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THE SUMMIT climbs toward 1,000 new churches



**Credits disciple-making,
cooperation**

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor &
CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham has a plan to reach the world by starting more churches, an evangelistic process often called church planting. Their goal is lofty – 1,000 churches in 50 years. But with an emphasis on disciple-making and cooperation, church leaders believe they are on the right track.

“The church is the institution that Jesus left us when He gave us the Great Commission – God’s ‘Plan A’ for reaching a lost world,” said Todd Unzicker, pastor of sending at The Summit.

They have started 248 churches to date, including 208 outside the U.S. In addition, 158 Summit members are currently serving as International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries, with 17 participants in the “limitless pathways” initiative, meaning those missionaries continue to work in professional careers while partnering voluntarily with an IMB team. The church has sent nearly 1,000 people to do mission work over the years, both domestically and internationally.

The Summit is also reaching thousands of residents and college students in the Triangle region of North Carolina. In 2017, The Summit aver-

aged nearly 10,000 in total weekend worship attendance at nine campus locations that make up its multisite approach to ministry. The Summit baptized more than 500 people last year and reported 45 salvations in its college ministry.

The church began as Homestead Heights Baptist Church in 1962, but went through a “revitalization” in 2002, a year after selecting J.D. Greear as pastor.

“We introduced a clarification of the vision,” Greear told the *Biblical Recorder*. “In reality, it was a return to the vision of the church’s original founder – Sam James of IMB fame. We wanted a fresh start. Three hundred longtime Summit members committed to do whatever it took to reach people and follow the Holy Spirit wherever He leads.”

The Summit wants to see new congregations in every North Carolina college and university town, influential cities across the U.S. and regions around the world with low Christian populations.

Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), applauded how the church “promotes evangelism and disciple-making” in a statement to the *Biblical Recorder*. He

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The Summit Church sent out more than 50 members and leaders in April 2017 to church plants in Atlanta, Ga., and Orlando, Fla. The Orlando team was joined by a group of members from another Summit church plant, Mercy Hill Church in Greensboro, N.C. (Contributed photo)

N.C. Baptists make a difference in Vermont

First in a series

By **MIKE CRESWELL** | BSC Communications

Mention Vermont and most Americans think pleasant things like maple syrup, bright fall foliage and winter skiing.

But to missions-minded Baptists, Vermont is one of the most challenging mission fields in the country. The state has proportionately fewer Bible-believing churches and Christians than any other state.

Scores of villages in Vermont have had no Bible-believing church for decades. Thousands of families have had no Christian members in five generations.

Vermont is not just lost; it is hard-core lost and gospel-resistant. The

state presents an unusual missions challenge, surrounded by other New England states that have similar degrees of lostness.

The population is about 625,000 people, fewer than Charlotte, N.C. Vermont is one of the nation’s most rural states, with vast areas of woodlands crossed by mostly two-lane roads.

See Vermont page 8



(BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

HHS: Religious liberty to be ‘vigorously’ enforced

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

The Donald Trump administration’s creation of an office to safeguard health care professionals’ religious liberty has drawn praise from evangelicals and derision from advocates of so-called abortion and transgender rights.

Meanwhile, Arkansas physician Steve Goss, who serves on the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, said new federal safeguards for religious freedom are not likely to change the practices of Christian health care providers or imperil the availability of medical services.

The administration announced Jan. 18 it will create a Conscience and Religious Freedom Division in the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Office for Civil Rights. An HHS press release stated the new division will “more vigorously and effectively enforce existing laws protecting the rights of conscience and religious freedom, the first freedom protected in the Bill of Rights.”

The Conscience and Religious Free-

dom Division’s website specifically notes abortion and assisted suicide as procedures for which health care professionals may need conscience protection. Media reports speculated some doctors and nurses also may request protection against being forced to assist with gender transitions.

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore called HHS’s action “a welcome and positive move.”

“Health care professionals do not put their consciences in a blind trust when they pursue medical training,” Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said in a press release. “... I am thankful that HHS recognizes how imperiled conscience rights have been in recent years in this arena and is actively working and leading to turn the tide in the other direction. Health care professionals should be freed up to care for the bodies and minds of their patients, not tied up by having their own consciences bound.”

The Washington Post noted a 2009 incident, in which a nurse at Mount Sinai

Hospital in New York was forced to assist in an abortion or face disciplinary action.

David Stevens, a physician and president of the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, said members of the organization he leads “have been discriminated against and some have even lost positions for speaking out” on matters of conscience.

“We are delighted that HHS has formed the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division,” Stevens said in a news release. “It is long overdue. There are already laws on the books. It will help address the injustices that laws were designed to prevent.”

Among pro-abortion and pro-transgender activists, the Human Rights Campaign’s Sarah Warbelow told *The Post* the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division seeks to “devalue the humanity of LGBTQ people.” Planned Parenthood vice president Dana Singiser said the division “will allow individuals and institutions to deny basic care for women and transgender people.”

Yet Goss, president of Mercy Clinic

Northwest Arkansas Communities, a division of the Mercy health system with 200 health care providers, told Baptist Press patients need not worry that heightened conscience protection will limit access to medical care. The physicians Goss knows all provide care to anyone, even if they are engaged in a lifestyle the doctor regards as harmful or immoral, he said, using smoking and alcohol abuse as examples.

“For general, basic medical care,” Goss said, physicians “aren’t turning away smokers or those that abuse alcohol. They’re still going to take care of them. It’s just part of our oath, and I think they would do the same for most anyone else.”

Goss said he has never felt the need for heightened conscience protection in his own medical practice. But he appreciates HHS’s action because it “could be important for physicians” who decline for conscience reasons to perform procedures like abortion and gender transition, which they regard as “elective and perhaps even destructive.” **BR**

Lottie Moon offering 4.1% above last year’s pace

By JULIE MCGOWAN | International Mission Board

Southern Baptists’ support of international missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) is 4.1 percent ahead of the same time frame as last year, according to a report by Rodney Freeman, International Mission Board (IMB) treasurer and vice president of support services.

At the end of December 2017, IMB had received \$15,221,629 for the 2017-2018 campaign, which began Oct. 1 and continues through Sept. 30. The total is \$600,027, or 4.1 percent, ahead of last year’s October-December pace.

The LMCO gifts encompass money received by the IMB or postmarked by the close of the last business day of December and includes receipts through the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and state conventions and from churches and individuals.

Freeman also reported that at the end of December, IMB had received \$23,304,153 in Cooperative Program (CP) funding for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, which started Oct. 1. This total is \$225,349, or 1.0 percent, ahead of last year.

“As we see the reports that giving to both the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering are trending upward from this time in previous years, I thank God for Southern Baptists’ faithfulness in giving,” IMB

President David Platt said. “These gifts represent a recognition that the very best way Southern Baptists can help reach the billions who have yet to hear the gospel is to collaborate in cooperative efforts to pray, go and send – and all those efforts must be undergirded by the cooperative effort to give.”

Platt voiced gratitude “to each person who has given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering during this concerted season of giving and to each person who has prayed for our international missionaries during this concerted season of praying. I also want to thank each church leader who has partnered with IMB to facilitate these avenues for your members to pray, give, go and send.”

The IMB partners with more than 47,000 churches who work together to spread the gospel among billions of people who have never heard it. The primary way this is accomplished is through the coalition of Southern Baptist churches sending and supporting thousands of missionaries. Support for the personnel comes through Southern Baptists’ gifts to the LMCO and CP.

Missionaries such as John McPherson, who has served 33 years in Africa, continually note their reliance on Southern Baptists’ LMCO gifts – as well as their appreciation for Southern Baptists’ faithfulness in giving. Much of McPherson’s ministry in theological education is an example of Lottie Moon dollars at

work, he recently told Tennessee’s *Baptist and Reflector*. “Lottie Moon was crucial for us,” McPherson said. “I worked with bush churches on the weekends, and I had a four-wheel-drive truck that allowed me to get to those places.”

The LMCO campaign year historically ran from June 1 to May 31 each year, but that campaign year did not align with IMB’s fiscal year (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31). IMB

finance leaders, in conjunction with the board of trustees, proposed to align the fiscal year and the LMCO campaign to Oct. 1 through Sept. 30. Messengers voted to approve the fiscal year change during the 2017 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix. Therefore, gifts contributed from Oct. 1, 2017, to Sept. 30, 2018, will apply to the 2017-2018 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. **BR**

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Make disciples in your home, church and world

About one month from now, N.C. Baptists will come together for our annual Disciple-Making Conference. I hope that you are making plans to join us for this year's event which is scheduled for Tues., Feb. 27 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Center Grove Baptist Church in Clemmons. Historically, this event has been held on a Monday, so please make note that this year's event is being held on a Tuesday.

Our mission at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is to assist local churches as they seek to fulfill their divinely appointed mission. One of the ways we seek to fulfill our mission is by providing a variety of opportunities for training and equipping like the Disciple-Making Conference.

Based on feedback we've heard from North Carolina Baptists, our leadership team has revamped the structure of this year's event so that it focuses on providing biblical and practical training in a variety of ministry areas.

This year, attendees will be able to choose from

among 40 different equipping sessions being held throughout the day. These sessions will be led by a mix of convention staff, pastors and other church and ministry leaders who will focus on equipping you to make disciples in our homes, our churches and our world.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

In addition, Matt Carter, pastor of The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, will be our keynote speaker for the day, and he will be focusing his messages on disciple-making in our different spheres of influence. Matt is one of the most influential younger pastors and leaders in all of the Southern Baptist Convention, and I am looking forward to hearing what he has to share with us.

The goal of the Disciple-Making Conference is to equip you to become a more effective personal disciple-maker as well to help you create or continue to cultivate a disciple-making culture in your church.

Before His ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ com-



manded us in the Great Commission to "go and make disciples."

Let's be reminded that disciple-making involves both evangelism and discipleship.

Disciple-making must begin with evangelism, but it must not end there. Evangelism is the first step in disciple-making, but it is not the only step. As we share Christ with others and see individuals come to know Him, we must continue to walk alongside of them and help them grow in their walk with the Lord so they, in turn, can become disciple-makers as well.

I hope to see you at this year's Disciple-Making Conference on Feb. 27. For more information about the conference and to register, please visit disciplenc.org.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" – Matthew 28:19. **BR**

9 ways pastors can be above reproach and avoid scandal

The patterns of sexual misconduct exposed in elite political and media circles are staggering. We are reaping the harvest of the "free love" movement in the 1960s and other decadent cultural trends. Nothing that has been exposed should surprise us, but it should sadden and sober us.

