrics. Moreover, though the words of the songs were on the screens, there was almost no involvement of the audience in singing along with the worship/praise team although I observed that a few were singing. Some were weakly mouthing the lyrics. None could be heard by other worshippers given the high level of the amplification. There was no attempt by most to sing at all.

Then there came the transformation. The worship team segued into a Getty hymn, heavy with theological content like that which is advocated for churches in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. This was accompanied by a reduced level in the volume of the amplification. Accordingly, the people sang with greater fervor. They morphed from a passive audience into a participating congregation. As I looked around, I observed on many faces the expressions of the joy of communion in an inspiring event. They were, as in the words of Ephesians 5:19, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody to the Lord with all [their] heart[s]." This was followed by the sermon, an outstanding message by one of America's young and brilliant theologians who, like the preacher of the west coast, deepened the desire of listeners to hear the Word of God, to learn of Christ.

The west coast pastor had more time to deliver his message because that church made the preaching of the Word central to the experience of worship. But that distinction was blurred for the east coast pastor because the time given to the musical part of the service was

exceedingly lengthy. Each church, in its own way, was tacitly making a statement about its understanding of what constitutes worship. This raises the question: what determines the standard of true worship?

Scripture should be that standard. When it is, we learn that the true worship experience is always reciprocal in interaction between worshippers and God, that is, while we are seeking the Lord in worship, the Lord is also seeking a certain kind of worshipper. He made this very clear: "They that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth for the Father seeks such to worship Him" (John 4:23). The Samaritan woman had been confused about this before her encounter with the Lord. Let us not be. As the tale of two churches shows, Christians are currently focused on different "styles of worship." But the Lord did not discuss this subject with the Samaritan woman. Rather, he described the nature of true worship. He said that we are to worship God "in spirit," meaning the engagement of our hearts in passion and enthusiasm with the Holy Spirit, and "in truth," that is, with our thoughts guided by the Word of God.

Some have said that Christianity is the only religion in the world that makes preaching the center of worship. But recently many have put music at the center of worship rather than the Word. While Israel's book of worship, the Psalms, is a song book, its center is its lyrical content which is saturated with the truth of God's Word. Let us therefore cease battling over what constitutes worship, over the use of "blended services," over whether we are relevant to generational musical tastes, and such. Instead, let us return to the biblical pattern of using church music, both traditional and contemporary, to edify the body of Christ by teaching biblical theology to one another, and follow that with expository preaching that brings revival to the people of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:1-9). This will unify the church. If we do not do this, however, things will remain in the confused state that they are, and the tale of two churches will ever be, as we now return to Dickens, "the best of times [and] ... the worst of times."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Ned L. Mathews is emeritus professor of pastoral ministries at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and pastor emeritus at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia and Cresset Baptist Church in Durham.) **BR**



NED L. MATHEWS
Guest column

A Genesis reminder

With the start of this New Year, I know many of you are making it a priority to spend more time in God's Word. Some pastors have made available different reading plans and resources to help you read through the Bible in one year.

If you are following a reading plan to read through the Bible chronologically, then you have already spent much time this month in the book of Genesis. Genesis is where we find the account of how God created the world. As you read the creation story ask the Holy Spirit to illumine your mind with a fresh perspective.

Keeping in mind that Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is upon us, I believe Genesis is a good place for us to turn in order to be reminded of the value of hu-

man life. We know human life is valuable because God created us.

The Bible tells us that after God created man and woman, He blessed them and told them to be fruitful and to multiply. God provided His creation with food and everything they needed to survive.

Not only did God create us, He created us in His image, to know Him and to be with Him.

Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve enjoyed fellowship with God and were not separated from Him. Our almighty, powerful God desired fellowship with His creation.

We know human life is valuable because even after sin entered the world,

God still loved His creation enough that He desired to redeem it. Although the people God created had chosen to sin against Him, God was willing to send His perfect and sinless son to earth so that He could die for the sin of mankind.

As we live in fellowship with God, He is daily sanctifying us and transforming our character into the likeness of Jesus.

