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HIGH COURT URGED to reverse pro-transgender ruling

By **TOM STRODE** | Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) has joined with other faith organizations to urge the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a lower-court ruling that a federal anti-discrimination law regarding sex covers gender identity.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed Jan. 10, the ERLC and its allies told the justices a refusal to reverse the appeals court opinion in the case “would unleash conflicts over religious liberty resembling the conflicts over same-sex marriage” and could even marginalize people of faith.

The Supreme Court has yet to schedule oral arguments in the case, which is likely to be argued in March or April. If so, a decision is expected before the high court adjourns in late June or early July.

The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va., ruled in April the school board of an eastern

Virginia county violated federal law by refusing to permit a transgender high school student – who is a female biologically but identifies as a male – to use the boys’ restroom. In a 2-1 opinion overturning a federal judge, the Fourth Circuit panel agreed with an Obama administration letter in ruling the ban on sex discrimination in the Title IX education amendments encompasses gender identity.

The ERLC “gladly joined in this important case to stand against the Obama administration’s latest effort to take power from Congress,” said Travis Wussow, the ERLC’s general counsel and vice president for public policy.

“The administration has attempted to create new law through the executive branch that jeopardizes student privacy, undermines parental authority and further conflicts with religious liberty,” Wussow told Baptist Press in written comments. “If any president wishes to redefine what the words ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ mean for every public school in the country, he must make his case in the legislature, not a small government office in Washington, D.C.”

When it issues an opinion, the Supreme Court may provide a definitive victory in a battle being waged in American schools regarding transgender rights – one advocates for such rights have been winning recently.

About a month after the Fourth Circuit’s decision, the Obama administration issued a sweeping directive on

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NATIONAL SBC MEETINGS TAKE SHAPE

BR staff

Plans are well underway for the two largest annual gatherings of Southern Baptists in 2017 – the annual meeting and the pastors’ conference – both of which will take place in Phoenix, Ariz., in early summer.

The annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is scheduled for June 13-14. President Steve Gaines announced the event’s theme in mid-December: “Pray! For such a time as this,” taken from Esther 4:14 and Luke 11:1.

“The Southern Baptist Convention needs to be a people of prayer,” Gaines said in an interview with SBC LIFE, journal of the SBC. “Only then will God send the power we need to fulfill the Great Commission.”

Phoenix has served as the annual meeting’s host city on two previous occasions, 2003 and 2011, which drew more than 7,000 and nearly 5,000 messengers, respectively.

The annual meeting’s website (sbcannualmeeting.net) provides information about hotel reservations, messenger registration, a map of the convention area and other useful links. The site will be updated as additional details are confirmed.

Hotel registration opened in October. Online reservations may be made around the clock at sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc17/hotels.

The Sheraton Grand Phoenix is the official convention hotel, located a block from the convention site.

Hotel rates, ranging from \$89 to \$165 at 16 recommended hotels, are available with hotel locations on an interactive map at sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc17/hotels.

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Rescue us from darkness

Matthew's Gospel tells us that immediately after the temptation of Jesus, He began His public ministry quoting Isaiah 9:2, saying, *"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned"* (Matthew 4:16).

Then Jesus immediately began to preach on repentance, according to the scriptures.

Darkness is an important word in the Bible. In creation, God conquered the darkness by making light. Throughout history, individual people and whole nations were described as people living in spiritual darkness.

Before we came to know Jesus Christ personally, we lived in darkness. But Paul said God *"... rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,"* (Colossians 1:13). When we followed Jesus' call to repentance, God gave us His light.

It does not take much discernment to know that spiritual darkness is dominating the United States of America. As recent evidence, review the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21. At the event and at simultaneous rallies across the country, speakers were profane in their speech and vile in their message. Profound hypocrisy characterized the events.

Performing at the Washington march, the singer Madonna told the crowd she had *"thought an awful lot about blowing up the White House"* but that it wouldn't change anything, in her opinion.

Everything about her message exuded darkness and confusion. Christian women had every reason to avoid the event and be offended by the bad characterizations of women the speakers painted.

Any responsible person would be cautious to make such careless comments.

So far, secular media has given Madonna a pass. Either they brush her off as irresponsible or they quietly agree with her.

It is obvious that Madonna, actress Ashley Judd – who also spoke at the Washington rally – and the women who

lauded them are living in the same darkness, the same spiritual blindness.