In both personal and public life, pastors should implement practices and standards that will help protect our ministries and churches from becoming accessories to sexual impropriety. Here are nine suggestions:

1. Set boundaries.

It is both virtuous and wise to avoid intimate conversations and extended times of being alone with members of the opposite sex who are not our spouses. Hold open-door meetings or use conference rooms with windows for meetings with volunteers or staff members. As pastors and ministry leaders, we are in positions of authority and influence, and we should embody a character of virtue and godliness. We must also not be naïve. We minister in an age where false accusations occur. It is nearly impossible to be accused of impropriety if you are never in a compromising situation.

2. Use proper vetting.

Make sure all those who work with

children and students have background checks and undergo a waiting period for service. As shepherds, we are responsible to protect the sheep. We should take seriously the processes and protections we put in place to make our churches safe.

3. Pursue accountability.

While we can guard against engaging in wrong behavior, we cannot fix the sinfulness within our hearts. We should preach the gospel to ourselves regularly (read *Dangerous Calling* by Paul David Tripp) and pursue holiness. We should also have accountability relationships. Personal accountability draws appropriate attention to our sinfulness, leads us to confession and functions as a discipline that will help us walk in holiness.

4. Know the legal requirements.

It is important to know what you are required to do legally should you or someone in your church face an accusation of abuse or harassment. You need to know your ethical and legal obligations to protect the victim and inform the authorities. The umbrella insurance company for your church is a good place to begin with appropriate policies and

measures regarding these issues as it relates to staff and volunteers.

5. Avoid a cover-up.

While we must handle accusations with discretion, we must not cover anything up. We are children of the light, and we should not be afraid of addressing things in the light. We should properly address any accusation of misconduct with a thorough process of internal investigation, as well as informing the proper authorities.

6. Focus on your marriage.

It should go without saying, but the greatest protection against impurity and misconduct is a healthy marriage. Your spouse is to be your lover and defender. A marriage functioning as God intends discourages misconduct. Also, you should trust your spouse's discernment regarding people in your circle. A healthy, trust-filled marriage is a safeguard against sexual impurity.

7. Watch your speech and jokes.

Inappropriate jokes and crude comments have no place among the body of Christ. As leaders, we must be careful that we don't get so familiar with

staff, friends and church leadership that we joke or comment inappropriately. We must remain above reproach in our speech.

8. Consider the consequences.

An accusation or an event of harassment in your setting could have catastrophic ramifications for your church. While I don't believe that we should worry or dwell on "what ifs," we must not stick our heads in the sand and hope things work out for the best. We owe it to our congregations to plan ahead and create protocols that could prevent such an issue.

9. Pray for God's protection.

In all our planning and preparing we must not forget to pray. We should pray for wisdom for our church leaders. We should pray that holiness would permeate our speech and actions. We should pray that God would protect the children and families in our congregations. We should pray that perpetrators would be confronted. We should pray that victims would experience restoration.

What other practices have you implemented that help us avoid misconduct or harassment?

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Chris Hefner is the senior pastor of Wilkesboro Baptist Church.) **BR**



CHRIS HEFNER
Guest Column

Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

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.

What stories do you have to share? Please send your story ideas, church news, staff changes to us. Email editor@BRnow.org.



Adoption: a pro-life battle

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Staff Writer

Three weeks after Joseph and Laura Thigpen, members of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, brought their two-year-old daughter home from Ethiopia after a grueling four-year process, the Ethiopian Parliament voted Jan. 9 to ban all foreign adoptions.

The couple, who had just let out their first “genuine sigh of relief” Dec. 16, now asked about the millions of children left without families, “Who holds their breath for these orphans?”

Adoption was always part of their plan – an issue they said would have kept them from moving forward in their relationship, even when they were dating.

They learned that poverty in other countries makes it impossible for locals to pursue domestic adoption in their own homeland. This knowledge affirmed the call to adopt internationally.

“We resonated with this,” Laura said in an email to the *Biblical Recorder*. “We, too, were once the orphan in a far-away land in need of a foreign adoptive parent. We, too, relied, and still do, on a Father to come to us when we could not go to Him.”

In September 2013, the Thigpens applied to their first adoption agency. It took nine months to complete a home study, file a petition to the United States Customs and Immigration Services to bring an orphan from Ethiopia to the U.S. and mail a dossier to be authenticated.

“The paperwork process of international adoption goes a little like this: hurry up, then wait ... hurry up, then wait,” said Laura.

By August 2014, they were placed on a list of families waiting for a referral of the child they would adopt. They were 39th on the list.

“Each month would go by, and we would hope to hear of movement. Some months we would move a few numbers, and some months we wouldn’t move at all,” Laura said.

Then, in November 2015, after waiting for more than one year and being told to expect a referral soon, Joseph and Laura learned the placing agency they were working with would suddenly be closing

Dec. 30, 2015. They were devastated.

“Our agency had given us a few options: remaining with them, but using another placing agency, putting us at the end of that waiting family list, which already had over 100 families; switching to an entirely different program (country) that they offered; or losing all of the money we had paid in agency fees by leaving that agency altogether for a new agency.

“We had a strong resolve to remain with an Ethiopian program, but knowing it took us a year to move from 39 to nine on a waiting list, we could not imagine waiting behind a hundred or more families. We cried out to the Lord in absolute desperation.”

Within 24 hours, a friend connected them to the organization from which she and her husband adopted two Ethiopian children. The agency needed a family that was ready to adopt a new child in their orphanage.

“After praying and seeking a lot of wisdom and counsel from pastors, friends and family, we felt certain the Lord was leading us to forsake the \$8,000 we had paid in agency fees and switch to this new agency. Of course, making a change requires an update to all of the paperwork – home study, immigration petition and dossier. So, we followed that call once again to ‘hurry up and wait!’”

Joseph and Laura completed their home study update and were ready to receive their referral by the first week of January 2016.

“We were excited, exuberant even to finally see the face of our child,” Laura said.

But the week before, an uprising began in Ethiopia. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the government office that handles adoption paperwork in Ethiopia, suspended all processing of paperwork. The child, too, waited to receive a signature that would permit her referral for international adoption. Her paperwork would not be signed for another year.

A community in prayer

By August 2016, Joseph and Laura felt more desperate than at any other point in



Joseph, Laura and Eliza Thigpen arrive home at Raleigh-Durham International Airport Dec. 16, after a four-year adoption journey. (Photo by Michelle Nachnani)

their journey.

“We felt we had been fighting an invisible war for three years with a harsh, shrewd and relentless enemy. We felt battered, and despair seemed unsettlingly close when we felt we needed spiritual reinforcements,” they said.

The couple asked a group of about 35 friends to pray and fast together one day a month. They prayed for specific needs for the adoption and for a particular little girl in the orphanage. The agency had requested prayer for the child, who was struggling to gain weight.

Things started looking up. In January 2017, Laura and Joseph attended the Evangelicals for Life conference in Washington, D.C. At the event, co-hosted by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commis-

sion and Focus on the Family, speakers and panelists talked about the warfare surrounding the adoption process.

“Their words were affirming and encouraging to our weary souls,” Laura said.

During their stay in Washington, D.C., the couple met an Ethiopian waitress. They shared the story of their adoption journey with her, telling her how long it had been and about the signature for which they were waiting. Laura remembered the waitress tearfully pleading, “Thank you! Please don’t give up! Those children need someone. Don’t give up!”

“Her tears and her words became treasured gems we hid in our hearts,” Laura said.

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Former Steelers running back discusses substance abuse, repentance

Tim Worley, North Carolina native and former National Football League (NFL) running back, struggled through injuries, substance abuse, crime and suicidal thoughts before becoming a Christian. He was drafted into the NFL in 1989 after an award-winning stint playing for the University of Georgia. Worley ran for the Pittsburgh Steelers and Chicago Bears and now does motivational speaking for youth across the country. He and his family live in Charlotte, N.C.



ROMAN GABRIEL III
Sports Q & A

Below is an edited transcript of Worley's conversation with Roman Gabriel III about his story of redemption.

Q: Can you tell us about using your platform for the Lord to alter the lives of other people?

A: For the past couple years, I've been doing ministry with K-LOVE and Airl radio on a program called "Dare to Dream." We go into middle schools, high schools and youth detention centers all over the country speaking to students. It's amazing – the feedback and the changes happening with the students, and even parents. It's outstanding. God is doing His thing.

Q: What are you seeing in young people today as you travel the country?

A: One of the things I'm seeing across the board is hopelessness. I see a lot of bullying. Many kids just don't have hope today, but I use my story to encourage. Whenever I present, I don't talk about my victories. I talk about my failures. I believe when we talk about our failures, it opens up people to talk about what they're going through. Even the comment cards we receive back from students are telling us things they wouldn't even tell their parents. We're pumping some hope to the children.

Q: Being a former All-American running back at Georgia, has this year been an exciting one?

A: Oh boy, yes it was exciting. My wife, Dee, attended The University of Alabama, so we're not a house divided, we're a house blessed. She's going to root for Alabama with that jersey on. But she wore my jersey the week before (a game against) Alabama, and I root



Tim Worley slips past a player as running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers. (Contributed photo)

for Alabama when the two aren't playing each other. She was a gymnast at the university. She's going to always represent "Bama."

Q: What's your take on a handful of elite NFL draft picks forgoing playing in their final bowl game, which would be their last college game?

A: Personally, I don't agree with it, but they make their own choices. I'm "old-school," a basic fundamentals guy. You play the very last game. It was very important to me to play as many games as I could at the University of Georgia. And it was very monumental to walk off that field and know that I gave it my all, which paved the way for me to be a first round pick for the Pittsburgh Steelers. I also believe you should be dedicated to your school, to those that gave you the opportunity to showcase your gifts.

Q: You reached your dream, being the seventh overall pick in the first round of the NFL draft. You had a good first year, professionally, but what happened when you began to experience problems in your personal life?

A: First of all, it was a very exciting time in my life, competing at that next level. When I look back, I was prepared to play the game of football. You didn't even have to pay me; I loved it. But

I wasn't prepared for the things that came off the field, the business side of things. Even before I stepped into the NFL, I started experimenting with drinking and using drugs occasionally. It started escalating when I got into the NFL. I just didn't know who I was. The things off the field became more important to me than the things on the field. I didn't know how to separate myself from being in a program mentality in college, to being an NFL employee. The Pittsburgh Steelers and the Chicago Bears were looking for a return on their investment. But that partying, frivolous lifestyle became most important to me. That's when the on-field injury problems came into play.

Q: So, things in your life began to go downhill?

A: That's when the failed drug tests began to show up. That's when the troubles and run-ins with the police began. Things just went sideways for me, all because of the negative choices I made. But I learned from it. I learned from those things, and I thank God. It's by the grace of God that I'm here today. He's given me a second chance to be here and reach back and help other people with some of the issues I once dealt with.