The Bible is clear – we matter to God. He knows the number of hairs on our heads. He invites us to cast our burdens upon Him, and He invites us into His presence through prayer.

During this time when we are mindful of how precious life is, I invite you to

think back to Genesis and to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for being your Creator and Sustainer.

Many people throughout our nation and world do not understand the value of human life.

A recent article reported that each year more than one million pregnancies in the United States end in abortion. How sinful and tragic this is because it destroys God's miraculous gift of life.

Please pray for God to change hearts. Please pray for people to be changed by the power of the gospel, and so come to understand the value of all life.

"What is man, that You are mindful of him, And the son of man, that you visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor." Psalm 8:4-5 (NKJV) **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

Sanctity of Life Sunday: Jan. 22

On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in the Roe v. Wade case opening an era of human devaluation. Each January, the Sunday closest to that decision date is reserved as a time of remembrance. We call it Sanctity of Life Sunday.

It is a moment to remember a terrible mistake by the leaders of this nation when 39 years ago, the Supreme Court of the United States of America legalized abortion. This is a time to deeply grieve over the denial of basic human rights to innocent children.

In the years since the Supreme Court legalized abortion, 55 million children have been denied the right to live. We have snuffed out a population equal to the size of Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah,

Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming combined.

We Americans should highly value “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” as the Declaration of Independence clearly proclaims. Yet, if we do not highly value life, there is no potential for liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is impossible.

As God-fearing human beings we embrace the reality that God is the Author of life, and that as His servants, we are to honor, respect and protect life. We are to assign the highest value to human life because it is the peak of God’s creation. According to His Word, human life is inestimably precious.

While a sanctity of human life ethic may be disparaged by the world, it is God’s view. His Word is clear: human life – at all ages and all stages – is precious.

While the culture in which we live promotes the view that human beings are merely enhanced primates, Christians serve a God who tells us clearly in His Word that we are made in His image.



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

Likening God to a potter, a vocation that was common in biblical days, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “We are all the work of [His] hands” (Isaiah 64:8).

The Bible tells us God is intimately involved with the fashioning of every human (Psalm 139). As a creation of the Most High God, we are precious in His sight. Innocent human life is to be protected – no matter one’s age or condition. No government has the authority to override God’s purpose.

This Christian perspective on life is not negotiable. It is the basis of every value we hold dear. If this value is compromised, we demonstrate disdain for all that is valuable in the sight of God. The value of life shapes our convictions on all social or ethical issues which address life: the value of life during pregnancy and at birth, issues involving end of life with the aged or infirm, and the quality of life of the years in between.

Chuck Swindoll said, “Not since the controversial issue of slavery ripped America apart at the seams has one subject troubled our country like abortion. It is virtually impossible to pick up a national periodical or, for that matter,

a daily newspaper without seeing an article, a column, a story, or an editorial either directly or indirectly related to abortion. Physicians and politicians, educators and newscasters, radio and television talk show hosts, feminists and lobbyists alike are never far from discussing the subject.”

Among all of these voices offering an opinion on this issue, the ones which should speak the clearest are the voices of Christians. As people of conviction, it is impossible to be silent. I challenge every serious follower of Jesus Christ to do all you can in the spirit of Christ to change the course that has been taken the past 39 years. Volunteer at your local crisis pregnancy center. Give financial support to these centers and encourage your church to include a center in the church budget. Clearly and graciously share your concerns with your elected officials. Vote only for those who will clearly commit to ending the grievous calamity of abortion.

This is a moral issue, not a political one. God have mercy on our nation, our world and on all who are silent on this evil holocaust of the most innocent and most helpless of all human beings. **BR**

Book urges believers to get back to the truth of the gospel

Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary

by **J.D. Greear (B&H Books, October 2011)**

“Being able to articulate the gospel is one thing; having its truth captivate your soul is quite another.”

Has conservative Christianity allowed the gospel to be upstaged by moralism and legalism? Have we lost our way in relativistic culture and become distracted by our culture to such a state that we have lost our way?