In spite of the large number of protesters in many cities, the marches appeared to be little more than a platform for the ungodly to protest the ungodliness they see in President Donald Trump's past.



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

If someone's rights were violated, the women's protests would be justified. Absent a decent reason to protest, we only see undisciplined anger and childish whining because they did not get what they wanted. What is the value in all of the noise? Has their behavior actually galvanized Trump supporters and pushed some borderline supporters firmly into his camp?

In contrast to the protests, John Piper, who is an author and retired pastor, prayed an impromptu prayer for the nation while in a small gathering of his staff at Desiring God ministry. The prayer has been widely circulated. I want to share a portion of it with you.

Piper asked the Heavenly Father, *"... that [Y]our name would be hallowed in Washington, and hallowed by Donald Trump and his family, his cabinet, the congress; that [Y]our kingdom would come, that [Y]our will would be done there."*

"To that end Lord, we ask that [Y]ou would bring Donald Trump out of darkness and into light. Give him a spirit of brokenness and humility. 'Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 18:3). 'Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3)."

"I pray that you would break his heart, give him humility, show him what it feels like to be penitent and to admit he's done wrong – to confess he was wrong, ask forgiveness from [Y]ou, and ask for forgiveness from the people that he's wounded or people that he's set a bad example for. He

needs to be given the gift of faith and humility and repentance, and I pray that [Y]ou would give it to him."

Piper prayed that God would *"... surprise even [Trump] at what is able to be brought about. Protect him from the deceptions of the Evil One at the level*

of this providential governance of your way in the world, in America now. So God, I ask that the church would not rely on government and would not rely on a Trump presidency."

"I pray for evangelical leaders not to celebrate Donald Trump's presidency with no apparent qualification, no tears, no brokenness, no sadness, that he set such an awful example for this land."

We join Piper in his prayer.

There is darkness in the land and in the hearts of many leaders – politicians, singers, actors, business people, church people – the list is endless. The darkness can be defeated. We know because that is the testimony of every person who has welcomed the grace of God, repented of sin and experienced the new birth through Jesus.

There is much work ahead for our newly elected president and Congress. In spite of the displeasure of some, they are our leaders. We must move forward, seeking the face of God every day in the spirit of Romans 13.

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention recently published their 2017 Legislative Agenda. I would like to point out some highlights of the report and invite you to pray for this ministry and the leaders they influence in our country.

The opening paragraph says the agenda is not exhaustive, but *"provides insight into the range of issues the ERLC will focus on this year."* The first category, labeled Sanctity of Human Life, itemizes six legislative initiatives. The first target is the defunding of Planned Parenthood. The summary reads, *"The*

ERLC is committed to seeing the nation's largest abortion provider (Planned Parenthood Federation of America) deprived of federal funds."

Another Sanctity of Human Life goal is to see a pro-life Supreme Court nominee presented to the Congress. Four other goals are identified with the last one, the *"Mexico City Policy,"* which President Trump signed three days after his inauguration.

The second category is religious liberty. ERLC staff will push to repeal the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Mandate, support the Conscience Protection Act, oppose the Department of Education's interpretation of Title IX, confront the sexual revolution dogma in the military and restore Russell Amendment protections.

The other categories are family and marriage, justice, and international engagement. Targeted legislation includes women in combat, the Civil Rights Uniformity Act, Criminal Justice Reform, Payday Lending, the Iraq and Syria Genocide Emergency Relief and Accountability Act, reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and fighting global antisemitism. A complete copy of the 2017 Legislative Agenda is available at ERLC.com.

Pray for the leaders who serve us in Washington, our states and our communities. Pray for those who live in darkness. Our responsibility is to be the light and to introduce them to the One who is the light of the world.

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"* (John 8:12). **BR**


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IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Bearing God's image, racial reconciliation

On Sun., Feb. 12, we will observe Racial Reconciliation Sunday, a time when we come together before the Lord and our brothers and sisters and work toward being more united in Christ.

It is heartbreaking to think about the racial injustice in our nation's history. Even today, I know that racism is an issue that continues to detrimentally affect so many. We should pray that God will pour His healing balm upon the wounds and atrocities that have been caused by racial strife – throughout the world, our nation and in our own state.

I firmly believe that racism goes directly against every aspect of the gospel – and it is sinful.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

Our Lord desires that we love each other as Jesus loved us, and that each person should “*esteem others better than himself*” (Philippians 2:3).