Q: At what point did you finally hit bottom?

A: In making the transition from professional football to a normal

lifestyle – suddenly at the age of 30, I'm speaking the word retirement. And it was tough, but the drugs and the alcohol were a big thing in my life. I didn't think I had a problem. I wouldn't admit it. I was just doing what I had to do. They say it's not a crime until you get caught, right? The thing that turned it around for me happened in 2008. I had a run-in with the police in Smyrna, Ga. I was basically suicidal, trying to kill myself or get somebody to kill me. I put myself in harm's way, through a run-in with police officers, trying to get them to put a slug in my heart, but they didn't do that. God gave me another chance. They stunned me with a Taser, arrested me and put me in jail for 23 days. That's when my life changed. I actually got down on my knees in a jail cell, and I repented and I asked the Lord to restore me. Ever since April 23, 2008, God has radically changed my life.

Q: Now that God has changed your life, how has that changed your perspective?

A: The word of God says we overcome by the blood of the lamb. I'm always going to tell my testimony. He told me to change my life, to change my perspective. It gave me a better perspective – that life is a gift. I don't want to waste time while I'm here. It's God's gift to us, and what we do with that gift is our gift to him. Our gifts are not for us.

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SBC 2018 Dallas theme: ‘Testify! Go. Stand. Speak.’

By DIANA CHANDLER | Baptist Press

“**T**estify! Go. Stand. Speak.” will be the theme for the 2018 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting June 12-13 at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, SBC President Steve Gaines has announced.

Evangelism is the urgency of the theme anchored in Acts 5:20, Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church near Memphis, told Baptist Press (BP) Jan. 17.

“Fulfilling the Great Commission has always been at the heart of who Southern Baptists are,” Gaines said.

“However, as research from [New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President] Chuck Kelley has shown, our baptisms are the lowest we have seen in 70 years. If we want to see that trend turn around, we must refocus our efforts on evangelism, telling a lost world about the hope that is found only in Jesus Christ.”

To accomplish the goal, Gaines said, Southern Baptists must be willing to go where God commands, to stand for



gospel truth amid conflicting cultural trends and to audibly speak the gospel to the world.

“As my former evangelism professor Roy Fish always said, ‘You can’t serve Jesus with a zipped lip,’” Gaines told BP. “It is our prayer that Southern Baptists will be challenged to boldly testify of the

work that Christ has done for us.” Attending the meeting will offer spiritual and practical benefits, said Gaines, who completes his second year as SBC president in June.

“As we meet, we will conduct business and hear from each of our entities, but most importantly we are going to

come together to cry out to the Lord,” Gaines said.

“Our country needs a spiritual awakening, and if we humble ourselves, pray, seek His face and turn from our sins, God will hear us and will forgive our sin and heal our land.”

The meeting’s location is dear to Gaines, who wanted the 2018 SBC annual meeting logo to capture the state’s rugged atmosphere.

“Since we are meeting in Dallas, the logo had to look and feel like Texas,” he said.

“I went to seminary, pastored my first church and became a father in Texas. You can’t meet in Texas and have it look any other way!”

A rugged cross is at the logo’s center.

“The cross at the center of the logo is meant to signify what we are testifying about,” Gaines said. “Our testimony is important, but at the end of the day, we need to preach ‘Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,’” he noted, referencing 1 Corinthians 2:2.

Additional annual meeting details are available at sbcanualmeeting.net. **BR**

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

GEORGE RAIFORD TROUTMAN, 92, died Jan. 13.

A native of Concord, Troutman became well-known in several areas – barbecue, automobile sales, real estate and home construction – along with his lifelong Baptist ties.

He is the subject of a book – *The Raiford Troutman Story: How the Son of a Sharecropper Built a Million-Dollar Business Upon Faith and Family* – by Michael Eury. The 2015 book covers the relationship between he and his wife, Margene, as well as the development and growth of Troutman Enterprises. His work ethic had him going to the office regularly, even at age 92.

At a young age, Troutman began working for his uncle detailing cars. He dropped out of school at age 16 to work full time. A childhood injury kept him out of the U.S. Army in 1943 at age 18. He began working in a garage doing body work. The following year, he took over the detailing business, Troutman’s Paint & Body Shop. He opened a used car lot which later expanded to Troutman Motors. He married Margene Weatherman in November 1952. A home expansion project inspired his idea to open Troutman Homes in 1958. In 1963, he expanded into the barbecue business when he bought Little Pig Barbecue in Concord. Renaming it Troutman Barbecue, the business is still popular. In 1968 he opened Troutman’s Dairy Bar and later adding a miniature golf course to the property. He included family members in all the businesses, which he incorporated in 1976 into Troutman Enterprises.



RAIFORD TROUTMAN

In 1987, he added Troutman Insurance. Some of the businesses have changed or closed over the years.

Troutman is credited with the success of Carolinas Independent Automobile Dealers Association and the National Independent Automobile Dealers Association (NIADA). He was named NIADA Quality Dealer of the Year in 1988. A charter member of Crosspointe Baptist Church in Concord, Troutman served in leadership positions at his church as well as positions with the Baptist State Convention general board (now known as board of directors) where he worked with the college study and Baptist assemblies committees, Christian Action League of North Carolina, trustee of the Baptist Children’s Home of N.C. (where his wife is currently serving as a trustee), Fruitland Baptist Bible College board of directors, N.C. Baptists on Mission (also known as N.C. Baptist Men) president and with disaster relief and trustee for Gardner-Webb University. He was president of Concord-Kannapolis Chapter of Gideon’s International, chairman of Salvation Army Advisory Board and founder and chairman of the Serenity House, a treatment center for alcoholic men. He sponsored local youth sports teams and served local groups such as Red Cross, Boy Scouts and Citizens National Bank.

He was a recipient of the Order of the Longleaf Pine and was named one of “The Most Influential People in the Last 100 Years.” Troutman was given a “Key to the City” in 2017, and Wingate University recently dedicated the Troutman Baseball Clubhouse.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Margene Weatherman Troutman; sons, R. Wayne Troutman, Keith D. Troutman and Gary Dean Troutman; daughters, Karen T. Barbee and Blenda T. Snodderly; sister, Janie Elizabeth Troutman; nine grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Memorials to: Hospice of Cabarrus County, 5003 Hos-

pice Lane, Kannapolis, NC 28083; The Baptist Children’s Home of N.C., P.O. Box 338, Thomasville NC 27361; Gideon’s International, % of Cabarrus East Gideons, PO Box 902, Concord, NC 28025; N.C. Baptist Men’s Disaster Relief, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512, or Wingate University, Athletic Program, 220 Camden Street, Wingate, NC 28174.

DONALD RAY HUGHES SR., 82, died Jan. 1, 2018.

A Wilmington native, Hughes was a Southern Baptist minister for 31 years and retired from Daniels Construction Co.

He is survived by his wife, Vivian Dicksey Hughes; son, Donald Ray Hughes Jr.; daughter, Cathy Hughes Bordeaux; four granddaughters and seven great-grandchildren.

MARY JO BUMGARNER STARNES, 82, died Dec. 25, 2017.

A native of Haywood County, she was raised in Candler and attended Western Carolina University before transferring to Pembroke State University, where she received her bachelor’s degree. After teaching one year at Covington Street School in Laurinburg, N.C., she and her husband, Cloyes, were appointed as missionaries to The Republic of Korea in 1960 by the International Mission Board. They retired in 1991 after 30 years of service there. They served as missionaries in residence for two years at Charleston Southern University in Charleston and Summerville Baptist Church. In 1993 they moved to Waynesville, N.C., where she taught at Crabtree Elementary School for one year followed by 20 years working with Lee Starnes State Farm Insurance in Waynesville. Starnes has been active in women’s and children’s missionary organization in the First Baptist

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Mentored men honor Bill Bennett's legacy

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

William “Bill” L. Bennett Sr., 93, died early Jan. 11, but many Christian leaders shaped by his mentoring ministry said his influence continues.

“His contribution in Kingdom advance will not stop even though God has chosen to call Bill Bennett to glory,” said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, in an email to the *Biblical Recorder*.

“The investment he made throughout his life as a pastor, a seminary professor, in training thousands of believers to share their faith and the mentoring he has done with a large number of men will continue to produce a harvest resulting in many more lost people coming to faith in Christ. I thank God that He allowed my life to intersect with this great influential servant leader.”

Founder of Mentoring Men for the Master (M3), based in Wilmington, N.C., Bennett served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Ark., for 19 years. During his tenure, the church became an international base for Evangelism Explosion (EE) training. M3 began as a small group, but eventually grew into a worldwide ministry.

He is a graduate of Wake Forest University (1948) and received master of arts and master of divinity degrees at Duke University (1948-1953). He earned a doctor of theology degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1965.

Bennett was a 12-year member of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), now known as LifeWay Christian Resources, and a trustee at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark. He served as interim pastor at Wilmington's Calvary Baptist Church in the 1990s and two interim terms at First Baptist Church in Leland, N.C. He was professor of preaching and pastoral ministries, as well as campus chaplain (1998-2015), at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, N.C. In recent years, he attended Scotts Hill Baptist Church in Wilmington.

Bennett penned several books, including *Handbook for Mentoring Men for the Master*, *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead*, *The Book for Beginners*, *The Life You're Looking For*, *10 Absolute Life Changers of Men*, *The Indispensable Role of the Holy Spirit* and *Politically Incorrect Answers to Today's Burning Issues*.

“It's based on a relationship with Jesus,” Bennett said of his mentoring book, in a 2012 *Biblical Recorder* article. “You've got to depend on the Holy Spirit.”

Bennett commented that men were



Bill Bennett, founder of Mentoring Men for the Master based in Wilmington, N.C., died Jan. 11. (SEBTS file photo)

desperate to learn how to be spiritual leaders at home and incorporate the Bible into everyday life.

“Most men are not the head of their home at all,” he said at the time. “They don't even lead in prayer. We show them how to disciple their families.”

Jim Henry, former SBC president and longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., said Bennett touched his life deeply.

“At New Orleans Seminary, he became my friend and taught me accountability, discipline and generosity. He mentored me in small things that ended up being big things,” said Henry. “One day, he greeted me by asking, ‘Brother Henry, have you prayed today?’ What an unbelievable man! He had one of the brightest minds of any man I have ever known. We lost a treasure.”

Bud Russell, minister of education and administration at Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Boone, said God used Bennett in a “dynamic way,” especially through the most difficult time of his 35 years in full-time ministry.

“The challenges and losses in our personal family, multiple tragedies that affected my family and our church family and community were compounded many times over,” Russell said of the year 2012. Bennett advised and shepherded Russell through specific Bible verses, which Russell has in turn used to help others.

