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BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

JANUARY 26, 2019 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • VOLUME 185 NO. 2 • **BRnow.org**

New SBC efforts focus on evangelism

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

Southern Baptists can expect to hear a lot about evangelism in 2019, according to Jim Law, executive director of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board (NAMB). “We’re looking for every opportunity to talk evangelism,” he told the *Biblical Recorder* in a phone interview about the recently announced “Who’s Your One?” initiative. J.D. Greear, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., plans to give Southern Baptist associational leaders an advance look at the evangelism campaign during a simulcast event Jan. 31. “Who’s Your One?” will formally launch Feb. 20.

The rollout will include a ministry leadership toolbox created by NAMB to help pastors lead their churches to be more active in sharing their faith.

Johnny Hunt, NAMB’s senior vice president of evangelism and leadership, will unveil the “evangelism kit” that includes educational materials, sermon outlines, prayer cards and NAMB contact information for pastors who want further guidance.

Hunt told the *Recorder* that he “could not be more excited” about the effort. “Everyone can be involved and intentional,” he said. “We can all pray, invite, share our testimony, share the gospel and trust Jesus with the results. ... If our over five million Sunday morning worshippers were to pray about their ‘one,’ I can only imagine what could happen. Let’s just do it. Thousands will come to Christ.”

Two weeks after the briefing for associational leaders, Hunt will preview the material with Southern Baptist state executives at their annual meeting in February, before promotion to churches begins.

Law expressed confidence in the campaign’s ability to help churches be more evangelistic because both Hunt and Greear have conducted similar, successful

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FORMER N.C. PASTOR ANSWERS PLEA

FOR HELP AT TIJUANA BORDER

By **LIZ TABLAZON** | BR Staff Writer



The day Juvenal Gonzalez spoke with the *Biblical Recorder* started just like every other day for him since early December: preparing and serving breakfast – tamales, chilaquiles, sometimes bacon and eggs and pancakes – to asylum seekers at El Barretal, an abandoned concert venue in Tijuana, Mexico, that now houses caravan migrants from Central America.

Gonzalez serves as the church planting catalyst missionary for the San Diego Southern Baptist Association (SDSBA).

He began the role in 2006 after moving from Lumberton, N.C., where he founded and pastored Iglesia Bautista Betel for 13 years.

Now he works with existing congregations to start

new churches in Tijuana, one of Mexico’s largest and fastest growing cities. “Some people migrate from the earthquakes, some people from the cartel, running from the dangers,” Gonzalez said. Thousands made the journey on foot and in vehicles, primarily from Honduras, with some from El Salvador and Guatemala. El Barretal is a 30-minute drive from the San Ysidro Port of Entry, where migrants can check on their place in line to file an asylum claim in the United States. At some ports of entry, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials can only process 20 people per day, extending wait times for asylum seekers. When Gonzalez first met migrants at El Barretal

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Church dropout rate among young adults studied

By **AARON EARLS** | LifeWay Christian Resources

Church pews may be full of teenagers, but a study released Jan. 15 suggests college students might be a much rarer sight on Sunday mornings. Two-thirds (66 percent) of American young adults who attended a Protestant church regularly for at least a year as a teenager say they also dropped out for at least a year between the ages of 18 and 22, according to a study from LifeWay Research.

Thirty-four percent say they continued to attend twice a month or more. While the 66 percent may be troubling for many church leaders, the numbers may appear more hopeful when compared to a 2007 study from LifeWay Research. A decade earlier, 70 percent of 18- to 22-year-olds left church for at least one year. “The good news for Christian leaders is that churches don’t seem to be losing more students than they were 10 years ago. However, the difference in the dropout rate

See Dropout page 16

Revisiting civility

Two-and-a-half years ago, I published back-to-back editorials on the subject of civility. The first one appeared in the June 18, 2016, edition of the *Biblical Recorder* and carried the title “Is civility dead?” The column focused on The Civility Project, an initiative launched by Mark DeMoss and Lanny Davis in 2009, but dissolved two years later.

The second column, “Reviving civility,” ran in the July 2, 2016, issue. I told more of DeMoss’s story and introduced Cassandra Dahnke who gives leadership to the Institute for Civility in Government (IFCG), based in Houston, Texas (instituteforcivility.org).

I was drawn to revisit the subject of civility when DeMoss announced Jan. 15 that he will close his Atlanta-based public relations firm March 29 after 28 very successful years of service to many evangelical ministries. (See story, page 11.)

In the reports of this recent change in direction, some news outlets pointed to DeMoss’s leadership as a primary crusader for civil practices and conversations in all arenas.

Reviewing my columns, I asked DeMoss why he launched The Civility Project in 2009, then closed down the effort two years later.

While he is still passionate about civility, the main reason DeMoss dissolved the project was the lack of time to do it right and make it successful.

“I think we were successful in some ways, but either I needed to put more money and staff into the project or dis-

solve it. I didn’t want to do it half-way,” he said.

“I didn’t dissolve it because only three people signed the pledge. The fact that only three signed it would be a compelling reason to keep going,” he added.



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

There are serious long-term consequences to unchecked incivility, according to DeMoss.

“I think there is a dumbing down of society to the point where fewer people can make an articulate case for something. All they can do is shout and hurl insults,” he said. “Condoning incivility is equivalent to saying ‘Anything goes.’”

“As a parent, if my children see me behave in an uncivil way to a waiter in a restaurant, or an employee at the Delta ticket counter, or somebody in traffic, how would I punish my child who treated their teacher or another student the same way? I look at television and a presidential candidate is calling other people ‘losers’ or ‘morons.’ I don’t see anything good in that. I don’t think it’s a big leap to move from common incivility to violence. Incivility says if I don’t get my way, I will resort to any tactic to get my way.”

The current political climate is puzzling to DeMoss.

He said politics as a whole “may be one of the worst examples of incivility we see today. ... I couldn’t have a successful PR firm and behave the way a lot of people do in politics. Nobody would hire me, and nobody would work for me, frankly.”

I would like to see an increase in conversations about civility among our brothers and sisters. We need to talk about the way we address issues and relate to others.

All of us get angry about something, sometime. There is so much in culture and in government to be angry about.

It is easy to categorize the anger of others as sinful and our own as “righteous indignation.”

But there is no excuse for believers to be uncivil in behavior or conversation.

Some know how to skillfully manage their anger.

Others are convinced their opinion is highly valued or needed by others, so they are quick to inject their toxic thoughts into every conversation.

When the conversation is posted on social media, the snarky, critical, attacking, unkind, crude remarks do not represent our Father, His Son or the Christian family well.

Let’s review some of scripture’s principles on civility.

- First, choose your words wisely.

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” – Colossians 4:6.

The phrase, *“know how you ought to answer each one”* not only refers to having the knowledge to answer others, but also to using winsome, graceful words in our responses.

- Second, we are called to decency.

“Let all things be done decently and in order” – 1 Corinthians 14:40.

I realize the context of that verse is be-

havior within the assembly of believers, but it certainly applies to all Christian behavior.

• Third, we must ensure that God is the object of our attention, not man. *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men”* – Colossians 3:23. Our goal cannot be to impress others or to win the argument. We must ask, does it glorify God? Is God pleased with my words and actions as I relate to others?

Social media seems to be fertile soil for incivility, so let’s begin there and intentionally change the conversation.

Do I believe social media is an evil tool? No, I do not. Social media can be compared to money. The Bible says, *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* – 1 Timothy 6:10.

We preachers like to point out that the Bible does not say “money is evil.” Money is used in some very posi-

tive ways. It is the love of money that is problematic.

Likewise, social media tools are not evil, but they can certainly become very evil methods of uncivil communication.

Twitter, Facebook and the like can also be useful tools in the spread of the gospel.

It is no secret that the shortage of civility is a problem on social media platforms. We’ve seen it from Democrats and Republicans, Christians and non-Christians. But, it does not have to be that way. Believers are called to make a difference. **BR**

“Is God pleased with my words and actions as I relate to others?”

Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Please send information immediately following an event, or for opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance. Include cost and contact information in your email or correspondence. All submissions will be subjected to *Biblical Recorder* styles and guidelines and will be edited. Send to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.

Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

Do you have an opinion on a story we shared in the *Biblical Recorder* or something going on in our culture? Please send no more than 300 words, along with contact information, to editor@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512-1185.

Only one letter from the same writer will be published in a 90-day period. All submissions will be edited by *Recorder* style guidelines. Have questions? Call (919) 847-2127.

BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

(ISSN 0279-8182)

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

Volume 185 No. 2
(919) 847-2127
Fax (919) 467-6180
BRnow.org

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- Bulk Plan (10+) \$11.50
- Family Plan, \$12.50
- Club Plan, \$13.50
- Single copies, .60 cents each

Payable in advance. N.C. sales tax is included. Digital rates: \$5.99 (one year); \$10.99 (two years); \$15.99 (three years).

Publication

Published biweekly on Saturdays with the exception of no issue at the end of December, by the *Biblical Recorder*, 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.

IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Get equipped to be salt & light

As followers of Christ, we are to be salt and light in the world around us as we live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Following the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we should manifest a godly influence in an unbelieving world.

Yet being salt and light in a rapidly changing culture can be challenging. Many of the hot-button issues present in our contemporary culture where spiritual darkness abounds can often make it seem that we have an “us against them” mentality as we live out our faith. But it doesn’t have to be this way.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

This year’s annual N.C. Baptist Disciple-Making Conference, scheduled for Tues., Feb. 26 at Green Street Baptist Church in High Point, will address how we can be salt and light in spite of the many challenges we face. The event will feature keynote addresses from John Stonestreet of

the Colson Center for Christian Worldview as well as more than 30 breakout sessions from a variety of pastors, church practitioners, ministry leaders and state convention staff.

The addresses and breakout sessions have been planned and designed to help encourage and equip church leaders and members to be faithful disciples of Christ who will have confidence to fulfill our calling to go and make disciples.

Some of the topics that will be addressed include immigration, sexual and gender identity, pornography and more.

Stonestreet is a gifted speaker, author, thinker and cultural commentator. As president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, he carries on the legacy of the late Chuck Colson, who after his midlife conversion following the Watergate scandal, dedicated his life to equipping Christians to develop a biblical worldview and put their faith in action.

Even though you may not recognize his name, many of you listen to Stonestreet on the radio because he hosts the popular Breakpoint radio program that Colson founded, which provides analysis and perspective on news and current events from a Christian worldview. This is your opportunity to meet and listen to an influential individual you enjoy hearing via broadcasts.

We are honored to have such a leading authority on faith and culture for this conference. I hope many North Carolina Baptists will take advantage of this opportunity. Whether you come alone or travel to High Point with a group from your church, I hope to see many of you there as we become better equipped to be salt and light for the Lord Jesus Christ.

More information about this year’s conference is available online at disciplemakingconference.org. Registration is just \$10 per person and includes lunch.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” – Matthew 5:16. **BR**



Little school casts a big shadow

One out of five Southern Baptist pastors in North Carolina have attended a little school hidden in the mountains near Hendersonville, N.C. Many South Carolina pastors also came from this little school. That place is Fruitland Baptist Bible College.