J.D. Greear brings, in this book, a message that is very likely to cause a collective group of “sighs” across Christendom. In a drowning, politically correct, relativistic culture it seems that the church has been drawn into a dangerous flow that is rapidly pulling many out to sea with its strong undercurrent. The author believes that evangelicalism, as a whole, desperately needs to return the gospel to the center of Christianity.

With a healthy dose of balance *Gospel* is a book that successfully attempts to move our thinking, and our heart, toward “gospel-centered” vibrance. The content, following the pattern of the author’s own *The Gospel Prayer*, J.D. Greear brings the reader back to the revivification of the Living Water: “In Christ there is nothing

I can do that would make You love me more, and nothing I have done that makes You love me less. Your presence and approval are all I need for everlasting joy. As You have been to me, so I will be to others. As I pray, I’ll measure Your compassion by the cross and Your power by the resurrection.”

The refreshing part of this book is that it reminds the reader of how the gospel has cut through the artificial nature of religion and restores the extraordinary truth of God’s gracious acceptance of a sinful world in Christ.

The gospel helps us move from a life of self-focus to

one of joy, radical generosity, freedom and courageous faith.

Greear reminds us that sin is not overcome with the will to “do better” but by being captivated by what God has done for us.

It points the reader, in helpful and practical ways, toward moving from legalistic obedience to love driven compulsion.

In *Gospel*, the reader is reminded that God is not looking for well-behaved people, but people who experience a vibrant obedience that can be produced only by the gospel.

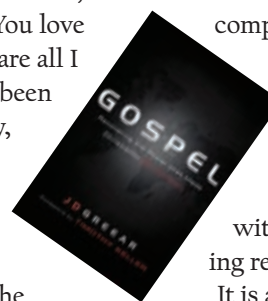
Greear writes with his conversational and witty style, which makes *Gospel* an easy and refreshing read.

It is a purchase that is well worth the price of the book.

(*EDITOR’S NOTE – Neale Davis, a graduate of Southeastern Seminary, has served with Cru, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, for 27 years. He is a volunteer counselor at The Summit Church, Durham, where Greear is pastor. He lives in Cary.*) **BR**



NEALE DAVIS
Book Review



BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

(ISSN 0279-8182)

News Journal of the Baptist State Convention
of North Carolina
Founded 1833 by Thomas Meredith

Volume 178 No. 2
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B3now.org

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Subscriptions

- Individual subscriptions, \$15.99
- Clubs, \$13.79
- Every Home Plan, \$12.49
- Church News Service, \$11.50
- Bulk (10+) \$11.50
- single copies, .60 cents each

Payable in advance. North Carolina sales tax is included.

Publication

Published biweekly on Saturdays by *Biblical Recorder Inc.*, 205 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511, as authorized by the Baptist State Convention in annual session at Winston-Salem, November 21–23, 1939.

Periodicals postage paid at Raleigh, NC 27676.

Postmaster

Send address changes to *Biblical Recorder Inc.*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512-1185.

January 29

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

February 5

Giving in a Greedy Culture

Focal Passage: Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 24:10-15, 17-18

In the community where I pastor is one of the most active Ruritan clubs in the area. They are constantly doing for others. For example, prior to Christmas they put together about 150 Christmas baskets that they deliver to the county nursing home and to the many whom are homebound and lonely. It makes me proud because many of these Ruritans are members of my own congregation. Caring for the poor, destitute, and otherwise needy in our communities is a biblical mandate. Furthermore, for those of us who are so fortunate to have the resources to give, giving should be deemed a joyful opportunity and a gracious blessing.

God commanded Moses and the Hebrews to have a compassionate and generous heart when it came to giving. There was the recognition that economic inequality would always exist.

There was also the recognition that there would always be folks who would be poor, and that people would fall on “hard times,” whether it be caused by personal neglect or circumstances be-

yond one’s control. God’s message was not to punish the poor and destitute, but to give practical remedies that His people could apply.