“His command of the scripture, an enormous amount of which he had memorized, maintained and used so fluidly was absolutely amazing,” he said. “I seldom saw him open the Bible except for using it as a prop as most every text he used he quoted and many times those were multiple verses at a time. It was obvious that the Bible was Dr. Bill Bennett's most valuable earthly possession!”

Hollifield heard Bennett preach at

a church in Fort Worth, Texas, while the N.C. leader was a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He learned about EE, the well-known method of training people to share their faith.

After Hollifield's graduation, he was serving West Asheville Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C., and wanted to be certified as an EE trainer.

He went to Bennett's church in Arkansas. “In those days, this was one of the largest churches in the SBC because they had a strong evangelism-equipping ministry utilizing EE,” Hollifield said. “From the first devotion he presented in that conference, even before he began leading the training sessions, I was convinced that Dr. Bennett had an intimate walk with Jesus Christ and was greatly anointed by God's Spirit as a pastor, preacher and a wonderful teacher. As I listened to him throughout the week, I seemed to catch at least a measure of Bill Bennett's zeal to help others come into a salvation relationship with Christ and mature as a follower of Christ. I quickly grew to love Dr. Bennett as a brother because of his love for Christ and his love for reaching lost people.”

Even after the training was over, Hollifield continued to listen to Bennett's sermons and closely followed the establishment of his M3 ministry.

“Dr. Bennett had a greater impact on my life than he was ever aware even though I attempted to convince him,” he said.

In 2012, the *Biblical Recorder* published two articles on Bennett's influence with his mentoring group, including one on Jim Gillespie, pastor of men's ministry at Richland Creek Community Church in Wake Forest.

“Dr. Bill sacrificed his time and resources to meet with me in order to men-

tor me into becoming a godly man who fulfills the Great Commandment and also the Great Commission,” said Gillespie.

Gillespie was a drug addict, high school dropout and had just left an outlaw motorcycle club, when he began to read his wife's Bible. He was saved in 2003 in his living room. When he started attending a church, someone mentioned Bennett to him, and they met.

“From that day forward he poured into me all of God's Word,” Gillespie said. “Walking me through every aspect of life as a Christian man, as a husband, father and disciple of Jesus. He pushed me to live a life pleasing to God and obedient to His Word in every detail of life. He made great sacrifices for me so that I could find work and get an education.

“Dr. Bill Bennett was a great man of God who loved Jesus with all of his being, and he mentored thousands of men to fulfill the great commandment and great commission. His ministry brought glory to God around the world. I thank God He sent Dr. Bill into my life.”

Gillespie has continued mentoring the men of his church.

“It is hard to say how much I owe him and love him,” he said.

Danny Akin, president of SEBTS, said, “Heaven is certainly richer today with his homegoing. Bill Bennett was a wonderful pastor and incredible mentor. I lost count many years ago of the number of men he poured his life into and who looked to him as a father in the ministry.”

An upcoming colleague at SEBTS, Scott Pace, said, “The impact of the life and ministry of Bill Bennett is inestimable. Those who knew him will celebrate his life as a model of godliness and faithfulness. His personal investment in pastors and people will continue to spiritually reverberate through generations to come.”

Bennett is survived by his son, William “Bill” L. Bennett Jr. of Dothan, Ala.; eight grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife, Doris Palmer Bennett, and two sons, Philip Judson Bennett of Greenwood, Ark., and David Palmer Bennett of Wilmington.

If anyone would like to share a story about Bennett with family members, please email Thad@mentoringmen.net. Memorials to M3 through the website (mentoringmen.net; under special instructions, add that the donation is in honor of Bill Bennett) or send a check to 1213 Culbreth Dr., Wilmington, NC 28405 with a note about the donation's reason on the memo line.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – K. Allan Blume, *Biblical Recorder* editor, contributed to this article.) **BR**

Vermont

Continued from page 1

A 2017 Gallup poll showed Vermont is America's least religious state. That is changing.

In 2016, Vermont churches counted 246 baptisms. That is not enough to say a great revival is under way, but it means Vermont led Southern Baptist baptisms in all other New England states.

Further, it only took 11 Vermont Baptists for each baptism. If N.C. Baptists had a similar ratio, all of the state's 5.8 million lost people would follow Christ in months.

The progress is encouraging. Vermont now has more healthy, growing Southern Baptist churches than ever. New churches are being planted. More pastors and church planters are considering ministry in Vermont.

It's too early to celebrate, but North Carolina Baptists should feel very good about the progress in Vermont and the important role they have played in part of this new work.

As Sanford, N.C. native Chris Autry put it, "North Carolina Baptists have fingerprints all over the state of Vermont." Autry now serves as a pastor in Barre (rhymes with Barry), Vt.

A long-term partnership

N.C. Baptist Men (NCBM), also known as Baptists on Mission, set up a partnership with the Green Mountain Baptist Association of Vermont in 2005 and coordinated the flow of thousands of N.C. volunteers into the state.

Partnership means N.C. Baptists ask Vermont Baptists how they can help, rather than trying to dictate a plan, said Mark Abernathy, who oversees partnership programs for NCBM in New England.

"We don't go in with an agenda. We ask, 'How can we assist you?'" Abernathy said. "We don't fill all the requests, but we have a pretty good track record on it."

Because Baptists are sparse in the region, there is one convention, the Baptist Convention of New England (BCNE), incorporating seven associations of approximately 370 churches sprinkled across Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

"We've sent an average of 400 to 550 volunteers a year to Vermont," said volunteer coordinator Steve Carter, who works with NCBM. "Of course, many of the volunteers go back year after year."

During 2017, NCBM sent 418 volunteers in 30 teams to serve across Vermont. Volunteer requests may be for construction, Vacation Bible Schools, sports ministries or other projects.

Every spring, Carter and his wife, Nellene, pack up their camper trailer and pull it from their home in Lincoln, N.C., for the two-day trip to Vermont. They stay until fall. During those months, they plan service opportunities for volunteers and encourage local pastors and church planters.

The Carters first went to Vermont as volunteers in 2005, and in 2008 began staying five or six warm-weather months each year to coordinate mission projects.

"The big challenge in Vermont is the culture," Carter said. "Down South, everybody has heard about Jesus and church ... We're in the Bible Belt. If people are not saved, they at least kind-of know a Bible story and who Jesus is. But [in Vermont], 98 percent of the people don't have a clue about any of that."

That has slowly begun to change in the past 12 years, Carter said.

"We have 51 churches in Vermont now and expect to

have several more by the end of 2018," he said. That almost doubles the state's 27 churches in 2005.

Some Vermont Baptist churches are struggling, Carter acknowledged, but others are doing well. In fact, several Baptist churches now claim several hundred members – virtual megachurches in Vermont where churches feel successful with 25 people present on Sunday.

There are other hints that things are changing.

Carter tells of a sports banquet held in Vermont in late summer in which 34 Vermonters accepted Christ as Savior – a rare response.

North Carolina native Lyandon Warren is working to start a new church in Castleton, Vt., with support from the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

"North Carolina has really shouldered a lot of God's work in Vermont," Warren said. "North Carolina Baptists need to know that and I think be proud of that. ... God has used them to impact this state in such a great way."

Becky Pellegrini, who serves on the board of directors of the BCNE, said she is thankful for the partnership with N.C. Baptists.

Pellegrini works with the youth of Faith Community Church in Barre, Vt., where she and her husband John, are members.

"North Carolina has helped me personally put on camps for our youth, and they have done physical work to our church building, our parsonage and our mission house," Pellegrini said. "It has been a great thing."

Vermont Baptists sent a team of volunteers to work in the Lumberton, N.C., area in 2017 to repair hurricane damage, she said.

Buncombe Baptist Association, in Asheville, N.C., has sent teams to Vermont for years, said Perry Brindley, director of missions. That includes sending 40 volunteers during the summer of 2017.

Beyond the volunteers, Brindley speaks with pride about how some of the key leaders in Vermont are from western North Carolina.

Starting strong in Rutland

Some shopping mall stores in Rutland, Vt., are not doing well. But that has enabled Mission City Church to rent space in the mall. Unlike the stores, Mission City is going great, with three Sunday services and more than 400 members. By Vermont church standards, this is a hugely successful, out-of-the-park home run of a church plant. The church now has 12 on staff, including four who are full-time and some who are volunteers.

The Tar Heel roots include Lead Pastor Tim Owens who grew up in Canton, N.C., and served seven years as associate pastor of Pinnacle Church.

In 2014, he moved his family to Rutland along with seven other adults and six children to start a church in his living room.

"We moved six times in six months," Owens recalled with a smile. The last move was to the shopping center.

The church became Mission City in 2016 after it launched a second campus at Castleton, a university town 14 miles west of Rutland and home of Castleton University. The Castleton church began meeting in a classroom building and has grown steadily.

Lyandon Warren wears many hats as NAMB's Vermont church planting catalyst. One of those includes serving as a volunteer campus pastor in Castleton.

Warren is from Waynesville, N.C., grew up in the Crabtree/Clyde area and worked as a tool and die maker before



Lyandon Warren, left, lead pastor of the Castleton campus church of Mission City Church, and another man sitting on a bench in front of a large screen displaying the word "WELCOME" and the text "We're glad you are here". photo by Mike Creswell)

he surrendered to full-time ministry in 2001. He graduated from North Greenville University in upstate South Carolina in 2006 and moved to Vermont soon after graduation.

"We're a church that believes in partnering in church plants," Owens said. "Our vision is to make disciples and plant churches. We don't just say it – we do it."

Along with a strong effort to plant churches in Nepal and helping get churches started in Maine and Georgia, they are also backing several church plants in Vermont.

Mission City helped train others involved in church planting, such as Hayden Swanger. He will lead worship and music at Crosspoint Church, a new plant by Todd West in Williston, Vt. Mission City is also helping Crosspoint with its website. Owens and West are old friends from their western North Carolina days.

Ricky Vest, one of Mission City's associate pastors, also has N.C. connections. He grew up in Georgia but spent five years in western North Carolina working in camp ministry before enrolling at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., in 2011. He graduated and moved to Vermont in 2015 for church planting.

He lives with his family in Pittsford, a 15-minute drive north of Rutland, and says he likes living in Vermont.

"God has given us the opportunity to build lots of relationships," Vest said, and adds they have had to buy more winter clothes.

A campus connection in Castleton

Many North Carolina church planters would see the trailer pull up beside a classroom building at Castleton University and perhaps have a twinge of backache.

Those weekly setups of sound systems, signs, screens, coffee pots and materials – then the tear down and moving it afterward – are part of the hard work required to have church in a borrowed or rented facility. For now, it's part of the schedule for Mission City Church's Castleton campus.