Fruitland is a two-year school that was created to train people for future ministry. It offers an associate’s degree in religion/Christian ministries.

I have taught at Fruitland off and on since 1993. I consider it one of the greatest privileges of my life to teach these men and women who will serve in ministry. Why have so many chosen to attend this school, and why does it have such a positive impact on so many lives?

Fruitland has had great leadership. I have served under four presidents. David Horton, our current president, continues the tradition of exceptional leadership for our school. The level of commitment to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina can be seen in the fact that three former presidents of the state convention, as well as our current president, teach there.

Academically, the faculty is more than equal to the task. Each one has at least a master’s degree and many have doctoral degrees as well. We have arrangements with schools such as the College at Southeastern in Wake Forest and North Greenville University to accept our student’s course work toward a bachelor’s degree. Southeastern has expressed its pleasure with the quality of students we send them.

Fruitland is amazingly inexpensive in its tuition and fees. A student can take a full load of 16 hours for less than \$600 total tuition for each quarter.

That is less than the cost of one class at most colleges. The cost of room, board, tuition and books together is around \$1,800 a quarter.

How can Fruitland offer a great biblically based education that trains ministers at such a low price? Two reasons:

- Because of your support through the Cooperative Program; and,
- Because most of the faculty teach one day per week, receiving only small part time salaries.

There is more to Fruitland than just the courses that are taught. The camaraderie that is felt among the students is something you have to experience to understand. Our students grow close to each other and develop friendships that last for life. They pray together and worship together in a daily chapel experience. This is unashamedly a strong Christian school.

One other factor that makes us unique is the fact that the majority of teachers are people who serve as pastors during the week.

Students are being taught by people who preach every week, visit their people in the hospitals, do funerals and are a part of the “real world” of Christian work. What the students receive is not just academic theory, but truths that have been proven in the life of local churches.

If you are looking for a place to grow in the Lord and train for future ministry, or if you are looking for a place to send those who are called to ministry in your churches, please consider Fruitland Baptist Bible College.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Steve Scoggins is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville and president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.) **BR**



STEVE SCOGGINS
Guest Column

P.K. PREACHER'S KIDS

BY DAVID AYERS



ERLC releases update on sex abuse study group

Biblical Recorder

Phillip Bethancourt, executive vice president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said the study group on sexual abuse launched last summer by J.D. Greear, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), is currently focused on assessing needs and reviewing ways to prevent abuse and care for survivors.

Bethancourt outlined “phase one” of the group’s three-part effort and signaled plans for the future in an article published on the ERLC website Jan. 14. The study group was formed by Greear, who serves as pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C.,

in conjunction with the ERLC and the SBC Executive Committee.

“The purpose of this phase is to review existing organizations, strategies, experts and resources in order to better understand the landscape of needs and opportunities when it comes to sexual abuse,” said Bethancourt.

The group has asked for input from a range of sources, including commissioning a survey on abuse by LifeWay Christian Resources. Plans for the project’s next phases – development and implementation – are already taking shape, according to Bethancourt.

Forthcoming resources will include “church-based strategies, seminary and higher education practices and training, and resources to be utilized at every level

of the SBC” as part of a “wide-scale, comprehensive effort.” More information will be released at the SBC annual meeting, June 11-12, in Birmingham, Ala.

Bethancourt encouraged churches not to wait until the study group finishes their work to begin preventing abuse and caring for survivors.

“Even now, churches should implement basic, common-sense initiatives such as background checks and ‘two deep’ policies that require two adults to be present when working with minors,” he said. “Although the study will highlight how there is much more that can be done, we encourage churches to take action now.”

Email studygroup@erlc.com with questions or suggestions. **BR**

LifeWay to reduce stores

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

In light of “an accelerated rate of erosion” at “brick-and-mortar” stores, LifeWay Christian Resources President Thom Rainer has announced that some LifeWay stores will be closing. The number of stores to close and the timing of those closures has not been announced.

Rainer wrote in a Jan. 15 email to all LifeWay employees, “We prayed and hoped that our investments in and commitments to the LifeWay stores would prove fruitful. That just has not been the case. To the contrary, we not only continue to see an erosion in the brick-and-mortar channel, we have seen an accelerated rate of erosion in recent months. It was our hope that greater traffic would result in greater sales, and that with our expense reductions and product cost savings, we would be able to offset sales declines. That hope has not been realized with the declines we have seen since September. In simple terms, a strategic shift is required for moving more and more of our resources to a dynamic digital strategy,” Rainer wrote. “We will be transitioning many of those resources from our LifeWay stores to digital channels. The good news is that we will be better prepared to meet the future. The challenging news is that some of our stores will have to close.”

LifeWay operated 174 stores in 2017, according to the latest figures published in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Annuals. In 2018, LifeWay launched

a new vision for its stores, seeking to make them places where people could “connect, learn and grow,” Baptist Press reported in February 2018.

The last time LifeWay’s sales exceeded its total operating expenses was 2009, when LifeWay reported a \$3 million increase in “unrestricted net assets from operations,” according to financial reports published in SBC Annuals. Since then, total operating expenses exceeded sales each year. The margin by which operating expenses exceeded sales grew from \$2.3 million in 2010 to \$35.5 million in 2017. Still, LifeWay’s total assets increased over the same period, from \$407 million in 2009 to \$452 million in 2017. During that timeframe, LifeWay sold its Glorietta Conference Center in 2013 and its 14.5-acre Nashville campus in 2015. LifeWay financial statements show \$20 million of net cash provided by operating activities in 2017. That resulted in a \$44 million increase in unrestricted net assets for 2017. LifeWay’s financial report for 2018 has not yet been released.

Amid the growth of online book-sellers, other Christian and secular bookstores have had to close as well. Two years ago, Family Christian Stores – which called itself “the world’s largest retailer of Christian-themed merchandise” – announced the closure of 240 stores across 36 states.

“At this point, we are evaluating all our stores, so we cannot say how many stores will remain in this new era,” said Rainer, who announced plans to retire from LifeWay in August 2018. **BR**

National Day of Prayer launches magazine

Baptist Press

Ronnie Floyd, president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, has introduced a new quarterly magazine, *PRAY*.

While *PRAY* will seek to “encourage and equip Christians in how to pray more effectively,” Floyd noted to Baptist Press that “it is also published for men and women who lead local church prayer ministries.”

The National Day of Prayer publication “is just one tool we are using to mobilize unified public prayer for America,” Floyd said in a Jan. 7 news release. “Through this resource, you can learn about how prayer impacts lives, find practical applications, and inspiration for your own prayer life.”

Orderliness is the theme of articles by Floyd and several others in *PRAY*’s inaugural January-March 2019 edition.

This issue includes a column by Floyd about the wisest decision you can make,

along with articles by Tim Clinton and Rachel Cruz.

Clinton is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors; Cruz is the host of an online money management program, “The Rachel Cruz Show,” and author with Dave Ramsey, her father, of *Smart Money Smart Kids: Raising the Next Generation to Win with Money*.

Floyd was named as president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force in April 2017. He is the senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. *How to Pray*, with a 20th anniversary edition slated for April, is among 20-plus book he has authored.

Subscriptions for *PRAY* and information about other church-related prayer resources is available at the National Day of Prayer’s Church Prayer Leaders Network, prayerleader.com. This year’s National Day of Prayer will be May 2 with the theme “Love One Another.” **BR**

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Can NFL kickers be leaders?

Matt Stover played 13 seasons as a professional football place kicker for the New York Giants, Indianapolis Colts, Cleveland Browns and Baltimore Ravens. In 2009, he was the third most accurate kicker in the history of the National Football League (NFL), even bringing home a Super Bowl championship when he played for the Ravens. In 2011, Stover was inducted into the Ravens' Ring of Honor.



ROMAN GABRIEL III
Sports Q & A

The mission of his organization, The Matt Stover Foundation, is to provide financial support to under-funded educational, religious and other charitable organizations. He is also co-founder of the Players Philanthropy Fund, an organization that enables athletes and others to create charitable funds for the causes they are passionate about.

Stover agreed to an interview with *Biblical Recorder* correspondent Roman Gabriel III about faith and leadership. What follows is edited for clarity and length.

Q: You were not only a great kicker and Super Bowl champion, but also a team leader. Is that rare for place kickers?

A: Roman, when you look back at my career over 20 years, one of the things I tried to do as a leader was know my teammates' stories. I tried to know where they came from, so I could empathize. I could minister to them in different ways. These guys have struggles like everyone else, and you can be a beacon of hope for them in the locker room.

Q: Has that changed for you after football?

A: It's what I do every day with the Players Philanthropy Fund. I'm helping and assisting them with their foundations if they don't have one. They can come inside the Players Philanthropy Fund and operate as if they have one. There are hundreds of great athletes out there doing great work. It's like that all the way across the league. To learn their stories and hear about their faith, family and football is very encouraging.

Q: Was your faith always strong over your entire career?

A: No. At the beginning of my career, my faith was very superficial. It



wasn't deep nor intimate. When I was kicking for the Browns, I was really caught up in the NFL career and needed to change my priorities. I decided to put God first. I was married, so my marriage and my faith came first over football. When I understood where the priorities should be, it gave me freedom.

I don't think a lot of people understand that the freedom to fail is so empowering. It gives you the ability to perform at a level you would never think of. As an athlete, if your identity is tied up in your career only, and things don't go well, you're going to get paralyzed and you're not going to perform. That's where my faith and my family – my priorities – became such a big issue.

Q: Who were the men that were instrumental as mentors for you during your football career?

A: Brian Hansen, who spent 18 years with the Cleveland Browns as a punter. I met him when he was 10 years into the league (32 years old). He had a family, and he gave me a beacon, a light to see what it was supposed to be. What a faithful guy he was, as a husband and father. And then I understood where my faith needed to go.

Q: Who showed you the way spiritually inside the football world?

A: I was very challenged at the beginning of my career by our team chaplain. He really showed me how to share my faith and connect with players. He modeled that in his life.

When I was with the Ravens, it was Joe Ehrmann. He showed me exactly how



Matt Stover was a kicker in the NFL for 19 seasons, most notably with the Baltimore Ravens, above. Stover was inducted into the Ravens Ring of Honor in 2011 and is a two-time Super Bowl champion. At left, Stover meets Roman Gabriel III during media days at a recent Super Bowl. (Contributed photos)

to do it. He was a mentor of mine for four years. He went on to be a great mentor, to write several books to assist high school and college football coaches to be faithful in their training of players.

The best thing I could do at the time was walk around the locker-room and be exactly who I am, not trying to be somebody I wasn't. In return, my teammates paid attention to how I lived my life.

Q: Can you think of an example where that played out?

A: Yes, my first time on Monday Night Football, I missed all three of my field goal attempts. We lost the game. I took it, then went back to work, and only missed one more field goal the whole year.