Here are three: (1) If a poor man is working for you, pay him at the end of each work day. He has no savings account to fall back on (24:15). (2) If a poor man gives you his most comfortable garment to you as collateral for a debt incurred, don’t personally benefit by sleeping in it on a cold night. Give it back to him before sunset so that he can stay warm (24:12-13). (3) Every seventh year cancel the debts of those who owe you (15:1). This would give opportunity for folks to start over in life, to “hopefully” learn the lesson to not get in debt again, and to treat others with dignity and respect. In the course of human history there have been few societies that have actually practiced what God has preached.

As God said to Moses and His people, “Open your hand. Give. Don’t have a stingy heart.”



WAYNE PROCTOR
Pastor, Eure
Baptist Church

Focal Passage: Colossians 1:9-23

Tim Tebow has caught the attention of American football fans. Why? Because he is passionate about Christ, and that passion transfers itself into the sport he plays. I’ve watched clips of him singing “Our God is an Awesome God” while warming up before a game, and I’ve heard him talking with little boys and girls and his teammates and the media. He never speaks without praising Jesus. Tim Tebow seems to have a proper perspective on who he is in relation to who Christ is and to God’s bigger plan for his life. In a world in which many glamour figures obsess over themselves, it’s refreshing to watch in real time someone who understands life as God intended.

Colossians 1:9-23 is a Christological passage. Christ is the center of all God’s intentions and plans. In verse 15 Paul wrote that Christ is the “image” of the invisible God.

This means that Jesus Christ was God in flesh.

People could see Him, touch Him, experience Him. A few years ago there was a TV commercial that stated, “image is everything.” The commercial pictured sports stars drinking soda pop, a rather vain attempt to associate success with a product. In Christ, however, “image is everything” because He is the reason for all that exists. He is the pre-existent One, but He also is the “pre-eminent” One (v. 18), the first and the best. He was not created (as some cults incorrectly interpret “first-born”). He was with the Father in creation, participating in every aspect of life. As such, Christ was and is the “agent” of creation. Everything – all life – has been created by Him, through Him, and in Him. Some rightly call Jesus Christ the “glue” of creation. He is the One who keeps the cosmos from becoming a chaos. The place of Christ is that He is the beginning. The function of Christ is that He is the head of the Church (v. 18). He created the Church through His own blood, sweat, and tears. True forgiveness and reconciliation happened at the cross (v. 20).

January 29

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

February 5

Be Passionate

Focal Passage: Deuteronomy 6:4-14; 7:6-9

What are you passionate about? Perhaps the best way to answer that question is to ask the people around you. Ask them what you talk about the most. Ask them where they observe you spending most of your time. Ask your check register – in what are you financially investing? The answers to these questions will demonstrate where your passion truly lies.

In this week’s passage, Moses reminds the people of Israel of God’s past faithfulness and their past failures. He also tells them of the coming danger of their hearts once again being drawn away from God by the idols of their own hearts and those of the surrounding nations. Therefore, based on the unique character/nature of God (6:4), His grace toward them (7:6-8a), and His covenant-keeping faithfulness (7:8b-9), Moses calls them to pursue with passion a love for God and God alone. This passionate pursuit of, and commitment to, the one true God is described in terms of a unique love relationship: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,

and with all your strength” (6:5, HCSB). In the New Testament, Jesus said this is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-30). As Thom Rainer recently put it, “We can’t escape the fact that nothing else really matters in life if our relationship with God isn’t what it should be.”

Why must we so passionately pursue a love relationship with God today, with God as the singular focus and object of our affection? Because our hearts will drift if we don’t. In the words of the hymn writer, my heart (and yours) is “prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”

We must, therefore, not only demonstrate such a passionate pursuit in our own lives, but also teach our children to passionately pursue a love relationship with God as well (6:7).

Those who have a relationship with Christ have it because of God’s grace toward them. We must never forget, however, that God’s grace changes us. Therefore, we must passionately love and obey God, by His grace and for His glory.



RANDY MANN
Minister of education
and evangelism, Wake
Cross Roads Baptist
Church, Raleigh

Focal Passage: Deuteronomy 14:1-2, 9-11, 19-23; 15:7-11

If a person is a U.S. Marine, one thing is certain, his life is different from that of most people. There is a level of discipline, respect, fitness, etc., that is simply not present in most other people. The Marine Corp has that expectation. You simply cannot be a part of “the few” and “the proud” and live like the rest. There are guidelines and expectations that you must live by if you are to be a United States Marine.