Lyandon Warren preaches but rotates Sunday services

Adopt

Continued from page 4



on City Church, Rutland, welcomes people to the Sunday service. (BSC

with associates so he can pursue his wider church planting ministry across Vermont and beyond. He and his wife, Kim, greet members and visitors in the outer lobby before the contemporary service starts.

Many of the attenders are university students, but some are older adults. Warren's own parents moved to Vermont from Waynesville, N.C., to help the new church get started.

At a table with balloons, discipleship pastor Tyler Ray signs up members for home groups. Ray is unusual – he grew up in a Baptist family in Maine, where Baptists are scarce. Called to full-time Christian service, he is attending Northeastern Baptist College, a Baptist school founded in 2013 in Bennington, Vt., to train people for Christian ministry in the region. This school is considered by Vermont Baptists to be a huge asset to Baptist outreach in Vermont and New England. Many New England Baptists who are called into ministry head to Baptist schools in the south; many wind up staying south. Clearly New England Baptists must begin training and equipping their own people to minister and serve here, and Northeastern is an indication that is beginning to happen.

Collin Terenzini, 25, is unusual for another reason. He is a Rutland, Vt., native who accepted Christ as Savior in 2010. He then moved to North Carolina so he could attend Fruitland Baptist Bible College. He graduated in 2013, continued his studies at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., then served as student pastor at Laurel Springs Baptist Church near Boone, N.C.

The unusual part is that Terenzini then moved back to Vermont, where he came to have high regard for the church planting ministry of Tim Owens, so he became part of the Castleton work.

“God is really working in Vermont,” Terenzini said. “He is working to change the least religious place in America to having a thriving Christian influence.”

Be sure to look for more stories from Vermont in the next issue of the *Biblical Recorder*. **BR**

Days after returning home from the conference, on Valentine's Day, Joseph and Laura received the notification that several children's paperwork had been signed, and they would receive their referral.

Upon receiving their daughter's file, they studied every detail of her photos, praising God for His sovereignty. Their daughter had been born in October 2015, just two months before their first placing agency closed.

“It would not have been a possibility for us to adopt her had we been or remained with the other agency.”

They also discovered that the little girl they and their friends had been praying and fasting for was this very child whose file they held. “The Lord had been answering so many prayers,” Laura said.

Still, the waiting persisted. Paperwork needed to be updated, translated and processed.

By May, Joseph and Laura were “drained, weary and exhausted physically and emotionally” and decided to take a week-long vacation to rest. Upon returning home, they received an alert from the U.S. Department of State. The Ethiopian government had temporarily stopped processing adoptions.

Throughout the next few weeks, with help from friends, family, their church and other organizations, Joseph and Laura sent emails, tweets and letters to Congressional representatives, urging them to help more than 200 families bring their children home.

As cases began moving forward, the Thigpens faced another obstacle: Ethiopia's rainy season. From August to October, weather can shut down the courts in Ethiopia, further extending families' waiting time to appear before a judge.

“People would ask how we were doing, and we would often reply, ‘We'll breathe when she's home but probably not before then,’” Laura said. “We felt like we were holding our breath not because we thought the Lord would forsake us, but because we had to move forward. We couldn't

stop to think about the ‘what ifs,’ and we certainly could not act like the fight was over.”

A family comes home

Joseph and Laura finally flew to Ethiopia Nov. 30. On Dec. 5, they were legally declared parents.

“There were several times we looked at each other, in awe of the fact that we were holding our daughter – the tiny little girl we had been praying for, pursuing relentlessly and actively waiting for four long years.”

The family – Joseph, Laura and Eliza Talitha – arrived home in North Carolina Dec. 16.

The couple said their adoption process led them to understand Romans 8 as a theological embodiment of their present reality. “We are eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons to be completed, hoping for what we cannot see, not knowing for what to pray,” the couple shared in a written statement to the *Biblical Recorder*. “We understand that in the adoption process we were never waiting on people or paperwork but on Almighty God, His plans and His time.

“We groaned regularly, wept often, suffered setbacks and heartache, longed deeply and learned to trust the Lord in a profoundly better way.”

Their journey also gave them perspective on being pro-life that they had not previously considered.

“Being pro-life is costly, and it requires a vision of humanity that is real, authentic and raw. ... Being pro-life is not just sparring with lawmakers or law enforcers over legislation, neither is it just caring for the weak, the vulnerable and the oppressed. We saw firsthand how the enemy not only takes pleasure in preying on the weakest and most vulnerable – he takes pleasure preying on human beings created in the image of God. This enemy worked diligently to thwart our efforts to bring our daughter home. But God is the relentless and just avenger for the orphan.”

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Seth Brown, BR Content Editor, contributed to this story.) **BR**



The Thigpen family celebrates their first Christmas together, just days after bringing Eliza home. (Contributed photo)

Hawaii missile alert spurred witness, family goodbyes

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

Praying, sharing the gospel and contacting loved ones were among Hawaii Baptists' reactions when a mistaken alert message Jan. 13 said a ballistic missile could strike them within minutes.

Shortly after 8 a.m. local time, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency sent an alert to cell phones on the islands stating, "Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill." A television banner added, "A missile may impact on land or sea within minutes."

State government officials revoked the alert after 38 minutes, according to media

reports, and later said the message went out because of human error. But amid heightened tension with North Korea, some Hawaiians and tourists thought their lives could end within the hour.

At the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, students living in dormitories went to the nearby house of Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) director Arjay Gruspe when they received the alert. He led them to take shelter in the BCM offices, which are partially underground, until the all-clear was given.

BCM associate director John Allison told Baptist Press (BP) his first thought was to call his parents in Oklahoma. Then he thought of a Japanese friend who had agreed the previous day to start studying

the Bible but had not received Christ as Lord and Savior. "I was praying, 'Lord, don't let [him] die so he can still hear about Jesus,'" Allison said. "I had shared the gospel with him before, but [the missile threat] made it so immediately real."

Craig Webb, assistant executive director of the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention (HPBC), had just finished washing his car when a neighbor relayed the alert. Webb called the family of an HPBC colleague, who was out of the state, to check on them and pray with them. He said he felt "a peace" and didn't realize until later "how upset everybody else was."

Hiking with international students later that day, Webb used his experience to give a gospel witness.

"I shared with them my experience about the peace I had," Webb said, "knowing that should we really be vaporized or killed somehow, because of the blood Jesus shed and by receiving the free gift of His salvation, we would spend eternity with Him."

Andrew Large, pastor of Waikiki Baptist Church in Honolulu, told BP he had an intuition shortly after receiving the alert that it could be a false alarm. When church members contacted him for counsel, he told them to stay where they were rather than rushing to what they perceived as safer locations.

Large plans to use the false alarm as an evangelistic opportunity in the days ahead. **BR**

Steelers Continued from page 5

They are for other people. Even through the adversity and all the difficult things that I put myself through, and the choices I stepped through that almost destroyed my life, I've used those things.

I've learned from them to get back in places to help someone else. It's all about the next person; it's all about other people. It's not about me.

It's about Jesus Christ. I want to continue doing those things to let young people know, "Listen, you've been put here for a purpose. God has given us many things so that we shouldn't take life for granted."

People need to hear the gospel and how much God loves us. When you're flowing in your strength, and you know your purpose, while you're here, you're unstoppable! That's the way I feel today, Roman.

Q: Alcohol and substance abuse is such a huge problem in our country, and it doesn't delineate between social standing, age, race, creed or religion. What would you tell people out there that struggle with alcohol or substance abuse?

A: I believe the first thing is you have to confess it; you have to admit that you have an issue. Secrets kill, and there are a lot of people out there right now walking around with secrets. People are killing themselves on the inside.

There so many different kinds of substances and drugs out there – the pharmaceutical drugs, opiates. People are dying every day from these drugs. Admit it; talk to somebody. Especially men, young men don't know how to talk to each other. Women, on the other hand, for the most part, are willing to talk more.

You have to humble yourself and admit that you have a problem.

When I humble myself and admit that I can't live this life by myself, that's when freedom comes and the mind can get renewed. Ask for help.

(EDITOR'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: soldouttv.com; Facebook: Roman Gabriel III; connect on Twitter: @romangabriel3rd. Contact at (910) 431-6483 or email: sold-outrg3@gmail.com.) **BR**

Do you have plans for Super Bowl Sunday?

Join Roman Gabriel III and his friends Tony Evans, Tony Dungy and James Brown from the Faith Family Football Celebration as sports greats highlight Jesus in their lives. There will be a live simulcast Thurs., Feb. 1 from Minnesota with an on demand broadcast available Feb. 2-5 online. Churches or small groups are invited to explore this option of tying in Super Bowl LII with a way to share Christ with others. Visit faithfamilysports.com.



HELPING THE LOCAL CHURCH MAKE DISCIPLES

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is focused on "impacting lostness through disciple-making." Our desire is to assist the local church in making disciples of all nations.

The Church Planting and Missions Partnerships Group is working to develop a "scorecard" that a local church might use to evaluate its progress in disciple-making. We believe the scorecard is a short, simple yet helpful tool in determining the congregation's impact upon lostness in its community.

Review these four aspects of disciple-making and our probing questions. We welcome your thoughts and feedback.

● **Winning** – We readily acknowledge that the believer "wins" no one to Christ. Our job is to prayerfully and faithfully share the gospel, and the Holy Spirit's job is to convict of sin and to draw the unbeliever to Christ. Salvation is totally a work of God. However, a church should be able to answer questions such as "Who has heard the gospel?" and "Who has publicly professed their faith in Christ?"

● **Growing** – In disciple-making, conversion is not the end. It's only the beginning. Through the practice of spiritual disciplines and through life-on-life interaction with mature believers, the new Christian should grow to

become more like Christ. So how does a church measure up to questions like "Who is gathering in small groups for instruction, modeling and accountability?" and "Who is demonstrating the transformed life?"

● **Training** – One aspect of spiritual growth is leadership development. Such development often happens in a mentoring relationship where a mature believer invests his or her life into a growing Christian to help them reach their full potential in Christ. This training relationship prepares the growing Christian for lifelong service and ministry leadership. Helpful questions might be "Who are you preparing for effective ministry?" and "Who are you developing into mature spiritual leaders?"

● **Sending** – Christianity is a missionary faith, and spiritual maturity always includes joining Christ on His redemptive mission. Mature Christians live "sent" lives, mobilized with the gospel in ministry and missions. Helpful questions might include, "Who are you sending?" "Where are they going – to their neighbor, an urban center in North America, an international setting?" "How long are they serving – a few days, a few months, a lifetime?"