My teammates look back on that and say, "Wow, you showed me a lot about

your faith" – the way I handled myself in a positive manner. Those are the stories you remember. Handle yourself in the right way, earn the right to speak and know the other players' stories so you can speak truth into their situation. From there, you've got an opportunity to be influential for the rest of their lives.

Find out more about the Players Philanthropy Fund at PPF.org and the Matt Stover Foundation at MattStoverFoundation.org.

(EDITORS'S NOTE – Roman Gabriel III is an evangelist and motivational speaker. Visit the Faith Family Sports website: fspn.net. Hear his Sold Out Sports Talk Radio program on American Family Radio in 200 cities nationally or streaming live at afr.net. Visit his website: soldout-tv.com; Facebook: Roman Gabriel III; connect on Twitter: @romangabriel3rd. Contact at (910) 431-6483 or email: soldoutrg3@gmail.com.) **BR**

Greear to launch ‘Who’s Your One?’ with associations

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

A Jan. 31 simulcast for associational leaders will help launch Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President J.D. Greear’s “Who’s Your One?” evangelistic initiative among the 1,000-plus associations within the Southern Baptist network.

“Who’s Your One?” encourages every Southern Baptist to intentionally build a relationship with one person over the course of 2019, share the gospel and invite that person to trust Christ as Lord and Savior.

“Associations have always served as a valuable partner in cooperation, mobilizing churches together,” Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., told Baptist Press (BP). “Our own local [Yates Baptist] Association, under the leadership of Marty Childers, provides a great structure for church revitalization, racial reconciliation and partnership evangelism in our city. It only seemed natural for every association in the country to work together.”

Sponsored by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the Yates Association, the simulcast will begin at 12:30 p.m. Eastern time and will feature Greear’s introduction of “Who’s Your One?” to Yates Association pastors as they gather for a luncheon at Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Durham. Other associations that sign up online will receive login information to broadcast the event live.

Following Greear’s address, Johnny Hunt, NAMB’s senior vice president of evangelism and leadership, will intro-

duce a “Who’s Your One?” evangelism kit being produced by NAMB for release in February. The kit is designed to help pastors lead a multi-week emphasis in their churches encouraging every member to become more focused and intentional about evangelism.

Hunt told BP, “The ‘Who’s Your One?’ evangelism kit is going to be a huge help to pastors throughout our convention as they seek to mobilize their congregations for evangelism. Our associational leaders can play a key role in helping churches engage with this effort. We are grateful for their partnership and look forward to seeing how God is going to move as thousands of Southern Baptists become focused on sharing their faith.”

The simulcast also will feature a question-and-answer session with Greear, Hunt and Yates Association pastors.

Ray Gentry, executive director of the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders, has encouraged associations around the SBC to host their own pastors’ luncheons during the simulcast or show the event video, which will be archived, to pastors at a later gathering.

“The event is an opportunity for Pastor Greear to speak directly to our associations, recognizing the critical role associations play in equipping our churches for ministry,” Gentry wrote in a Dec. 20 email to associational leaders. “...Can you imagine the impact if every church in our associations were filled with people asking God each day to allow them to lead one person to Christ this year?”

Childers, missional strategist for the Yates Association, called the simulcast “a great example of Baptist collaboration.”

NAMB also has a number of national and regional events focused on evangelism. A leadership training program called “Timothy+Barnabas” – which Hunt developed and led at Woodstock for years – came under the umbrella of NAMB’s leadership development arm on Jan. 1. Hunt will continue to lead the program and plans to host five training events in 2019 across the United States.

“Leadership and evangelism go together,” said Law, explaining that many congregations fail to share the Good News in their communities because they have not been led to do so by their church leaders.

Visit NAMB.net/evangelism for more information. **BR**



Southern Baptist Convention President J.D. Greear, who will address associational leaders during a Jan. 31 simulcast, called Baptist associations “a valuable partner in cooperation.” (BP file photo by Bill Bingham)

“We are just thrilled about hosting the event,” Childers told BP, “because we do get to hear from our SBC president and hear his vision. I think that will go a long way. I know J.D. has a heart for Baptist

churches and Baptist associations.”

Additional information about the simulcast is forthcoming on the SBCAL website, sbccassociations.org, and SBCAL social media channels. **BR**

TEACH US TO PRAY

In his book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Andrew Murray makes a profound observation, “Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, only how to pray. To know how to speak to God is more than knowing how to speak to man. Power with God is the first thing, not power with men. Jesus loves to teach us how to pray.”

Reading this statement at the beginning of a new year caused me to pause and reflect on the truth of Murray’s words. Do I value speaking with God through prayer more than I value speaking with men?

The ability to come before the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth must not be lost on us as believers. When Christ died on the cross, He conquered sin, but we must also not forget the thick temple veil that separated a Holy God from communing with sinful man was rent in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). No longer did man have to go to a priest to make intercession for him, but through the Great High Priest, man could come to the throne of God himself.

What a privilege that is too often taken for granted or neglected altogether. As I have thought about men and women who have influenced my walk with Christ, I recognize

many were great Bible teachers, communicators of the gospel and passionate servants, but the common thread among all of them is that they had a deep and consistent prayer life.

Their prayer lives were developed over years of coming before the Lord’s throne regardless of time, place and circumstance. The basis of their being great Bible teachers, gospel communicators and passionate servants flowed from their prayer lives; their prayer lives were not by-products of their ministries.

Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. They observed from Jesus’ emphasis on prayer in His own life that prayer meant speaking with God Himself. The disciples not only wanted to engage in prayer, but they wanted to engage in prayer well.

Is our heart cry still today, “*Lord, teach us to pray*,” as it was for the first disciples?

In this new year, regardless of chronological age or length of time walking with the Lord, may our desire be for Jesus to teach us to pray.

embrace



ASHLEY ALLEN

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Ashley Allen is consultant for Embrace Women’s Ministry for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. For more information you can reach her at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5559.)

SBC Continued from page 1

initiatives at their respective churches. Hunt previously served as pastor of Woodstock Baptist Church near Atlanta, Ga.

“We’ve got to prioritize evangelism again,” Law said.

Law also expects evangelism to be a “major topic of discussion” at the SBC annual meeting in Birmingham this June.

“We’re not trying to focus on one particular resource,” he continued. “We’re trying to get people to use any resource they want to get people to share their faith.”

Hunt and Greear plan to embark on a “Gospel Above All” tour in the fall of 2019 and into next year.

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Dominican Republic native found gospel focus at SEBTS

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

It started with a prayer. In his home country of the Dominican Republic, youth pastor Moises Gomez had a burning desire to be better equipped to serve the church. He and his pastor asked the Lord to provide a way for Gomez to be equipped for full-time ministry.

"I think we should pray and see God respond in this prayer," Gomez recounted his pastor telling him in 2014.

Two weeks later the phone rang, and Edgar Aponte was on the other end. Aponte was Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SEBTS) director of Hispanic leadership development at the time (now the International Mission Board's vice president of mobilization).

Aponte offered Gomez an opportunity for theological education under the seminary's Kingdom Diversity Scholarship. After a campus visit, growing financial support and other doors the Lord opened, Gomez and his family moved to Wake Forest, N.C., and he began his master of divinity studies in Christian ministry during the 2016 spring semester. During his two years at Southeastern, Gomez said he has gained a richer theological base, a Great Commission focus

and what he regards as a "well-balanced" master of divinity.

SEBTS embodies a "special flavor," as Gomez puts it, one in which he has experienced deep relationships with his professors and has been challenged through their teaching and lifestyle.

"One of the reasons I love to be here is I have found that my knowledge in theology has been increased, and my heart has been encouraged through the way professors have been teaching and leading," Gomez said.

As a husband and father of two, time can be one of the biggest challenges in balancing school, family and work. However, Gomez and his wife chose to make family a priority during this time they consider an "oasis" from the challenge of ministry in the Dominican Republic.

Gomez tailored his schedule accordingly. During the day he attended class, went to work and studied at the library. But once he arrived at the apartment, the books were put away to focus on family.

"I have found that another person could be a better pastor or a better student than me, but in my house there's no other person who would do something in a way that I could do it," said Gomez, who said he and his wife also planned



A Kingdom Diversity scholarship allows Moises Gomez to go to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary while juggling family and church life. (SEBTS photo)

about serving the church while in school, they have passionately pursued it. Gomez has the opportunity to preach in various cities across the country, including New York City, Miami, Raleigh-Durham and Orlando. At his home church, Imago Dei, he has led the Hispanic Initiative for a year and a half, which encompasses about 40 congregants and 20 kids coming together once a month for a time of teaching and fellowship in their own language.

Betsy serves with Revive Our Hearts, a ministry led by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, to equip women to

thrive in their identity in Christ by providing resources through radio shows, events and blogs. In her work with the ministry, Betsy teaches throughout Latin America and manages the media team and the blog for Hispanic women. Her classes and professors also have played a vital role in her ministerial work.

While time management can be challenging, the community at Southeastern lends itself to being family-oriented, said Gomez's wife, Betsy, who is also a student at SEBTS pursuing a master of arts in ministry to women.

"The challenge is more to choose well in what we are investing our time in," she said, "being faithful to the Lord and not trading our family for our studies."

Gomez has been impacted by the Great Commission focus in the classroom, specifically the expectation to share the gospel during the semester. While evangelism reports are expected in missions and evangelism classes, he remembers being held accountable for this even in courses like Bible exposition, church history and Old Testament survey.

"I can testify as an international student, coming from a different background, who is pursuing to be equipped, that the seminary intentionally fulfills and achieves what we have in our mission," said Gomez, who saw this firsthand as a recruiter for Southeastern's Hispanic leadership development office.

Gomez and his wife do not just talk

thrive in their identity in Christ by providing resources through radio shows, events and blogs. In her work with the ministry, Betsy teaches throughout Latin America and manages the media team and the blog for Hispanic women. Her classes and professors also have played a vital role in her ministerial work.

"I remember having a speaking engagement in Mexico and sitting with a professor asking him if he thought that what I was going to teach was proper for that time," she recounted. "I felt like the companion of the professors, and I've seen the investment and how that has been fruitful."

While the couple has spent countless hours studying, ministering to others and raising their kids, the next step in the journey is as exciting as the previous one.

As Gomez looks back on his time at Southeastern with fondness, what began as a prayer four years ago is becoming a reality. At the beginning of December, Gomez received his master of divinity in Christian ministry. At the end of December, he and his family moved to Texas to pursue full-time ministry. In his new role as one of the pastors on staff at the Dallas-area First Irving Baptist Church, Gomez will specifically be working to better engage the Hispanic community around the church. Gomez and his family are not just leaving a school but a family, one that has shaped their minds, hearts and lives. "People here become family, and we are pursuing the same thing: to be equipped in order to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission," Gomez said. **BR**

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Border

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last month, there were 3,000 at the center. Today 700 remain.

“The majority of these people, they already crossed,” he said, only to find themselves in detention centers in California and Arizona.