For this reason, each of us should look to our Heavenly Father this Sunday and ask Him to point out anything in our attitudes that could be a barrier or stumbling block to working together with those of other races. All human beings were made in God's image, and if we do not show love and respect to an individual from any ethnic group, we fail to bring glory to our Lord in this area of our life and gospel testimony. All individuals who have accepted Christ as Savior are one through the blood of Christ and in the bond of Christ. Our Lord desires that we see beyond the differences in skin color, languages, customs and cultures in our acceptance of others. It is time that we confess our sin of any discriminative prejudice that we secretly harbor toward others, even if we are this way because we were raised in a Southern culture that once gave approval.

Let us celebrate the fact that God chose to create different races and cultures! Chris Green of The Summit Church has in the past encouraged Southern Baptists to strive for oneness, rather than sameness (<http://bit.ly/RacialReconciliation>), and I hope we will all put his words into action this Sunday.

Some years ago, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) formally and publically denounced racism, saying that “we affirm the Bible's teaching that every human life is sacred, and is of equal and immeasurable worth, made in God's image, regardless of race or ethnicity (Genesis 1:27), and that, with respect to salvation through Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).” (<http://bit.ly/SBCresolution>)

I am grateful for the progress we have made in destroying racial hatred, but I am painfully aware that we still have quite a distance to go.

There is still much work to do. Will you pray for racial reconciliation this Sunday? Ask the Lord to use you personally to help advance our churches toward racial reconciliation. Pray that we will be able to see each other the way that God sees us – as image bearers of God, and as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of our ethnic differences.

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” – Genesis 1:27. **BR**

Our differences & our mission

“Jesus: to the Neighborhood and the Nations” was the cry during the 2012 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in New Orleans. That cry for missions and cooperation encapsulates the heart of Southern Baptists since the days of men like Jesse Mercer and women like Lottie Moon.

It was during that SBC when I heard seminary president Danny Akin say to a group of pastors: Within Southern Baptist life we have different theological ideas. We disagree on different issues but we agree on the gospel and the urgency of missions.

I remember saying to a friend, that's the kind of spirit and leadership we need in our churches. We want to bring people together rather than divide ourselves over non-gospel issues. The gospel makes us one, and that gospel compels us to go to reach our neighborhood and the nations for King Jesus.

But the reality is, even for redeemed sinners like us, this work of cooperation is challenging.

It requires personal sacrifices and humility; it requires a heart that is slow to be offended and quick to forgive. Cooperation toward missions is like love; it demands intentionality and patience. It can be

difficult but we can do it. We love because we have been loved by God. We go because He came. And that saving love compels us to tell others about that divine love.



EDGAR APONTE
Guest Column

That's why we seek to work with those who may disagree with us on non-gospel and non-ecclesiological issues. Together we can accomplish far more than what we can accomplish by ourselves. It can be messy, but it is glorious. It can be painful, but it is rewarding.

We Southern Baptists must keep in mind that the Christian life is a life of repentance. And a spirit of repentance should mark our interactions within our local churches and denominational activities. Let's love one another because we can. We cooperate for something that is greater than ourselves, the glory of the Triune God among the nations.

Let's work together knowing that our ministry is not only impacting the next 10 years, but the next 10,000 years and more.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Edgar Aponte, @EdgarRAponte, is the International Mission Board's vice president of mobilization.) **BR**

Keys to Dabo Swinney's success

There's so much more to the cliffhanger national championship college football game that captured the attention of millions on Jan. 9. The Clemson Tigers entered the game as the underdog and defeated the most dominant college football program in a decade, the Alabama Crimson Tide.

The victory began years ago in the towns of Pelham, Ala., and Gainesville, Ga., with two young boys whose lives would feature significant trials and adversity.

In a chapel sermon delivered by former NFL player C.L. “Shep” Shepherd earlier this season, Clemson players and coaches heard a message about adversity.

“The best teacher in life is not success,” he proclaimed. “It's adversity.”

That message rang loud and clear when Clemson was unexpectedly beaten by the unranked Pittsburgh Panthers. What should have been an easy win for the Tigers became an obstacle that proved to make them stronger.

Coach Dabo Swinney was born to a mother, Carol, who at an early age overcame polio. Her dreams of a

family and a stable home quickly diminished when her husband, Ervil Swinney, turned to alcohol to cope with his problems.

Swinney, his mom and brothers were left to fend for themselves. At times they were homeless. Those experiences instilled fierce determination in Swinney to provide for his mother, and to win back his father by making him proud.