CHUCK REGISTER

EDITOR'S NOTE – Chuck Register is executive leader for church planting and missions partnerships for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact (800) 395-5102, ext. 5532, or register@ncbaptist.org.

GRADUATION ROUNDUP



Milton A. Hollifield Jr., Baptist State Convention of North Carolina executive director-treasurer, addresses students during Campbell University's graduation in December. (Campbell University photo)

BSC's Milton Hollifield addresses Campbell grads

(Campbell University) Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive director-treasurer for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, gave the commencement address for Campbell University. He encouraged the graduates to do the right thing always, follow God's will for

their lives and respond to failure with a good attitude. "I challenge you to live with intention and great purpose, and live your life for the glory of God and the good of humanity," he said. "I challenge you to make the world a better place for those who will follow you."

Mathis warns students about being lukewarm

(BSC Communications) Christian ministry got a big boost in late December as 40 men and women graduated from Fruitland Baptist Bible College in winter commencement exercises at the main campus in Hendersonville, N.C.

Greg Mathis, longtime senior pastor of Mud Creek Baptist Church in Hendersonville, warned graduates against being lukewarm in their ministries in the baccalaureate sermon titled, "Don't Lock Jesus Out of Your Ministry," based on Revelation 3.

Mathis has taught at Fruitland for 37 years and now serves as professor of evangelism and church growth. His teaching has been in addition to his main ministry at Mud Creek Baptist Church, where he has served for 38 years.

Fruitland President David Horton de-

scribed the commencement exercises as a time of worship and celebration.

He told the gathering that Fruitland has trained men and women to go out and serve in the Lord's Kingdom since 1946.

Mathis said the church at Laodicea described in Revelation 3 was the only one in which Jesus is described as being outside the church, looking in and undecided on whether He will enter. Jesus had only condemnation for that congregation, Mathis said.

"Literally, He was so nauseated, He was about to throw up," Mathis said. "From the outside the church looked successful, but Jesus said they made Him sick. If you leave out of here tonight and become lukewarm in your ministry, Jesus wants no part of that."



President Dan Lunsford, left, and Wayne Higgins, right, chair of the board of trustees, adjust the doctoral "hood" as they confer the doctor of humane letters honorary degree to Michael Blackwell, president of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. (Mars Hill University photo)

Mars Hill confers honorary degree to BCH leader

(Mars Hill University) Michael C. Blackwell, president of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH) received an honorary doctorate of humane letters during Mars Hill University graduation ceremony in December.

Blackwell is a native of North Carolina. He is a journalism graduate of University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and holds two master's degrees and a doctorate from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest where he fo-

cused on Old Testament, Christian ethics and pastoral counseling.

Blackwell served in ministry positions in churches in Raleigh and Carthage, N.C., and then Richmond, Va., before accepting the presidency of BCH in 1983. BCH is the Southeast's largest child care and family services organization.

In addition to his role at BCH, Blackwell is the founder of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry, which serves the needs of the aging.

Akin stresses that the gospel is for all people

(SEBTS) The good news of the gospel, encapsulated in John 3:16, is meant for all people and to be shared across all nations.

President Danny Akin addressed why this verse is a captivating truth for

graduates, family and friends at the Dec. 8 graduation ceremony for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and The College at Southeastern. "When God gave his Son, God gave his best," said Akin. "And God gave his best to die."

GRADUATES

Gardner-Webb University Divinity School

- **Master of divinity** – Amy Carpenter, Gastonia; Paul English, Charlotte; Jeremai Williams, Gastonia; and William Worley, Hickory

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Master of arts Christian studies** – William Franklin Dees Jr., Rocky Mount; Lesley S. Hildreth, Wake Forest; Jeanett Rennay Newsome, Raleigh; Grayson Pope, Davidson; Jonathan Warren Waggett, Wilmington; Melvin L. Williams Jr., Raleigh; Michael David Williams, Charlotte; Rebecca D. Hayden, Wake Forest; James Kent Reaves, Knightdale; and Mark Russell Stevens, Princeton
- **Master of arts ethics, theology and culture** – Wooram Yun, Wake Forest
- **Master of arts philosophy of religion** – Alexander Malloy Oakley, Plumbtree, and Tyler Bentley

Ferneyhough, Raleigh

- **Master of arts in biblical counseling** – Cameron Bayli Austin, Cary, and Jessica Marie Cobb, Cary
- **Master of arts in Christian school administration** – Erik W. Harris, Rocky Mount
- **Master of arts in church planting** – Amanda Lee Burdick, Wilmington; Randy Keith Pace, Middlesex; and Amy Jo Bastow-Cox, Durham
- **Master of arts in women's studies** – Kiersten Griffith Lewis, Wake Forest
- **Advanced master of divinity** – Allen D. Mayberry, Raleigh, and James Aaron Seay, Wake Forest
- **Master of divinity with biblical counseling** – Kenny Simeon Llywelyn, Statesville
- **Master of divinity with Christian apologetics** – Patrick Krentz, Wake Forest, and Zachary James Locklear, Wake Forest

- **Master of divinity with Christian ethics** – William Henderson Matthews, Clinton
- **Master of divinity with Christian ministry** – Aaron Paul Cline, Lincolnton; Nicholas Ryan Garner, Creedmoor; Matthew Sheridan Keefe, Apex; Bradley Justus Kinnison, Winston Salem; David Kyle Ritch, Liberty; and Jonathan Emery White, Charlotte
- **Master of divinity with missiology** – Davis Alexander Troxler, Raleigh
- **Master of divinity with pastoral ministry** – Trenton Keith Haywood, Lumberton
- **Master of theology** – Nicholas Ryan Alley, Youngsville; Eric W. Lockhart, Wake Forest; Jesse Logan Parker, Wake Forest; Shelia Celestine Springs, Raleigh; and Daniel Blake Stevens, Wake Forest

- **Doctor of ministry** – Steven Ackley, Winston Salem; Kenneth L. Morris, Cary; and David D. Trump II, Durham
- **Doctor of education** – Branton Lee Burleson, Hendersonville
- **Doctor of philosophy** – James T. Hughes III, Cary, and Chris Pappalardo, Raleigh

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Master of arts in theological studies** – Timothy W. Hodge, Rutherfordton
- **Master of divinity** – Michael A. Knight, Statesville
- **Master of theology** – Samuel A. Roach, Weddington
- **Doctor of philosophy** – Samuel D. Tyson, Monroe



Former LifeWay headquarters implodes in Nashville

The Draper Tower began to collapse, at left, at approximately 10:30 a.m. EST Jan. 6 following detonation of some 600 pounds of explosives. The former campus of LifeWay Christian Resources was enveloped in a cloud of dust, at right, after the tower fell. (BP photos by Jim Veneman)



NEWS BRIEFS

2-year-old dies at NOBTS preschool center

(NOBTS) A 2-year-old child died Jan. 11 while eating lunch at the Early Learning Center (ELC) at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). The child lost consciousness after choking on food just after noon. Efforts to resuscitate the child by members of the ELC staff and EMS responders were unsuccessful.

NOBTS President Chuck Kelley said the seminary community is saddened by the death and called on members of the immediate community and the larger Southern Baptist community to pray for the child's family and all those affected by the death. "Our hearts are overwhelmed with sadness in the loss of one so young. May all of us join together in praying for God's grace, comfort and strength to minister to this family and all of those affected by this tragic loss," Kelley said.

The seminary has mobilized grief counselors to speak with staff members, parents and children at the ELC, which serves the larger community, not just those with connections to the seminary.

Pew: Muslims on pace to outnumber Jews in U.S.

(Baptist Press) Muslims will likely surpass Jews as the second largest religious group behind Christians in the U.S. by 2040, elevated by a high birth rate and immigration, the Pew Research Center said in its latest analysis.

The 3.45 million Muslims here will more than double to 8.1 million by 2050, surpassing the number of Jews along the way, Pew estimated Jan. 3. But the research center did not give a Muslim nor Jewish numerical population estimate for 2040. "Our projections suggest that the U.S. Muslim population will grow much faster than the country's Jewish population," Pew said. "By 2040, Muslims will replace Jews as the nation's second-largest religious group after Christians."

Still, Muslims will only account for 2.1 percent of the U.S. population by 2050, Pew said, compared to 1.1 percent today. Jews total 1.9 percent of the nation's population, Pew said. Pew based the estimates on its 2017 survey of U.S. Muslims and official Census Bureau data, and said its analysis is in response to prevailing questions amid changing U.S. immigration policy.

Awana co-founder Art Rorheim dies at 99

(Baptist Press) Children's ministry pioneer and Awana co-founder Arthur Reynold Rorheim died Jan. 5 in Oregon, Ill., at age 99.

Rorheim co-founded the Awana Youth Association, originally an acronym for Approved Workers Are Not Ashamed, in 1950 while youth director of North Side Gospel Center near Chicago. Lance "Doc" Latham, his pastor at the time, was co-founder. Rorheim ministered with Awana for more than 60 years, continuing well into his 90s, Awana said in a press release. He spearheaded Awana's international expansion in 1972, spreading from Bolivia to include 119 countries and 4 million children by 2017. Rorheim retired as Awana executive director in 1990 and served as president until 1999. He is survived by his son, Ken, and his daughter, Kathlyn Brock.



ART RORHEIM

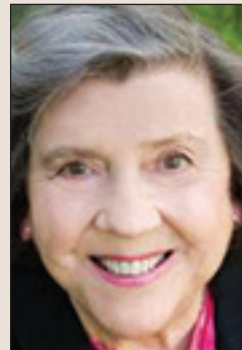
GuideStone announces new Dallas location

(GuideStone Financial Resources) GuideStone Financial Resources plans to relocate in late summer 2018 to 115,000 square feet of new leased offices about 10 miles north of its current facility.

The financial services arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has occupied its current home in Dallas' Uptown district since 1989. GuideStone's headquarters building has been sold, but will be leased back until the move can be completed. The move to Pinnacle Tower in the North Dallas area will occur as GuideStone celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2018. It has been based in Dallas since its founding in 1918.

Actress who portrayed Corrie ten Boom dies

(Baptist Press) Jeannette Clift George, 92, whose acting career included the film portrayal of Corrie ten Boom, a legendary Dutch woman sent to a Nazi concentration camp for sheltering Jews during World War II, died Dec. 28.



JEANNETTE GEORGE

Her theater career began with students at Houston Baptist University (HBU) (then-College) as actress-in-residence. The college's A.D. Players, formed by George in 1967, became a nonprofit theater company in 1969 which she led as founder/artistic director, yet she remained a supporter of HBU's drama students throughout her career. Last year, 50 years after the founding of the A.D. Players, George lived to see the opening of the Jeannette & L.M. George Theater (named in honor of her husband Lorraine M. George who died in 2004) in Houston's Galleria-Uptown area.