The Mexican government opened El Barretal as a shelter when another facility, a sports complex called Deportivo Benito Juárez, became overcrowded and littered with trash and sewage. It was there that Gonzalez, along with his wife, two sons and daughter, first provided migrants with coffee and bread. They ran out quickly.

“The next day they call us. The immigration from Mexico call us and asked if we can feed women and children. There was big rain coming, so we prepared chicken soup. I asked what time they want it, and they say, ‘Hold, hold, hold.’”

Around 7 p.m., Gonzalez heard back from officials who requested he take the food to the new site instead.

“So we wait with chicken soup at El Barretal, and as soon as they arrived, it was wet, raining hard, so we received people with the chicken soup plate.”

Two other pastors and several local church members have since joined the family on their daily visits to the shelter.

“I try not to be busy so I can talk to people,” Gonzalez said. “Somebody will ask me if I’ll pray for them, if I’ll talk to them, if I’ll listen to them. One of the great needs is spiritual. We need churches. We need brothers and sisters that can come and spend the whole day teaching and praying for them.”

An immigrant himself who first came to the U.S. for work, Gonzalez said he was initially “a little slow in getting into” ministry to asylum seekers.

“When the government in Mexico knows that you’re a pastor and you care for people, how can you say no?” he said. “So when they called me, it was like an open door to show the government the love of Christ and also to show the people from the caravan that God really cares for them.”

The immigration official who contacted Gonzalez met him two years ago, when his church served as a sanctuary for Haitian refugees.

“Right now the government here in Tijuana, they really trust in me. Whatever I say, they say, ‘Yeah, pastor, we’re gonna do it.’ It’s really a testimony for us as a Christian to come and serve,” he said.

“For me, it was not a matter of taking sides – that they come illegally, or they’re gonna be legal – my first response was: Christ opened the door for me to show His love. ... Some people think that they don’t deserve, but nobody deserves.



Above, migrants at El Barretal wait in line to celebrate Christmas with a meal. At left, tents are popping up in areas near the border while people wait to cross the border. (Photos courtesy of Juvenal Gonzalez)

“For me, it was not a matter of taking sides – that they come illegally, or they’re gonna be legal – my first response was Christ opened the door for me to show His love.”
– Juvenal Gonzalez

“So to me, it was more like, hey, I need to be obedient helping the poor, the needy, the widow and the children. For me, it was like a wake-up call when they called me.”

Gonzalez told the *Recorder* he is prepared to welcome teams that want to care for people at El Barretal. With support from SDSBA, he can offer transportation and housing for church groups visiting from the U.S.

The time he could spend in conversation with individuals and families is limited by the demands of food distribution.

He simply needs more people.

Alan Cross, missional strategist for the Montgomery Baptist Association in Alabama, traveled to Tijuana in December. He visited the border wall at the Pacific Ocean, where Christians on the U.S. side of the wall gathered to pray and sing.

“In the midst of the news stories and concern about the border, I saw the church at work on both sides ministering, praying and being the hands and feet of Jesus to migrants,” Cross said in a statement to the *Recorder*. “I saw them being treated as people in need and not

political objects. The church transcends borders and is transforming this controversy into opportunity for ministry and the gospel of the Kingdom to be proclaimed and demonstrated to these desperate people.

“I pray that Southern Baptists will further join with missionaries like Juvenal to share the love of Christ with the migrants coming to us for help.”

In addition to physical presence at El Barretal, Gonzalez asked for prayer for more opportunities to minister to asylum seekers. Individuals and churches can also make financial contributions to SDSBA for the work in Tijuana. Visit sdsba.net to donate. **BR**



Russell Moore at EFL: Dignity, gospel needed

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

Human dignity and gospel mission should characterize the Christian voice at a time when people are treated like machines, Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore said at Evangelicals for Life (EFL) Jan. 17.

Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), opened the second day of the annual conference sponsored by the ERLC. The two-day event at McLean Bible Church in Vienna, Va., a suburb of Washington, D.C., continued with a full day of addresses, panel discussions and breakout sessions on such topics as abortion, adoption, disability, racial unity, immigration, Christian persecution and criminal justice reform.

Many EFL attendees planned to participate in the annual March for Life Jan. 18 on the National Mall.

Moore told the audience, “We march for life, but we march beyond that to eternal life.”

Jesus demonstrated truths about the dignity of human beings and the power of the gospel in Luke 18:31-19:10, which describes His encounters with two outcasts in the region of Jericho – a blind man and the tax collector Zacchaeus, Moore said.

The blind man was dependent and unproductive, he said. “When usefulness is the definition of whether or not one is worth something, then we have turned human beings into machines,” Moore said. “And when one stops being useful or is never considered to be useful in the first place, those people are discarded even as we would discard an outdated technology.”

The blind man, however, cried out to Jesus, calling Him Son of David – “language that everyone would have understood refers to the king that God is going to send to deliver His people,” Moore said. In so doing, the blind man was “able to see what the disciples of Jesus



Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, opened the second day of the annual Evangelicals for Life conference on Jan. 17. (Photo by Karen McCutcheon)

themselves were not able to see,” he said. The disciples did not comprehend what would happen to Him in Jerusalem, though He had just told them.

The crowd sought to silence him “because he’s a problem, he’s a burden,” Moore said. “[T]o silence him would be to make him imperceptible.

“[T]hat’s exactly what takes place in our own society when it comes to the people who are so vulnerable that we don’t want to recognize that they’re there,” he told the audience. To the unborn, immigrants, refugees, elderly and children in foster care, people can say, “We want to silence you,” Moore said.

Jesus, however, “sees beyond that social pressure; He sees beyond the identity politics,” Moore said. “And He sees the person, and He sees this person not as a thing, not as a machine. He sees him as someone created in the image of the God who is Lord over all things.

“He sees him and He reflects to him the love and the mercy of the gospel and of God.”

With Zacchaeus, Jesus “again defies all of the social pressure around Him,” this time by inviting Himself to the home of a despised tax collector who had used his

power to extort money from people, Moore said.

Jesus fully knew controversy would break out because He was calling tax collectors to repentance and “willing to be in relationship with people He is calling to repentance,” Moore told the audience. Jesus is showing “God is not shocked by this sin, and God does not leave you in that sin,” he said.

Christ is calling Christians to live in the same way, he said. “We have to speak in a way consistent with the gospel so that we’re speaking a word of justice. God is just. God does not ignore what happens to the cries of the poor and the vulnerable and marginalized and the unborn and the elderly and the stranger.”

Followers of Jesus must hear women who are in crisis pregnancies and say to them, “God hears you, and we’re here with you,” Moore said. Christians also are to “hear the voices of unborn children who have no functioning vocal cords, who can’t speak for themselves, to say, ‘These lives are not inconveniences. These lives are children loved by God.’”

In addition, Christians should respond to the voices of children in foster care, refugees suffering persecution, and the elderly in nursing homes or their own homes, he said.

God “hears oppression, and God will bring to judgment the oppression of the weak,” Moore told attendees. That is not the only word, however, he said. Jesus also says, “Come to Me,” in a word of invitation to both the oppressed and the oppressor, he said.

Jesus is saying, “Come to Me through the cross of Christ where the judgment of God has already fallen and where the love of God is seen...,” Moore said.

“In an age of machines,” he said, “we have to be the people who are able to speak with confidence to those who are in power, ‘There is a God, and He sees you,’ and with mercy to those who are weak and forgotten ... to say, ‘Jesus loves you.’” **BR**

ERLC boosts advocacy through training

By SETH BROWN | BR Content Editor

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is known for its advocacy work among the nation’s lawmakers on behalf of Southern Baptists, but its efforts do not stop there. ERLC staff members also advocate alongside Southern Baptists by equipping them to understand public policy and petition legislators independently.

Attendees of the 2019 Evangelicals for Life (EFL) conference, held Jan. 16-18 at McLean Bible Church near Washington, D.C., had an opportunity to participate in two breakout sessions that discussed how to engage and what to expect in meetings with government leaders. Team members from the ERLC’s Washington, D.C. office also coordinated meetings for each participant with his or her state’s congressional staff.

Chelsea Sobolik, policy director for the ERLC, told the *Biblical Recorder* that many Christians are intimidated at the thought of meeting with elected officials, but she wants to empower Southern

Baptists to engage their representatives on important issues.

Brittany Salmon, a doctoral student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and member of The Well Church in Abilene, Texas, said the breakout sessions “gave us the tools” to build relationships and partner with government officials.

“It’s one thing to say that we’re pro-life,” Salmon continued, “it’s another thing to be equipped to go and advocate for these issues.”

While describing the EFL advocacy training, Sobolik referred to the adage about giving someone a fish versus teaching them to fish.

“Governments are supposed to be for the people,” she said. “Legislators work for their constituents – at least they should. While they will listen to [ERLC staff], because we have relationships on [Capitol] Hill, they will definitely listen to their constituents.”

Sobolik previously worked on a congressional staff for three years, an experience she said helps her understand how

other staffers think.

She emphasized to EFL participants that “a posture of service” was both appropriate for Christians and an effective way to advocate.

Another ERLC policy director, Steven Harris, briefed participants on the theological framework for the ERLC’s advocacy efforts.

“We are under no illusion here that anything we do replaces the work of the local church,” he said. “The local church is God’s ‘Plan A.’”

Harris also pushed back against the idea that Christians should stay out of politics.

“While Caesar’s image is on the coin, it’s God’s image that is on Caesar,” he said, referring to Matthew 22:15-22, a well-known passage in which some believe Jesus speaks against political involvement.

“It is appropriate and right for the Christian in a democratic republic to make sure the witness of righteousness is appropriately realized and spoken in these arenas that are deciding how we are

going to govern ourselves,” said Harris.

Lauren Konkol, ERLC team coordinator, and Jeff Pickering, associate policy communications director, outlined practical considerations for meeting with congressional staff, such as appropriate attire, punctuality, flexibility and how to initiate advocacy conversations.

“When we enter a congressional office – bearing the name of Christ, our church, our community – we want to do that in a way that is respectful,” Konkol said. “We, as the ERLC, advocate on behalf of Southern Baptists. We bear that responsibility with great pride.”

Joseph Thigpen, discipleship pastor at City Church in Tallahassee, Fla., attended meetings Jan. 19 with staff from U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio’s office.

“It was clear to me that the ERLC’s D.C. team has taken the work of advocacy for Southern Baptists seriously,” said Thigpen. “We were able to see firsthand the fruit of their relationships in our nation’s Capitol. They have built key relationships which allow Southern Baptists to be a respected voice on life issues.” **BR**

New BCH outreach center to aid families dedicated

By **BLAKE RAGSDALE** | BCH Communications

The vision to establish a dynamic new ministry to aid families throughout the state came into focus with the Jan. 15 dedication of the Bob and Carolyn Tucker Greater Vision Outreach Center.

Donors, dignitaries, staff and community friends gathered at Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina's (BCH) Mills Home campus in Thomasville to celebrate the official opening of the 10,000 square-foot center.