In a far greater way, God outlined His requirements and expectations for His people – holiness.

He told them why they must live different lives: “for you are a holy people belonging to the Lord your God.” (14:2a, HCSB). God’s plan, seen in His covenant promise to Abraham, was to give His people the “good land” that He promised to them, and to use them as a light to the nations, demonstrating His glory.

For God’s people to receive this land

Be Different

and to dwell in it richly as God intended, they must walk with God, by faith, and “be careful to follow all the statutes and ordinances” (Deuteronomy 8:1) God set before them. But they didn’t.

In fact, they couldn’t. While the law could cause them to try to change their behavior, the law could not change their sinful hearts. Only God could change their hearts.

So, in the fullness of time, God sent Jesus to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law and to give new hearts to those who would repent and believe in Him by faith.

Therefore, when a person receives the grace of God in Christ, it changes him. As Paul says, “old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

As a Christian, is your life different from those around you in the way you love, forgive, help others, and give? If not, ask God, by His grace, to change your heart. You see, the Marines exert external pressure to make you act different. God changes your heart to make you different. As those who have received God’s grace, through the power of His Spirit, be different!

TAR HEEL VOICES

Being liked shouldn't be a priority

According to a guest column in the December 10 *BR*, if we change our name from Southern Baptist Convention, and if we cease being known for our opposition to immoral practices like homosexuality, and if we avoid any common ground that may be shared by some in political circles, then more people will like us.

Is that so?

Where in the book of Acts do we see the believers laboring to get people to like them? I do not mean that they were trying to be disliked but that being liked was not their priority.

In Acts 5:13-14, Luke gives us interesting insight into the early church. "None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women," Acts 5:13-14 (ESV). While many would not dare be associated with the church, many others were getting saved!

If only we were more interested in what the Scriptures say rather than the pollsters.

The author refers to the supposed stigma of the word "Southern." However true that may be, if we change our name we will not change our past. Did the Apostle Paul seek to conceal his past as a persecutor of the Christians? No. Instead, he used that to speak of God's grace and mercy (Acts 22; 26; 1 Timothy 1:12-15; 1 Corinthians 15:8-10).

I was present in 1995 when the formal apology was made. That was the right thing to do – to publicly acknowledge the wrong in the beginning of our convention. That was a matter of integrity. Changing our name in an attempt to camouflage our past seems deceitful.

Well, what about "Baptist," will we delete it also? For whatever reason, some churches no longer wish to be identified as a Baptist congregation. As a convention are we so ashamed of our Baptist heritage that we will abandon the name? I hope not.

Brothers and sisters, there is something far more offensive than the words "Southern Baptist." It is the truth of the gospel. Oswald Chambers is reported to have said, "There is nothing attractive about the gospel to the natural man. The only man who finds the gospel attractive is the man who is convicted of sin."

The concern I have is not about the changing of a name. What bothers me is the reasoning I am hearing. The December 10 article sounded very seeker sensitive and focused on man.

The author claimed that a name change will "inject the body with a new energy." Apparently, he believes that but I do not.

The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers the Church. Hanging out a different shingle never will.

Jack Marshburn

Tar Landing Baptist Church, Jacksonville

Why change name?

Why change? In the December 24 edition of the *Biblical Recorder*, Erin Roach reports that the MAJORITY have a favorable impression of Southern Baptists while only 40 percent are unfavorable.

Why should we have to change the name for those that don't like us? Is it the name or the doctrine? Jonathan Merritt wrote in the December 10 issue, "What's in a name?"

I don't believe it's the region, but our doctrine. They say we are pushy. That has nothing to do with a name. I have witnessed in Ohio, South Dakota, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Alaska, Maine and Vermont.

Some folks in Colorado cried when we left. People in some states want us back.

No time did they mention anything negative about us as Southern Baptist.