The 1975 film "The Hiding Place," based on ten Boom's autobiographical book with the same title, was produced by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's World Wide Pictures division. George was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for her performance.

China bombs megachurch

(Baptist Press) The bombing demolition of a megachurch in China is indicative of a rush to silence Christianity under new laws that will heighten religious persecution, according to human rights group ChinaAid.

The Golden Lampstand Church in Linfen, Shanxi, was home to some 50,000 worshippers before the Chinese government bombed and demolished it Jan. 9. Religious persecution is at its harshest in communist China in perhaps 50 years, ChinaAid President Bob Fu told BBC News Jan. 11.

The church is among many Protestant congregations not registered under the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) that places congregations under total government control. Churches which register with TSPM forego freedoms, including evangelism beyond the church walls, the ability to baptize anyone under the age of 18 and the ability to choose church leaders without governmental oversight, Fu told BBC. The crosses of more than 2,000 churches (even registered churches) have been destroyed in the past three years, Fu said.

Full stories available online at BRnow.org.

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Website training

Website development training in Cary is offered to create and update a basic church website using WordPress or Wix. These free classes at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina will train participants on the basic and advanced functions of the content management

system, including basics of website terminology and design. Each class will host 12 students. WordPress classes are Feb. 13, Apr. 10, June 12 or Sept. 11; Wix classes are Mar. 13, May 15, Aug. 7 or Oct. 2. Registration is required. Visit ncbaptist.org/website.

Software training

Free training opportunities are provided by Baptist State Convention of N.C. for churches and associations in areas such as Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher.

All classes are held in the lab at the Baptist State Convention in Cary. Classes

are free, but registration is required.

- **Word** – Feb. 15
- **Access** – Mar. 8
- **Excel** – Mar. 27
- **PowerPoint** – Apr. 12
- **Publisher** – May 3

Visit ncbaptist.org/training.

Alex McFarland is hosting the 2018 Truth for a New Generation conference with the theme “Save a Nation” Mar. 23-24 at Life Community Church in Jamestown. McFarland, a religion and culture expert and author is also director for Christian worldview and apologetics at the Christian Worldview Center of North Greenville University.

Several nationally known speakers will be part of the stellar group, including Fox News’ Todd Starnes and Lauren Green, renowned apologist Josh McDowell and faith investigator J. Warner Wallace, among many others. Speakers will address topics such as religious liberties, race, national healing and more.

This year’s conference will also feature a screening of the American Family Association feature-length film, “The God Who Speaks,” as well as VIP “Gold



Circle” seating, which will allow participants to interact with the speakers. Early registration is encouraged due to limited space. An early-bird rate of \$34.95 is available through Jan. 30 and includes admission both days. After Jan. 30 the cost is \$39.95. Visit truthforanewgeneration.com.

Salem Baptist Church in Apex will host a Spring Fling March 24 for persons with developmental disabilities. The event will begin with registration at 9:30 a.m. and will conclude by 1:30 p.m. Participants will experience music and worship, fun and games, crafts, balloons, face paint and sports. All participants with a group must be high school age or older and one parent or sponsor must accompany every five or fewer participants.



Any participant less than high school age must be with a parent or guardian. Registration is \$5 and includes a Chick-fil-A lunch.

Visit ncbaptist.org/springfling.

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

Baptists on Mission is sponsoring the 2018 North Carolina Baptist Missions Conference April 6-7 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. The conference is open to all men, women and youth. It includes worship, general sessions, breakout sessions, missions fair exhibits, missions testimonies, volunteer supper and more. The speakers are Bryan Loritts, Vicki Grossman, Kyle Idleman, Jennifer Rothschild, Tom Richter, Terry Rae and worship led by the Annie Moses band. Cost is \$20 per person, which



includes all general session, breakout sessions, materials and lunch on Saturday.

There is also an optional “Mission Opportunities” Friday supper for \$8 per person. Visit baptistsonmission.org/Events/Missions-Conference.



Woman’s Missionary Union of North Carolina is hosting its annual Missions Extravaganza April 27-28 at Ardmore Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. The theme for 2018 is “Defining Moments.” Participants will meet missionaries and choose from a wide variety of breakout sessions that will encourage, challenge and equip, in addition to learning new ways to be focused on missions and spiritual development.

There will be worship, renewal and fellowship with women (and men) on

mission across the state. Featured speakers are Taylor and Susan Field of Graffiti Community Ministries in New York City. This year the missions extravaganza is also partnering with Operation Bandanas and the Ronald McDonald House.

Registration fee is \$55 if received by Feb. 1 or \$65 after Feb. 1 and includes a box meal Friday evening and a box lunch on Saturday.

The one-day rate is \$30 and includes one meal.

Visit wmunc.org/me2018.

AROUND THE STATE

Staff changes

KERRY PEELER has been called as pastor of Christian education at First Baptist Church, New Bern. He previously served as pastor of Enfield Baptist Church, Enfield. Peeler holds a master of divinity from Campbell University Divinity School and is married to Rochele Bailey.

Gardner-Webb University (GWU) has appointed **CATHERINE BURR** as associate provost for adult and distance education. Burr previously worked for the University of Phoenix in Charlotte, Raleigh and Richmond, Va. **JUNE HOBBS**, a longtime GWU English professor will soon assume a new role, after being named the inaugural Fay Webb Gardner Chair of Student



CATHERINE BURR



JUNE HOBBS

Success. The 24-year GWU veteran will begin in Fall 2018.

The North Carolina Baptist Foundation, Inc., has hired **RICHARD CHILDRESS** as vice president for development. He had been serving as intentional interim pastor of Westwood Baptist Church, Cary.

Southeastern Seminary has made some recent staff changes. **RONJOUR LOCKE** is instructor of preaching and urban ministry. Locke was previously the pastor of First Baptist Church in Brooklyn, Baltimore, Md. **SCOTT PACE** is associate professor of preaching and pastoral ministry and associate director for the Center for Preaching and Pastoral Leadership. Pace currently is associate professor of applied ministry and the Hughes Chair of Christian ministry at Oklahoma Baptist University. **JEFF STRUECKER** is assistant professor of Christian leadership. He received his doctor of philosophy from Southeastern in 2015 and has more than 22 years of military service (10 years served as private and platoon sergeant in the 75th Ranger Regiment).

More Around the State items are on pages 6 and 15.

February 4

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

February 11

I Am a Minister

Focal passage: 2 Corinthians 3:4-12

Several years ago, I was encouraged to make a timeline of my life. I was to choose 20 of the most impactful events in my life, highs and lows, and number them from one to 10 based on the level of impact they had on me. I was to look through the timeline for a theme God might be writing in my life.

The theme I identified was redeeming hope.

Repeatedly my Savior had redeemed my lowest of lows, and in the waiting time, He had given me experiences that filled me with great hope.

Before long, my timeline went back into my desk drawer, long forgotten. It wasn't until I came across many people with experiences similar to mine that I pulled the dusty page out again. These people had one thing in common: they were looking for hope and redemption.

As followers of Christ, we're equipped with the Holy Spirit and our testimonies to minister about the wonders of God's love.

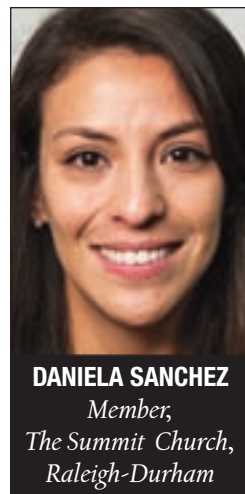
"And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient ... but our sufficiency is from God, who made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit ..." (2 Corinthians 3:4-6).

We can trust that through Jesus we have all we need to serve God.

Further into this chapter of Corinthians, Paul compares the law of the Ten Commandments to the fulfillment of the law through the Jesus' righteousness. Our attempts to live under the law are futile, holding out temporarily before we inevitably sin.

However, God has called us to live through Jesus' righteousness alone, the glory of which will last into eternity. This is how we serve our Lord and minister to the world.

We have the hope of redemption that the broken world around us longs for. *"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we use great boldness of speech ..."* (2 Corinthians 3:12). Let us minister. Let us be bold.



DANIELA SANCHEZ
Member,
The Summit Church,
Raleigh-Durham

Focal passage: 1 Peter 2:4-10

Historically, priests took on the responsibility of going into the presence of God on behalf of many and standing as God's representative among people. Jesus became our Great High Priest that we might be adopted into the priesthood.

First Peter 2:4 describes Jesus as the living Stone, one precious to the Lord and chosen by Him.

By extension, in Christ, we too are living stones *"being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God ..."* (1 Peter 2:5).

To offer spiritual sacrifices to God is to deny ourselves and obey Him.

Romans 12:1 describes it this way: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."*

Another example can be found in He-

brews 13:15-16. It reads, *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."*

Through Jesus we are free to enter into the presence of God with praise and supplication.

Christ also endowed us with the privilege of representing Him in the world and called us to serve others as He has served us.

Our Wonderful Counselor is the sole reason believers are positioned as priests.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

As priests we are privileged, but also carry a great responsibility.

That responsibility is to take the gospel, our salvation out of darkness into light, to the ends of the earth.

February 4

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

February 11

Delivered

Focal passage: Acts 20:22-35

Charles Spurgeon, the renowned English preacher, once wrote, "Soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian minister; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every believer."

Read that quote again. Think about its implications.

If you were to sit down and make a list of all the priorities in your life, would soul-winning be at the top? Do you structure your time and energy around making His name known?

As followers of Jesus, we have a task. We have a responsibility. We have a God-given commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

We are stewards of a message that is life-changing and permanently alters the future of those who trust in the person of that message (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Perhaps no one understood this better than the Apostle Paul.

When speaking to the Ephesian elders in person for the last time (Acts 20:38), Paul said that he *"did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27).

He did not shy away from telling them what was of utmost importance.

Paul understood that it was his duty to *"testify to the of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24), regardless of the earthly consequences. Knowing he would have to make a tremendous personal sacrifice through imprisonment and afflictions (Acts 20:23), he did not waver. He did not dither. He boldly and confidently shared the saving work of Jesus Christ.

In his book, *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out*, Alvin Reid said that the "only failure in witnessing is the failure to witness." The majority of Christ followers will go their whole lives without ever leading someone else to the Lord. Why? Because they fail to share.

I challenge you. Don't be in that category. Make a commitment to pray that God would put people in your path to share Jesus with.

Make a commitment to boldly share when those opportunities arise. Make a commitment to make "soul-winning the main pursuit of your life."