"This is the fulfillment of a dream, of a vision that some of us had and simply wouldn't let go of," BCH president Michael C. Blackwell said at the dedication program.

"For those of you who have truly been gripped by a vision that you feel came from God, you know you have no choice but to do what God is asking you to do."

The dedication program consisted of a catered luncheon in the center's warehouse.

The area was adorned with elaborate tables and beautiful place settings. Around them, guests could see areas reserved for donated clothing, school supplies, furniture, food and other supplies that can meet the immediate needs of community families.

"God plainly asks us to follow a vision of outreach in the community," Blackwell explained, "and when we feel God has opened a door, we are very quick to go through that door."

The door opened wide in 2016 when Bob and Carolyn Tucker of Concord pledged \$1.5 million for the establishment of the new ministry. The center is named in their honor.

Carolyn's smile beamed brightly as she stood at Blackwell's side and spoke to the capacity crowd. "Bob and I are pleased to be a part of the giving towards such a great organization as the Baptist Children's Homes."

The Tuckers are longtime friends of BCH and members of North Kannapolis Baptist Church. They are the founders of Shoe Show, Inc., which has retail locations in 47 states. Bob and Carolyn's son, Bobby, is a member of BCH's Board of Trustees.

"The real journey began when we heard of the real work and the lives that are changed. We were moved by the spirit, and we are just carrying on a great tradition," Carolyn continued.

"When you give to an organization like this, you see it, it is not just on a piece of paper.

"We are all so glad to be a part of this work."

The "work" is the expansion of BCH's array of services to children and families. The goal of the Greater Vision Outreach Ministry is to provide assistance to working families who struggle financially and can benefit from one-on-one mentoring on a path to self-sufficiency.

The center assists them by providing direct services, referrals to community resources, and education opportunities that help them on their journey. The ministry also serves the community by being a clearinghouse, channeling large donations to non-profit partners for distributions.

"This is a holistic approach that provides help, hope and healing for the economically depressed, spiritually discouraged and economically distressed," Blackwell said to the crowd.

To express his gratitude, Blackwell presented Carolyn with a framed copy of the Greater Vision article that appeared as a center spread in the January/February 2019 edition of *Charity & Children*, BCH's long-running news publication.

Many donors and volunteers came together to be a part of the new ministry including the Harris family who owns Furnitureland South in High Point. They provided the furnishings for the center as well as Stokes Cottage.

The renovated children's cottage was also unveiled and dedicated as a part of the celebratory day. North Carolina Baptist volunteers were vital to preparing the cottage to be a safe, family-style home to hurting children.

Even though the Greater Vision Outreach Center has just been officially dedicated, Greater Vision Outreach Center manager Sara Becker, her staff, volunteers and community partners have been meeting the various needs of families and individuals for months.

To date, Greater Vision has provided 48,314 meals and distributed 14,471 items of clothing and 10 pieces of furniture to children and families, both in the Triad and across the state.

"What sets Greater Vision apart is our commitment to help families move to greater financial independence – where they rely less on assistance," Becker said.

With the new center fully operational, Blackwell is looking forward with expectation as the vision for BCH's newest ministry widens.

"The creation of the Bob and Carolyn Tucker Greater Vision Outreach Center is historic for Baptist Children's Homes," Blackwell said.

"It is an opportunity to take our organizational vision of 'sharing hope ... changing lives' to the next level – a greater level." **BR**



Carolyn Tucker, right, talks about being involved in the work of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, led by Michael Blackwell, president. (BCH photo)



NCBM receives \$40,000 donation

Show N Tell Ministries presented a check for \$40,000 to the N.C. Baptists on Mission (NCBM) Jan. 11 after organizing a Broadway benefit concert in Raleigh in the wake of Hurricane Florence. Broadway Sings for Florence was held in October at Meymandi Concert Hall at Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts. One hundred percent of ticket admissions and all donations at the event were given to N.C. Baptists on Mission. "We're delighted to receive the donation," said Richard Brunson, right, NCBM executive director. "These funds will be used for our on-going operations in North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Florence. The needs will be great for years."

Broadway veteran Craig Schulman led a group of five Broadway performers in the show. The cast had plenty of star power with Schulman (the star performer in *Les Miserables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Jekyll & Hyde*); Tamra Hayden (*Les Miserables*, *Phantom*), Gary Mauer (*Phantom*, *Showboat*); Lawrence Clayton (*The Civil War*, *The Color Purple*) and Lana Gordon (*The Color Purple*, *Chicago*).

The North Carolina Symphony volunteered its services and the City of Raleigh provided the venue rent free. "It was a great collaboration," said Tim Stevens, left, the president of Show N Tell.

DeMoss to close PR firm

Biblical Recorder

Mark DeMoss, founder of DeMoss, a public relations firm known for its high-profile, faith-based clientele, plans to shutter the Atlanta-based organization March 29. In a letter to friends dated Jan. 15, DeMoss said he was diagnosed with cancer two years ago, but tests now show he is cancer-free.

“In addition to the gift of God’s presence and physical healing during this journey, the experience motivated a season of reflection ultimately leading to both clarity and affirmation of this important decision for me,” the letter said.

He explained that many public relations organizations have been “reinventing themselves” and changing their business models, but DeMoss said he is “not wired” to do that with his firm.

Founded in 1991 as The DeMoss Group, the firm managed clients such as the Southern Baptist Convention, Samaritan’s Purse, Operation Christmas Child, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Chick-fil-A, Museum of the Bible, American Bible Society, Hobby Lobby, Cru (formerly Campus Crusade), the American Center for Law and Justice and dozens more.

DeMoss planned and coordinated media relations for memorial services and other events surrounding the death of North Carolina evangelist Billy Graham, which received worldwide news coverage last year. He also served as an advisor for Mitt Romney’s 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns.

DeMoss’s 20 employees were notified Jan. 11 of the company’s forthcoming closure. Clients were then informed about the decision. Their website calls De-Moss “the nation’s largest PR agency serving faith-based organizations and causes.” Mark DeMoss is also the author of *The Little Red Book of Wisdom*. **BR**



MARK DEMOSS

Gardner-Webb names interim president

Gardner-Webb University Office of Communication

The Gardner-Webb University (GWU) Board of Trustees has named an interim president, who will begin Feb. 1 when President Frank Bonner retires. Ben Leslie, GWU provost and executive vice president, will lead the university until the new president assumes the role.

“With nearly 13 years of administrative experience as provost and executive vice president of the university, the board is pleased to entrust Dr. Leslie with this responsibility and confident that his leadership will help ensure a stable and smooth transition,” noted Jennifer Marion Mills, chair of the GWU Board of Trustees.

Interviews of presidential candidates have been completed, and an announcement on the new leader is expected soon.

Leslie came to Gardner-Webb in 2006 from Sioux Falls Seminary in Sioux Falls, S.D., where he was academic vice president and dean, and professor of systematic theology and Christian ethics. He earned a bachelor of arts from Samford University

(Birmingham, Ala.), a master of divinity from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Ky.), a master of theology from Baptist Theological Seminary (Rueschlikon, Switzerland), and a doctor of theology from the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

Since 2009, he has served as Gardner-Webb’s accreditation liaison for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). He provided institutional oversight of the school’s most recent reaffirmation of accreditation (2017) and has frequently served as a committee member for SACSCOC off-site and on-site reviews. Under Leslie’s leadership Gardner-Webb has been

consistently recognized nationally for outstanding achievement through academics and community/service-related efforts.

He is a member of First Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C., where he teaches Sunday School. An ordained minister and Christian scholar, Leslie has been a featured speaker in churches, conferences, and events and has authored numerous journal articles, essays and publications. **BR**



BEN LESLIE

WMU-NC celebrates Camp Mundo Vista’s 50th anniversary

Where is your perfect place to get away and reconnect with God? In what sacred spaces have you heard His voice and responded to His calling? Where has God trained you for the ministry you are a part of each and every day?

For many women across North Carolina, this space is Camp Mundo Vista. A small plot of land on a mountaintop near Asheboro, Camp Mundo Vista has impacted the world, and this year celebrates 50 years of being a training ground for women in missions and ministry!

Woman’s Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) established Camp Mundo Vista in 1969 as a Girls in Action (GA) camp where girls could come for a week during the summer to escape everyday life, encounter God, interact with missionaries and learn to listen for God’s calling on their lives. The women of WMU-NC knew many missionaries had surrendered to God’s call at camps such as this, and they wanted to provide that opportunity for girls in North Carolina. As Sara Ann Hobbs, one of the original dreamers of Camp Mundo Vista, said in her dedication speech in June 1969, “we ... aim to develop that heart sensitivity to the voice of God that makes it easy for Him to be heard and makes it imperative that He be followed.”

In the past 50 years, God has certainly fulfilled this original dream for the camp! Today, there are missionaries who have served in many places around the world who trace their callings back to Camp Mundo Vista. Kimberley Johnson, staff member from 1987-1991, recalls, “I answered God’s call into missions sitting on a rock in Unit 2 during my quiet time. God sent me to Bogota,

Colombia, to serve with the [International Mission Board] International Service Corps.” Martha, who was on staff in 1996 and who took her daughter to Mother-Daughter camp several years ago said, “Camp Mundo Vista encouraged my own daughter to pray about God’s leading of missions in her future and planted the seed

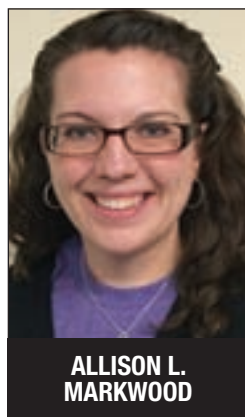
for a mission opportunity for us to experience together.” After staying in contact with the missionary they had met at camp that summer, Martha and her daughter traveled to Thailand last year to help host medical clinics.

For every woman who has served internationally or become a career missionary, there have been hundreds of others who have dedicated their lives to the Lord at Camp Mundo Vista and chosen to live on mission every day because of their time there.

Though initially just for GA camps, Camp Mundo Vista developed into so much more.

In the off-season, different organizations hold meetings there, and WMU-NC utilizes the facilities for retreats and trainings. There have been specific events for minister’s wives, military wives, teenagers, college students, missionary kids, and many other groups. One especially meaningful tradition at Camp Mundo Vista each year is the retreat for women incarcerated in the N.C. prison system. God has moved through this retreat in mighty ways by reminding inmates, counselors and volunteers alike of His grace for each of us and by restoring lives to Him.

Over the past 50 years, Camp Mundo Vista has undergone many changes. The facilities have been updated, the pathway to the Outdoor Chapel is now paved, and there is a new zipline among many other things.



ALLISON L. MARKWOOD

Though much is different, God’s presence is still tangible, the mission is still the same, and the view is still breathtaking. Though you physically look out on a small forest, at Camp Mundo Vista your heart begins viewing the world through God’s eyes.