Do we need to change "Northern Tissue" because it is regional?

I have even heard people say we need to drop the name Baptist. I believe those 40 percent don't like us because we are evangelistic.

Old Vance Havner said we shouldn't change our doctrine to suit the world.

I have a suggestion for a name change: SCBC, Still Confused Baptist Convention.

Doug Ewing
Belmont

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

First Baptist Church of Monroe, NC (www.monroefirstbaptist.org), is seeking a **Senior Pastor**. We have completed a transition process and self-study. We affiliate with Union Baptist Association, CBFNC, and CBF. A seminary degree is required, senior pastor experience is preferred. Send resumes, including references, to pastorsearch@monroefirstbaptist.org or Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 3385, Monroe, NC, 28111 by March 15, 2012.

Holloways Baptist Church of Southmont, NC, is currently seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor**. Please send resume to: Holloways Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, 131 Briggs Road, Lexington, NC 27292.

Church Staff

Metro Atlanta Baptist church seeking **Minister of Spiritual Formation and Families**. Please send resumes attn: Mrs. Susan Lewis at 561 Veterans Memorial Hwy. SE, Mableton, GA 30126, or via email at susan@mtharmony.org.

Lakeview Baptist Church in Monroe, NC, is seeking a **part-time music/worship leader**. Responsibilities include planning, organizing, conducting, and evaluating a comprehensive music ministry. Submit all resumes to LBC Music Search Team, 4602 Concord Highway, Monroe, NC 28110, or email to musicresumes@lakeviewfamily.org.

First Baptist Church, Andrews, seeks **Minister of Students**. Must be dedicated to the Lord and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ through activities and functions. A bachelor's degree from 4 year college is required, seminary degree preferred but not mandatory. Duties: to administer and develop all facets of student and children ministries, focusing on Bible study and discipleship. Send resumes to: Andrews First Baptist Church, PO Box 427, Andrews, NC 28901, or email: fbcal@frontier.com.

First Baptist Hildebran is seeking a **part-time Director of Youth Ministries and Activities**. Position requires experience working with youth and 20-25 hours per week. Send resume to First Baptist Hildebran, PO Box 220, Hildebran, NC 28637 or revronarndt@embarqmail.com.

Millers Creek Baptist Church, a conservative SBC church, is seeking a **full-time Children's/Discipleship Pastor**. This position leads ministries for children from birth to sixth grade and their families plus coordinate discipleship training. MDiv. preferred but not required. Send resume to Personnel Committee, Millers Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 559, Millers Creek, NC 28651, or email: churchoffice@millerscreekbaptist.org.

Minister of Children: First Baptist Church, Mt Holly, NC (www.fbcmountholly.org), just west of Charlotte, is seeking a part-time minister of children to lead our ministry to children from birth to 5th grade and their families. We are a dually aligned CBF-SBC affiliated church and are egalitarian on issues of women in ministry. The candidate should preferably be a seminary or divinity school student or graduate and have experience in children's ministry. Resumes may be sent to FBC-Mt Holly, 300 S. Main St., Mt Holly, NC 28120 or e-mailed to Kendell@fbcmountholly.org.

Miscellaneous

NCBAM needs servant volunteers to educate aging adults about the use of Red Bags. Contact North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry to learn how Red Bags prevent overmedication and the use of conflicting medicines: 877-506-2226 or online at www.ncbam.org.

NCBAM needs volunteers for the biggest ramp-raisin' marathon this state has ever seen. Sign up for Rampin' Up! – an April 28, 2012 event at www.ncoperationinasmuch.org. Check out www.rampinup.org for more information or call North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry: 877-506-2226.

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Making Life for Older Adults

The Best of Times:

Partnership Ministry
with the Local Church

Goal:
\$600,000



Maurice Briggs, Chaplain, Brookridge Community; Ramon Smith, Pastor, College Park Baptist Church, Winston-Salem; and Paul Harrell, Retired Baptist Pastor and Brookridge Community resident.

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All gifts received from the February Offering are used to provide care and services to Baptist Older Adults with limited financial resources.



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February 5-12, 2012