JAMES ZIK
Associate pastor,
Beach Road Baptist
Church, Southport

Focal passage: Acts 22:3-8, 15-22

J.D. Greear, a pastor in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., said, "It is one thing to understand the gospel but it is quite another to experience the gospel in such a way that it fundamentally changes us and becomes the source of our identity and security."

Greear's point is that the gospel is not just a message to hear.

It is a message to be believed.

It is a message that is life-altering. It is message that transforms.

For those who accept the claims and work of Jesus Christ on their behalf, their lives are changed forever.

In the opening verses of Acts 22, Paul recounts what his life was like apart from Christ.

Describing himself as *"zealous for God"* he was so opposed to the people of *"The Way"* that he *"delivered men and women to prison"* (Acts 22:4).

Paul then describes his experience on the road to Damascus where he encoun-

The Testimony

tered Jesus Christ who would radically change him.

We see his thought process clearly in the book of Philippians.

Of his former source of identity and accolades, Paul says he *"counts them as rubbish"* or dung.

The fact that he was circumcised, a Hebrew and a Pharisee were of no concern to him anymore.

Why? Because Paul understood what experiencing the gospel will do for someone.

Not only did it change Paul's primary source of identity, but God would then use him to bring about His redemptive purpose as Jesus said, *"Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles"* (Acts 22:21).

You may not have had as dramatic of a turnaround as the Apostle Paul, but if you are a true follower of Jesus Christ then your story is no less miraculous. You have been brought to life.

You are no longer chained by the shackles of sin. And God wants to use your transformed life to make other disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

The question we must all answer is: have I truly experienced the gospel?

And if so, how does God want to use me?

Obituaries

Continued from page 6

and Encouraging Word Baptist churches in Waynesville as well as singing in choirs. Her husband was involved in the search committee that brought the current executive director-treasurer to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Cloyes Starnes; daughter, Maria Huelsman of Warner Robbins, Ga.; son, David Russell Starnes of Port Orange, Fla.; sisters, Lynn Eargle of Lexington, S.C., and Eula Williams of Spartanburg, S.C.; brother, Ed Bumgarner of Cherryville, N.C.; and six grandchildren.

Memorials to: Encouraging Word Baptist Church, 1408 Pigeon Road, Waynesville, NC 28786.

JACK BRITT, 86, of Fayetteville, died Dec. 22, 2017, after a brief illness. A Robeson County native, he earned a full scholarship to play football at East Carolina

University where he received his bachelor and master degrees. He later earned a doctorate in education at Nova University. He was a teacher/coach in Raleigh and served in the U.S. Army before working 34 years in the Cumberland County Schools, where he retired as superintendent. He became director of corporate relations at Campbell University and was later named vice-president for institutional advancement.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Jane E. Britt; daughters, Mary Lou Britt Edge of Fayetteville, Janie Britt Brown of Holden Beach, Allyson Britt Lee of Wake Forest; sons, Jack Brooks Britt of Wilmington, William Douglas Britt of Holden Beach; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild; brothers, William Coleman Britt of Nashville, Tenn., and Austin Hoover Britt of Greenville; and sisters, Joan Britt Bunn of Newsoms, Va., and LaRue Britt Hamm of Asheville.

Senators, Trump address pro-life supporters

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

Two United States senators urged those attending the Evangelicals for Life (EFL) conference Jan. 18 to practice honest, loving persuasion in the effort to defend human dignity.

Sens. James Lankford of Oklahoma and Ben Sasse of Nebraska delivered keynote speeches on the first day of the third annual conference in the country's capital. The three-day event – hosted by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Focus on the Family – coincides with the annual March for Life Friday, Jan. 20.

Attendees participated in the march with tens of thousands of others on the National Mall three days before the 45th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Jan. 22, 1973, ruling by the Supreme Court

that legalized abortion. At least two significant, pro-life actions took place on the day of the march:

- President Donald Trump became the first U.S. president to address the March for Life rally by video. Trump spoke to the crowd via satellite from the White House Rose Garden. Some previous Republican presidents addressed the rally by phone or recorded message, according to *USA Today*. Vice President Mike Pence became the first holder of his office to address the rally when he spoke in person last year.

- The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Born-alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act in a 241-183 vote before the March for Life. The bill protects children born alive during an abortion procedure.

Visit brnow.org. **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denominational

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) is seeking a **part-time Regional Director** for the far west region of NC. The position is responsible for orchestrating ministry services of NCBAM. Master's degree in gerontology, social work or related field; or bachelor's degree in gerontology or social work plus two years experience in related field preferred. Visit <http://www.bchfamily.org/about/employment> to apply.

The Welsh Neck Baptist Association, located in the Pee Dee area of South Carolina, is searching for a **full-time Director of Missions** who has a heart for ministers, passionate about the local church and a desire to see the association collaborate as a missional outpost. Please send résumés to rod@kelleytownbc.com or to Welsh Neck Baptist Association, P.O. Box 1407, Hartsville, SC 29551.

Pastor

Cedar Creek Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Pastor**. We are a conservative, rural Southern Baptist church. Accepting résumés until February 15, 2018. Mail résumés to Linda Prevatte, chairperson, 3716 Cedar Hill Drive, Fayetteville, NC 28312.

Church Staff

Green Creek First Baptist in Columbus, NC, is seeking a **full-time Student Pastor**. This individual must have at least an associate degree in church ministry and two or more years experience in student ministry. They will be responsible to oversee and facilitate the K-12 ministries of the church and teach 7-12 Bible studies. Green Creek First is a conservative-minded church that partners with the SBC, BSCNC and the Polk Baptist Association. Please send résumés to gcfbpersonnel@yahoo.com or gcfbpastor@yahoo.com by March 2, 2018.

Student Pastor – Part-time. Principle Function: Plan, administer, coordinate, supervise and evaluate a comprehensive and active student ministry at Pittsboro Baptist Church, with alignment to the overall vision and mission of the church to make growing disciples of Jesus. Primary responsibilities include leadership development, discipleship/mentoring, programming and administration. For more information, contact PBC Personnel Committee at Davisgal0422@gmail.com. To apply, send your résumé to Pittsboro Baptist Church, PO Box 696, Pittsboro, NC 27312, or email to Davisgal0422@gmail.com.

Full-time preschool and children's pastor.

The First Baptist Church of Mauldin, S.C. is seeking a full-time Preschool and Children's Pastor. Send résumés to First Baptist Mauldin, 150 South Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662, or email wleonard@fbcmauldin.org. For more information, visit www.fbcmauldin.org to view the job profile and job description.

First Baptist Church of Troy, North Carolina, is seeking a **full-time Student and Children's Minister** with some music and technology expertise. This person will work with our new Senior Pastor and existing team to develop and build a family-centered student and youth ministry serving our church and drawing unchurched families and individuals into our church. First Baptist has a vision and passion for reaching the lost in our community and building them in their relationship with Christ. Requirements: a bachelor's degree (completed or in the final year of residence for an intern) in a related field; a passion for the Lord and His church; and a love for children and youth. Send résumé with references to Pastor Jeff Hartman – pastorjhartman@gmail.com; First Baptist Church, 401 East Main Street, Troy, NC 27371.

First Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, NC, is prayerfully seeking a candidate to serve as **full-time student ministry leader** k-12. This person must be a born again child of God, demonstrate Christian character, be called to lead children and teens and provide a testimony of faith. A bachelor's degree in a related field from a Baptist seminary or divinity school is preferred. Responsibilities include an active leadership role with the youth grades 7-12, to include Bible teaching and mission projects and to plan and coordinate church volunteers to work with the children k-6 grades. Please submit résumé to First Baptist Church, Attn: Search Committee, 125 Tappan St., Spruce Pine, NC 28777, or email to doctorrock1@yahoo.com.

Miscellaneous

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Summit

Continued from page 1

also highlighted similarities between The Summit and the state convention's missions and ministry strategies, which include a focus on making disciples, planting churches and reaching college students.

Will Toburen, executive pastor of discipleship ministries, said, "We believe that disciples make disciples, so our discipleship and evangelism strategies are inextricably linked."

"We're not trying to do a new thing." – J.D. Greear

At the core of The Summit's church planting and discipleship model is an emphasis on multiplication. They train each new Christian disciple to make more disciples and each new church to start more churches, and so on.

"Multiplication always grows faster than addition," Unzicker said.

Church leaders know their goal of "1,000 churches in one generation" is ambitious – likely impossible – if they work alone. That is why they cooperate with other local churches.

"We're not trying to do a new thing," said Greear, "simply do the 'old things' in a new generation with the power of

the Holy Spirit. ... We are grateful for our partnership with the BSC in doing that."

Unzicker echoed that sentiment: "The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has been a great partner."

In 2014 church leaders decided to begin a five-year process of gradually increasing The Summit's Cooperative Program (CP) giving.

"We are big believers in cooperation for the purpose of mission," said Greear, "and since the Southern Baptist Convention [SBC] is our tribe, it made sense that the lion's share of our giving should go there."

Their CP commitment made an unexpected turn in 2016.

"We found ourselves in a place where God had so blessed us financially that we could go ahead and get to our five-year goal, so we did that," Greear said. "We are very excited to be a part of the SBC right now, and feel like God has a lot for the SBC in the future. Missions is what the church is all about, and churches helping churches is a core New Testament strategy."

Hollifield also commended The Summit's preaching and Bible teaching ministry. For 2017, The Summit reported that nearly 5,000 people were engaged in one



Lynn Greear, J.D. Greear's father, baptizes Jocelyn McBride. McBride attended a worship service in February 2017 at The Summit after being invited by a friend. Lynn and his wife, Carol, came to know McBride through the church's "Starting Point" ministry and spent weeks discussing the gospel and answering her questions about God. (Contributed photo)

of the church's 355 small groups.


"J.D. is a solid and effective preacher," he said, "but he is not the only one who is teaching the Word of God. People who attend there are getting biblical truth from a number of people, helping them grow in their faith. As a result, they are challenging people to surrender their lives to the Lord and answer God's call on their lives."

Unzicker said college students were a strategic part of their mission strategy, calling them an "untapped gift to the church." Young adults have the time and flexibility to develop interest and experience in international missions. They are "eager to take on new challenges," Unzicker explained. As they begin to

graduate, marry and start families, their "global vision for the world" will "infect the DNA of all our churches."

Greear said, "We've been given a great tradition of faith, and we want to steward it well for the next generation. We want to take the old, historic gospel into the future."

"I believe the greatest days of the SBC are ahead of us, and it's exciting to be alive at this time. We need God's grace and His help more than ever, and we believe He is more than ready to give it. We face new challenges in being faithful gospel preachers in the 21st century. But Jesus, the Lord of the church, is the same yesterday, today and forever. He helped our forefathers; He will help us." **BR**



"My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old—" Psalm 78:1-2

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