There is much to celebrate, and WMU-NC wants you to be part of this historic year! Here are four ways you can join Camp Mundo Vista’s awesome story:

- On June 1, 2019, WMU-NC will host a 50th anniversary celebration and a reunion for all former camp staff. If you worked at Camp Mundo Vista, please come celebrate with us. Don’t miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime event to worship with your Mundo sisters! Please check out MundoReunion.com and register today!

- Another great way to get involved is to make Camp Mundo Vista part of your children’s ministry at your church. WMU-NC is hosting a one-day missions event for boys and girls on March 9, and preparations are already underway for a fantastic girls’ camp and mother-daughter camp this summer. Spots fill up quickly, so visit wmunc.org and make your reservations today.

- Please also consider giving a gift in honor of Camp Mundo Vista’s anniversary to the Heck-Jones Offering, which funds WMU-NC and all its events. Visit wmunc.org for more information about the offering and to give online.

- Finally, please celebrate with us by praising God for all He has done at and through Camp Mundo Vista, and by praying for His continued blessings for another 50 years.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Allison L. Markwood is the assistant recording secretary for Woman’s Missionary Union of North Carolina and formerly served on the camp staff at Camp Mundo Vista. She attends Mercy Hill Church in Greensboro.) **BR**

Bailey Smith, early SBC conservative president, dies

Christian Index & Baptist Press

Evangelist Bailey Smith, who helped sustain the Conservative Resurgence at its outset in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), died Jan. 14 at his home in Duluth, Ga. He was 79.

Smith's election as SBC president in 1980 was the second victory for conservatives following the landmark election of the late Memphis pastor Adrian Rogers in 1979.

J. Gerald Harris, retired editor of Georgia Baptists' *Christian Index* news journal, described Smith as "a powerful preacher, devoted pastor and faithful friend" in an obituary posted Jan. 15 at the *Index's* online news site.

Harris wrote that Smith told him he had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in April 2017. "I was stunned and heartbroken, but he was calm and demonstrated an imperturbable peace at the threshold of the personal physical storm he was entering."

After receiving care from Atlanta-area cancer specialists, Smith went to the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Smith and his wife Sandy remained in a Houston hotel for months for further diagnosis, chemotherapy and observation. Doctors ultimately recommended a complicated cancer surgery known as the Whipple procedure that, as Harris described it, offered "a five-year survival rate of up to 25 percent. Although the

skill of the surgeon and excellent care of the hospital was commendable, the surgery was not successful."

Smith's two terms as SBC president (1980-1982) were marked by his resolute preaching of the gospel. At one point, he sparked a national controversy over his declaration that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew."

The comments, spoken at an evangelical gathering in Dallas that included remarks by Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan, subsequently were clarified by Smith and others that he was speaking from a theological, not racial, standpoint.

"Most Baptists have known Bailey Smith as both a successful pastor and an effective evangelist for more than six decades," Harris wrote, "and his death has left a significant spiritual void in the 21st-century church that seems to be struggling to keep evangelism a priority."

Bailey Eugene Smith was born in Dallas on Jan. 30, 1939, the son of Bailey E. Smith and his wife Frances. He graduated from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas, Ark., in 1961 and from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1966.

Smith led churches in Texas, Arkansas and New Mexico before being called, at age 34, as pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., where he served 12 years. At the time of his election as SBC president, Smith was the youngest man ever to lead the convention, Harris



Bailey Smith, evangelist and former SBC president, urges the church in America to "wake up," preaching from the account of the sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane during chapel at Southwestern Seminary in March 2005. (SWBTS file photo)

wrote, noting that he earlier had served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference and the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma simultaneously.

Harris wrote that *TIME* magazine described Smith as "a formidable figure, a fiery, red-haired, old style prairie stem-winder." *Christianity Today* referred to him as "an inerrancy superstar."

"In 1980 the Del City church baptized 2,000 persons, an accomplishment un-

precedented in Christian history," Harris wrote. "In the 12 years Smith was the pastor ... the membership grew from 6,600 to more than 20,000, and in a convention that was known for thriving on growth and soul-winning, Bailey Smith was known as a pacesetter."

"In 1985 the Del City church was flourishing, but Smith sensed a definite call from God to become a vocational evangelist," Harris continued. "He is the only former president of the Southern Baptist Convention to enter crusade evangelism." Bailey Smith Ministries conducted area-wide crusades, church revivals, Bible conferences, ladies' retreats and overseas ministries.

Smith's Real Evangelism Conferences "touched and changed countless lives for three decades," Harris wrote.

Smith authored several books, including *Real Evangelism*, *Taking Back the Gospel*, *Real Christianity*, *Real Christian Excellence* and *The Grace Escape*. Harris wrote that Smith was working on his autobiography at the time of his death.

Smith is survived by his wife of 55 years, Sandy, and three sons, Bailey Scott; Steven, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark.; and Josh, pastor of Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Bogart, Ga.; and eight grandchildren.

A graveside service for the immediate family was held in Warren, Ark. A memorial service is planned for 10:30 a.m. Jan. 30 at One Heart Church in Norcross, Ga. **B3**

Jimmy Allen, SBC president and 'energetic dreamer,' dies

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

Jimmy Allen, a former Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president and entity leader known for his gregarious personality and engagement with cultural issues, died Jan. 8 in Brunswick, Ga. He was 91.

The last SBC president to serve before the convention's Conservative Resurgence, Allen also was a confidant of President Jimmy Carter and once met with Ayatollah Khomeini during the Iran hostage crisis. Allen led the SBC's Radio and Television Commission from 1980-90 and the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Christian Life Commission from 1960-68.

During Allen's 1968-80 pastorate of 9,000-member First Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, the congregation was among the SBC's baptism leaders and established a range of social ministries.

"He was the most energetic dreamer I think I've ever known," said Allen biographer Larry McSwain, a former dean and provost at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "He was driven by a call from God as a young man that never left him, and he had a passion for people that shaped the kind of ministry he had throughout the many chapters of his life."

A hallmark of Allen's SBC presidency was Bold Mission Thrust, a convention-wide campaign adopted in 1978 "to enable every person in the world to have the opportunity to hear and to respond to the gospel of Christ by the year 2000." Allen was among the campaign's chief promoters.



JIMMY ALLEN

Gender diversity marked Allen's presidential appointments and SBC program decisions. At his first annual meeting to preside in 1978, a woman, Marian Grant, chaired the Program Committee and 15 women were appointed to SBC committees, according to McSwain's biography *Loving Beyond Your Theology*. Grant was the wife of *Biblical Recorder* editor, Marse Grant.

Five additional women had program roles, including addresses by Coretta Scott King and Ruth Graham Bell.

Allen's intense work ethic, McSwain said, led him to sleep only about four hours a night and consume "coffee by the gallon."

His engagement with social issues included efforts to battle racism and segregation during the Jim Crow era. Allen said in a 2008 interview his concern about racism began as a teenager when a conference at LifeWay's Ridgcrest Conference Center led him to rethink prejudiced views.

"My sense is that the Bible itself is our authority and our mandate and that the Bible is very clear about God creating all men in His image," Allen said in 2008. "And therefore there's a mandate in God's Word to oppose any kind of discrimination and racial prejudice."

At the Texas Christian Life Commission, Allen advocated for the integration of Texas public schools and helped organize a conference on race at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His 1969-71 presidency of the Baptist General Convention of Texas culminated with an interracial gathering of 41,000 Texas Baptists from various conventions in Houston's Astrodome.

Allen's advocacy of racial justice brought so many threats to his family that he and his wife Wanda established a secret pattern of rings for their home telephone to let their children know a parent was calling rather than a white supremacist with a death threat, McSwain said in a 2008 interview.

While SBC conservatives and moderates alike came to applaud Allen's progressive thinking on race, McSwain told Baptist Press, his "progressivism" in other areas like theology and U.S. politics "probably triggered some reaction" from "grassroots" Southern Baptists involved in the Conservative Resurgence.

In his latter years, Allen participated in moderate Baptist groups like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the New Baptist Covenant. **B3**

AROUND THE STATE

Staff changes

LUCAS MONCADA was called to Mintz Baptist Church, Roseboro, as youth pastor. Moncada is currently a student at Southeastern Seminary working on his doctorate of philosophy.

Pine Ridge Baptist Church, Zebulon, has called **JAMES HORTON** as senior pastor. James previously served as pastor of Rocky Hock Baptist Church, Edenton, for over 14 years. He holds degrees from Louisburg College; NC State University; Southeastern Seminary, and Trinity Theological Seminary. James and his wife Gloria have two children and two grandchildren.

Graduate

GENE ROBERTS, associate pastor of Newfound Baptist Church, Leicestershire, graduated in December from North Greenville University with his doctor of ministry degree.

Retirement

KEITH FRANKLIN WILLIAMS retired from Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Oxford, after 38 years as pastor. He received a diploma in pastoral ministries from the seminary extension department, Nash-

ville, Tenn., and was awarded an associate divinity degree from Southeastern Seminary. He attended Chestnut Ridge Baptist Church, Kings Mountain, N.C. where he was a Sunday School teacher, a deacon and a member of various other committees before being ordained April 26, 1976.

He served as pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Bessemer City, N.C., for more than four years prior to accepting the call to Mt. Zion, where he preached his first sermon as pastor on Aug. 3, 1980. He also served as moderator for Flat River Baptist Association for four years and interim director of the association.



KEITH WILLIAMS

On Aug. 5, 2018, the date he retired, Williams was awarded the title of pastor emeritus and the church's fellowship hall was named in his honor.

A prayer bench was also given in honor of his wife Linda Webb Williams for her dedication and leadership to the church. They have two daughters, a son and six grandchildren and plan to live in Granville County.

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is presenting the 2019 Disciple-Making conference Feb. 26 at Green Street Baptist Church, High Point, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Main sessions and more than 40 breakout sessions will focus on how to be salt and light in a rapidly changing culture.

The featured speaker will be John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

A non-refundable, \$10 per person registration fee includes registration,



program materials and lunch. Visit ncbaptist.org/event-disciple-making-conference to register.

Camp Mundo Vista and Caraway Conference Center and Camp invite volunteers ages 13+ to a Work Out-Cook Out Day March 2 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The campuses were hit hard this fall by the two hurricanes and an early snow storm, and they need help cutting and removing trees. All volunteers will be treated to a free cookout lunch and fellowship. Please bring your own tools and safety equipment. To register for the free lunch, call (336) 629-2374 or contact Jimmy Huffman at jhuffman@caraway.org.



AWAKEN, a statewide North Carolina prayer gathering, provides an environment for God to speak to His people through seasons of worship, focused prayer, dialogue and the preaching of God's Word. Attendees will be challenged to return to their churches with a renewed passion to seek God for the next great revival and spiritual awakening in their community, North Carolina, America and beyond. Although there is no cost to attend, a love offering will be received.

You can register at the door. For more information, contact Fatima Roma at froma@ncbaptist.org or 1 (800) 395-5102, ext. 5513. There is a special pre-event dialogue and dinner for ministry leaders on the topic of revival and spiritual awakening with event speaker Richard Owen Roberts on March 8, 3 p.m.-6 p.m. prior to the start of the prayer gathering. The dinner and dialogue is free, but registration is required by visiting ncbaptist.wufoo.com/forms/zcx7kaal4wcb8v.



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is hosting a New Minister Orientation March 19 from 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Baptist building in Cary. This one-day event will introduce pastors to the ministries, resources and staff of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. The event is designed for pastors who are relatively new to ministry, new to North Carolina or have not previously attended.

Attendees will learn why disciple-making is the heartbeat of the state convention's work, meet and hear from state convention leaders and staff members, network with other pastors, gain some new ideas for ministry and discover how the state convention can assist you in your ministry.

To register, visit ncbaptist.org/event-new-minister-orientation.

Camp Cale receives \$25,000 Bryan Award

Rye Foundation

The Rye Foundation has announced the winner of its Ray Bryan Award, and the recipient is Camp Cale in Hertford.

Warren Steen, the president of the foundation, said the award recognizes a faith-based organization that is making a positive and lasting impact on children and youth.

He reported that the award is given annually, and the winner receives \$25,000 to enhance and expand its programming.

"We are surprised, excited, and humbled by this wonderful news," said Matt Thomas, the director of the 90-acre camp.

According to Thomas, the camp will use the funds to launch a leadership initiative to identify "leaders of tomorrow" in area high schools. Participants are expected to come from a 5-county region that includes Nags Head, Manteo, and Hertford. They will receive

extensive training to recognize and utilize their God-given talents, and many are expected to return to the camp as counselors.

Based in Winston-Salem, the Rye Foundation makes charitable investments in the areas of religion, youth and education. The foundation has earmarked a total of \$100,000 to honor the life and legacy of Bryan, a Goldsboro businessman and philanthropist who died in 2016 at the age of 84.

"Ray Bryan really cared about children," said Steen, "and he believed that God has a special plan for every child. The award that bears his name will ultimately help thousands of boys and girls across our state."

The Rye Foundation has contributed over \$255,000 to Baptist causes, including scholarships for the Baptist All-State Youth Choir and support for capital projects at Camp Caraway, Camp Mundo Vista, and the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell. **BR**

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February 3

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

February 10

When Substances Take Over

Focal Passage: Ephesians 5:15-21

Many years ago, I took a planning seminar to help me get organized. In the seminar, I learned it takes at least 21 days to develop new patterns of behaviors in a person's life. They argued that if a person wanted to change bad behavior (stop procrastinating or quit eating too much), he or she must replace the bad behavior with good behavior (better planning and exercise).

If the person kept doing the good behavior for at least 21 days straight, it would become a habit in that person's life. Although I took that seminar more than 20 years ago, I still think I am working on the 21 days.

This week's lesson focuses on the dangers of substance abuse and why believers should allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives and not drugs or alcohol. Ephesians 5:18 says, "*Do not be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*" (ESV). In the passage, the Apostle Paul is exhorting believers to live under the control of Holy Spirit and not anything else.

"... instead of focusing on what you cannot have (drugs or alcohol), focus on what you do have, which is a relationship with Christ."

Over the years, I have ministered to dozens of individuals struggling with substance abuse. We often recommend they attend a place called Hebron Colony, a Christian residential facility near Boone, N.C. They have an approach that is very effective in helping men break free of alcohol and drug addiction that is reflective of Paul's words in Ephesians 5:18.

Basically, they teach the men first to find their identity in Christ, and secondly, they teach them how to replace old habits with godly habits. In other words, instead of focusing on what you cannot have (drugs or alcohol), focus on what you do have, which is a relationship with Christ.

Over a period of 12 weeks, men begin to understand what it means to allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives.

In the end, they realize God offers something far greater than any substance can provide – and they are willing to fight for it!



BARTLEY WOOTEN
Pastor,
Beulaville Baptist
Church

Focal Passage: Genesis 2:18-25

In 2004, Daniel R. Heimbach, ethics professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote a book titled *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis*. His book is considered to be the standard for helping believers understand the importance of the Christian sexual ethic.

In the first part of his book, he describes the potential danger of moving away from what God intends regarding marriage and sexuality. Interestingly, his book was written over a decade ago, but much of what he describes is already occurring today.

Since the topic for our lesson this week is about marriage, Heimbach's thoughts are important for us to consider. I have modified his information, but the thrust of the argument belongs to him. I highly recommend his book.

What could happen if Christians do not stand strong on the biblical position of marriage? First, if the sanctity of marriage is compromised, promoting sex without boundaries occurs. When sex

occurs without boundaries, the importance of procreation is threatened. Sex becomes about self-gratification only and not about creating a family.

When the importance of the family is weakened, respect for authority is not taught.

When there is no respect for authority, the laws of government are not followed, which leads to further breakdown of the society. When the society begins to breakdown, crime, murder, riots, poverty and violence begin to occur. As these things occur, the social structure will eventually collapse.

When you think about these negative consequences, it is important for us to resist the temptation to conform to the world's vision for male and female relationships. God's plan is always best. The Bible teaches us that God created marriage to be between one man and one woman for a lifetime.

If we want a strong, healthy society, it begins with strong, healthy marriages that produce strong, healthy families.

If we abandon God's intention for marriage, then we can expect long-term moral failure and the corrosion of a great nation. Instead, let us turn back to God's plan for marriage and experience His blessing.

February 3

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

February 10

Accept It

Focal Passage: Genesis 37:5-11, 19-27

I have often heard people say, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." The idea here is that when chance circumstances are not what you would like for them to be, you make the most out of the situation. On the surface it seems like a good notion. However, the Bible teaches something altogether different – that God is sovereign over our circumstances and that while evil may come at the hands of sinful men, His plans cannot be thwarted, and He will turn all things for our good and His glory.

Consider Joseph. Joseph did not choose his dreams, God did, and his brother's efforts to prevent God's plans actually fulfilled them instead. They do eventually bow down to Joseph in Egypt.

Of course the plan was not to have all of them bow down before their favored relative. No, Joseph was sent ahead of them to preserve them as a people from the famine. This would also preserve the line of the Messiah to come through Judah's offspring, a Messiah whose story

also illustrates God's sovereign use of evil to advance His purposes.

Acts 2:23-24a says, "*This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again ...*"

Evil men committed evil acts against Jesus, but God had predetermined that these things would take place for His glory and the salvation of His people. They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). Such knowledge brings great hope and comfort to the believer. Therefore, in your service to the Lord, do not become prideful or prone to despair. He has placed all of us in unique situations, He uses all of us differently, and He even uses those who would seek to destroy us to accomplish His will.

Be faithful to walk in a manner worthy of your calling.



CASEY SHORT
Pastor,
Reddicks Grove Baptist
Church, Williamston

Focal Passage: Genesis 39:3-12, 19-21

I was recently challenged to throw a Christian bachelor party for my best friend. One of the first ideas to come to mind was to take him to an arcade. What guy doesn't love video games, right? (Within moderation, of course.) What I love about an arcade game is that whether you win or lose, play well or poorly, there is never a loss of joy. The game-play itself brings a satisfaction separate from any points or tickets you might win as a result. In other words, the blessing is not dependent on you but on the game itself.

It would be easy to read Genesis 39 and believe falsely that God is blessing Joseph because of his faithfulness. A closer read reveals that God blesses Joseph with success because He is God. He has a plan, He has graciously included Joseph in that plan, and God favors him and causes him to prosper

Tempted

per to advance it for His glory. Joseph's faithfulness is in response to God's favor, not as an attempt to receive it.

Verses 9-10 read, "*There is no one greater in this house than I ... How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?*"

God has blessed. How can I repay Him with rebellion and disobedience?

Further proof that Joseph's faithfulness is not the cause of God's blessing is seen in verses 19-21. After Joseph has withstood temptation, he is still imprisoned. Yet, God was working to accomplish His redemptive plan.

Believer, you are highly favored of the Lord, but such favor is pure grace and mercy. You cannot earn it, and you do not deserve it.

The proper response to God's gracious favor is faithfulness in the midst of temptation and an understanding that to be faithful is to ensure a certain amount of suffering for His sake. Still, there is a satisfaction separate from the blessings of this world and immune to trials, the eternal, insurmountable joy found in Christ Himself.

Evangelist Rick Stanley, stepbrother to Elvis, dies

By ART TOALSTON | Baptist Press

Rick Stanley, a stepbrother to Elvis Presley who turned to Christ two months after Presley's death in 1977 and, as an evangelist, spoke at Billy Graham-sponsored events and in a multitude of other settings, died Jan. 5 in Aiken, S.C.

Stanley returned to First Baptist Church in Eureka, S.C., five years ago – where he first gave his testimony in early 1978 and was serving as associate pastor and minister of music at the time of his death at age 65.

John Arthur, pastor of First Baptist since 1963, said Stanley died of liver and kidney failure in Aiken Regional Medical Center's ICU.

His two daughters, Brittany and Bethany, were at his bedside, Arthur said. They had called Stanley's two brothers, David and Billy, to say a final goodbye, and Arthur left the room so that the daughters could be alone with their father.

Stanley was mostly unconscious after Arthur took him to the hospital when he fell ill on Jan. 2.

Stanley had moved to Eureka after "getting off the road," as Arthur put it, from an evangelistic ministry

that took him to crusades, church meetings, youth camps and school assemblies over the years, often with fellow evangelists. He also came to the rural community divorced from his wife Robyn.

In Eureka, Stanley rented a single-wide trailer 300 yards from Arthur's house. "He was with me every step of the way," Arthur, 75, said of his five years with Stanley. "We were sort of a team, a great team ... seven days a week."



RICK STANLEY

Stanley's car was in disrepair so he traveled with the pastor wherever they went, visiting in homes among the several hundred people in the Eureka area and in hospitals and local establishments. "A lot of people wanted to meet Rick," said Arthur, noting that Stanley had been interviewed on such TV shows as "Good Morning America" and "Larry King Live." Stanley also had authored an autobiographical book, *The Touch of Two Kings*.

At church on Sunday mornings, Stanley taught Sunday School and led the music and took prayer requests in the worship service attended by 30-35 people. Arthur preached three Sundays of the month and Stanley one Sunday. "I knew Rick Stanley to be a most dedicated and devout Christian," Arthur said.

"He loved people. He loved the Lord. And he loved the church." Arthur spoke of Stanley saying that he returned to Eureka to learn the ministry from a seasoned pastor and wanted to serve at First Baptist the rest of his life.

Arthur can't recall how he learned of Stanley's conversion in 1977 and contacted him to give his testimony at Eureka, but they stayed in contact over the years.

Stanley attended Criswell College in Dallas before earning an associate of divinity degree in 1986 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He was one of several speakers in Las Vegas at the 1989 meeting of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists in conjunction with that summer's SBC annual meeting and he addressed the 1994 SBC Pastors' Conference in Orlando, Fla. At age 16 or 17 (accounts also vary), Stanley became a personal aide to Elvis and, as he described it, eventually became one of those who gave the singer prescription drugs before his concerts and before he went to sleep at night. Stanley also veered into drug use and, according to a 2010 Associated Press feature, was bailed out of jail by Elvis in 1975 for a forged prescription and subsequently entered rehab. At the time of his death, Stanley was not afflicted with any addiction, Arthur stated to Baptist Press. **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

First Baptist Church, Marshall, NC, is a Southern Baptist church seeking a **full-time Pastor**. Applicants must be ordained with a SBC seminary degree. This person should be youthful, energetic and have good communication and visitation skills. Send résumé to: Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 484, Marshall, NC 28753, or ChurchOffice@fbcmarshall.com.

Fountain Baptist Church, Fountain, NC, prayerfully seeks **Bivocational Pastor** who is dedicated, energetic, caring, gifted in preaching, teaching, discipleship to lead small congregation desiring growth and community outreach. Send résumé to Fountain Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 276, Fountain, NC 27829, or email wthigpen@outlook.com.

Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Asheville, NC, is seeking a **full-time Lead Pastor**. Our future pastor should be a called man of God, led to give Christian leadership to our church family and surrounding community in the name of Jesus Christ. We believe the Bible is the supreme authority of faith and life, and is the true Word of God. We are aligned theologically with the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in the year 2000. As pastor, his goal should be to lead believers to become mature followers of Jesus Christ through loving, growing and serving (our mission statement). Minimum requirements are 5 years ministry experience with bachelor's degree. Minimum age requirement is 25. Résumés should be sent to bryan44dover@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church of Clayton, NC, is prayerfully seeking an experienced **full-time Senior Pastor** who is energetic, enthusiastic and approachable, capable of bringing all age groups together to serve the Lord. Clayton is a rapidly growing community located close to Raleigh while maintaining small town charm. We currently have approximately 700 members, a child development center licensed for up to 59 children a day, and are affiliated with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Southern Baptist Convention. We have ordained women ministers and women deacons, and are a congregational model church. Requirements include a master's degree or higher from a seminary or divinity school with five years senior pastor experience, or its equivalent. An online-only application can be completed by going to <http://goo.gl/8vEESq>. Once there please supply requested information, attach your résumé, and other pertinent files. For additional information or questions, please email pastorsearch@fbcclaytonnc.org.

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(919) 459-5691

First Baptist Church, Hickory, NC, is seeking a **Senior Pastor** filled with the Holy Spirit, who has an intimate relationship with the Lord, and who affirms our mission and identity statements to minister to a multi-generational body of believers. Qualifications include: accomplished preacher/teacher of the Bible with a master of divinity degree or higher; minimum of five years full-time senior pastor experience; a proactive, strong leader who collaborates with staff and church leaders; and a servant-leader who serves as a role model for the Christ-like life exhibiting humility and integrity. FBC is affiliated with the SBC and CBF. Send résumé and cover letter to PSC, First Baptist Church, 339 2nd Avenue, NW, Hickory, NC 28601, or to pscfbchky1819@gmail.com. Sermon audio and/or video recordings may be submitted. Deadline: February 23, 2019.

BRnow.org
BE SURE TO CHECK OUT
OUR WEBSITE

Stallings Memorial Baptist Church, Salisbury, NC, is seeking a **full-time Pastor**. Being a mission-minded Southern Baptist church, we are searching for the man God desires to lead His Church into the future with an emphasis on evangelism and missions. Applicants should be SBC ordained with a seminary education from one of the SBC seminaries and affirms the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. Send résumés to: smbcpastorsearchcommittee@gmail.com, or PO Box 438, Rockwell, NC 28138.

Amity Baptist Church, Denver, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are affiliated with and support the SBC, BSCNC and South Fork Association. We adhere to the 2000 BF&M. Minimum of five years pastoral experience and Bible college and/or seminary training. Send résumés to: Amity Baptist Church, c/o Pastor Search Committee, 881 Amity Church Road, Denver NC 28037, or AmityPastorSearch@gmail.com.

Church Staff

Green Street Baptist Church, High Point, NC, is seeking a **full-time Business Administrator**. Prior experience is preferred. Interested applicants should email résumés to kristi@greenstreet.org.

Concord Baptist Church (Granite Falls, NC) is seeking a **full-time Children's and Family minister**. Growing church with approx. 750 members. Three other full-time staff. Experience is required and affirm the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. Please send cover letter and résumé to: tomcdonald@charter.net or mail to church at: Concord Baptist Church, Attn Pastor, PO Box 127, Granite Falls NC 28630.

Placing a classified ad in the *Biblical Recorder*

Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: alison@BRnow.org.
- Purchase ads at BRnow.org/Advertise.
- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

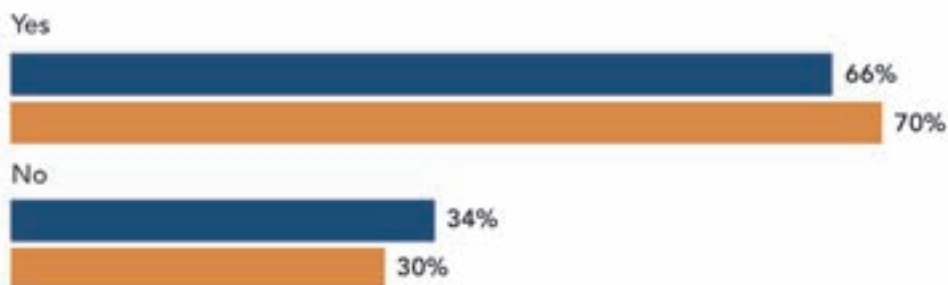
For more information, call the office at (919) 459-5691.

Cost for Baptist churches/organizations is \$1.25 per word, number and stand-alone initial (\$1.45 for commercial and non-Baptist entities) with a minimum charge of \$35. Classifieds also are carried online.

Did you stop attending church regularly (twice a month or more) for at least a year between the ages of 18 and 22?

Among young adults (ages 23-30) who attended a Protestant church regularly for at least a year in high school.

2017 2007



LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com

Dropout

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now and then is not large enough statistically to say it has actually improved,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

“The reality is that Protestant churches continue to see the new generation walk away as young adults. Regardless of any external factors, the Protestant church is slowly shrinking from within.”

When they drop out

The dropout rate for young adults accelerates with age, according to the latest survey conducted Sept. 15-Oct. 13, 2017. While 69 percent say they were attending at age 17, that fell to 58 percent at age 18 and 40 percent at age 19. Once they reach their 20s, around 1 in 3 say they were attending church regularly.

“Overall, Protestant churches see many teenagers attending regularly only for a season. Many families just don’t attend that often,” McConnell said. “As those teenagers reach their late teen years, even those with a history of regular church attendance are pulled away as they get increased independence, a driver’s license or a job. The question becomes: will they become like older adults who have all those things and still attend or will students choose to stay away longer than a year.”

Ben Trueblood, director of student ministry at LifeWay, said those numbers speak to the issue at hand. “We are seeing teenagers drop out of the church as they make the transition out of high school and student ministry,” he said. “This moment of transition is often too late to act for churches.”

Why they drop out

Virtually all of those who dropped out (96 percent) listed a change in their life situation as a reason for their dropping out. Fewer say it was related to the church or pastor (73 percent); religious, ethical or political beliefs (70 percent); or the student ministry (63 percent).

The five most frequently chosen specific reasons for dropping out were: moving to college and no longer attending (34 percent); church members seeming judgmental or hypocritical (32 percent); no longer feeling connected to people in their church (29 percent); disagreeing with the church’s stance on political or social issues (25 percent); and work responsibilities (24 percent).

Nearly half (47 percent) of those who dropped out and attended college say moving to college played a role in their no longer attending church for at least a year.

“Most of the reasons young adults leave the church reflect shifting personal priorities and changes in their own habits,” McConnell said. “Even when churches have faithfully communicated their beliefs through words and actions, not every teenager who attends embraces or prioritizes those beliefs.”

Among all those who dropped out, 29 percent say they planned on taking a break from church once they graduated high school. Seven in 10 (71 percent) say their leaving wasn’t an intentional decision.

“For the most part, people aren’t leaving the church out of bitterness, the influence of college atheists or a renunciation of their faith,” Trueblood said.

Where are they now?

Not all teenagers leave church as a young adult. A third (34 percent) say they consistently attended twice a month or more through the age of 22.

Those who stayed saw the church as an important part of their entire life.

When asked why they stayed in church, more than half say the church was a vital part of their relationship with God (56 percent) and that they wanted the church to help guide their decisions in everyday life (54 percent).

Around 4 in 10 (43 percent) say they wanted to follow the example of a parent or other family member.

Similar numbers say they continued to attend because church activities were a big part of their life (39 percent), they felt church was helping them become a better person (39 percent) or they were committed to the purpose and work of the church (37 percent).

Among all young adults who attended church regularly at least one year as a teenager, nearly half (45 percent) currently attend at least twice a month, including more than a quarter (27 percent) who attend once a week or more.

Another 8 percent say they attend once a month, while 25 percent say they attend a few times a year. Twenty-two percent of those who attended regularly at least one year as a teenager now say they do not currently attend at all.

Among those who dropped out for at least a year, 31 percent are currently attending twice or month or more.

Top five reasons church dropouts say they stopped attending church

Among young adults (ages 23-30) who attended a Protestant church regularly for at least a year in high school:



Notes: Respondents were asked to select all that apply.

LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com

“On some level, we can be encouraged that some return,” said Trueblood, “while at the same time, we should recognize that when someone drops out in these years there is a 69 percent chance they will stay gone.”

He advised churches to begin by working to lower the number who leave in the first place. “There are steps we can begin taking with those currently in student ministry that will keep them connected from the beginning of these years.”

Trueblood also asserted churches should have a strategic focus on individuals during those traditional college years.

“In many places this is a forgotten, under-resourced ministry area,” he said. “Focus is placed on children, students, and then not again until someone enters the ‘young family’ stage. This needs to change.

“While some young adults who leave church are rejecting their childhood faith, most are choosing to keep many of the beliefs they had, but with a smaller dose of church.”

Methodology

A demographically balanced online panel was used for interviewing American adults between the ages of 23 and 30 years old. The study was sponsored by LifeWay Students.

The survey was conducted Sept. 15-Oct. 13, 2017. Slight weights were used to balance gender, ethnicity, education, and region. The sample was screened to only include those who attended a Protestant church regularly (twice a month or more) for at least a year in high school. The completed sample is 2,002 surveys.

The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error from the online panel does not exceed plus or minus 2.4 percent. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Comparisons are made to a LifeWay Research online survey of 1,023 young adults ages 18-30 in April-May 2007.

LifeWay Research is a Nashville-based evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches.

For more information on the study, visit LifeWayResearch.com or view the complete report. A graphic video of the information is available at LifeWay’s YouTube page. **B3**