Determination is what compelled Swinney to walk on at The University of Alabama and become a first-string wide receiver who played a role in their 1992 national championship victory.

After becoming a coach at Alabama, then losing his position in a leadership turnover, Swinney landed a job under Tommy Bowden as the assistant wide receiver's coach for Clemson in 2003.

Bowden resigned mid-season five years later, and much to the surprise of Clemson fans, Swinney was named interim head coach. After winning the program's respect, he was offered the full-time position and began rebuilding a program with great potential.

Swinney eventually reunited with his father. He calls forgiveness “One of the greatest gifts we have from God.”

Swinney's father came to faith later and turned his life around before his death to cancer in 2015. He even lived with Swinney during cancer treatments – a time of healing for both.

Swinney's wife of 23 years, Kathleen, also felt the sting of loss when her sister lost a nine-year battle to cancer.

After her sister's breast cancer diagnosis, Kathleen and her younger sister underwent genetic testing and discovered they also had the gene with links to

See Swinney page 6

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.

U.S. named on latest persecution report

BR staff

The United States ranks for the first time among the worst countries in the world at protecting religious freedom, according to a new report by International Christian Concern (ICC).

The non-denominational Christian aid and advocacy group recently released the 2016 Hall of Shame report on its website, *Persecution.org*, which highlights the U.S., along with Russia and Mexico, in a “New and Noteworthy” category of nations where religious liberties are declining.

The document classifies the world’s 12 “worst persecutors” under three headings: “Worst of the Worst,” which includes countries like Syria and North Korea; “Core Countries,” a category for regular abusers of religious freedom such as China, India and Saudi Arabia; and the “New and Noteworthy” category for significant but less dangerous offenders.

The ICC said the U.S., Russia and Mexico are “not

anywhere near the same level of persecution” as some other countries, but recent events “indicate declining religious freedom and are cause for alarm.”

Examples of persecution in the U.S. included media backlash against Christians for creating an “anti-LGBTQ atmosphere” after a Muslim-American who claimed allegiance to the Islamic State killed 49 people and injured many more in an attack on a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla. ICC also highlighted various examples of Christians and other religious people being “marginalized through the law.”

The report detailed, “From the case of a Christian football coach suspended for praying at the 50-yard line, to Christian business owners forced to pay a \$135,000 fine for declining to bake a cake for a same-sex wedding, the number of troubling cases directed toward Christians has exploded.”

Russia’s 2016 Yarovaya Law was cited as the principal religious liberty threat in the former Soviet Union. The legislation expands counter-terrorism measures against

Islamic extremism but has the effect of placing “credible restrictions” on Christians and other religious people not affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Mexico’s infringements included non-enforcement of religious liberty protections in rural areas where residents have been coerced by violence and others means to participate in village ceremonies considered by Christians to be pagan or even satanic.

Iraq and Syria were listed as some of the worst nations in the world for severe religious persecution.

“Christianity in Iraq and Syria is on the verge of extinction as a result of atrocities by [the Islamic State], other militant Islamic groups and a widespread increase in radical Islamic thought,” the report said.

Many Christians have been taken hostage or killed, but the “vast majority” fled their countries as refugees, according to the report.

View the full document here: persecution.org/persecutionnl/2017-01/ICC%202016%20Hall%20of%20Shame%20Report.pdf. **BR**

Walker joins Lankford as prayer caucus leader

Baptist Press

Another Southern Baptist has stepped up to provide leadership for the Congressional Prayer Caucus.

Rep. Mark Walker, R.-N.C., will be the new House of Representatives co-chairman of the caucus; it was announced Jan. 9. Sen. James Lankford, R.-Okla., the other co-chairman of the prayer caucus, and former Rep. Randy Forbes, R.-Va., made the announcement. All three are members of Southern Baptist churches.

Forbes, a seven-term congressman, founded the caucus in 2005 to help protect the right of people to exercise their religious belief and pray freely. The caucus had more than 90 members in the last congressional session. Walker is replacing Forbes, who lost in the Republican primary last year in his bid for re-election.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, expressed his gratitude for the leadership Forbes and Lankford have provided to the Congressional Prayer Caucus.

“I’m overjoyed to see Congressman Forbes’ tireless work in praying and speaking on religious freedom issues will be continued by the new leadership of Congressman Mark Walker,” Moore said in a written statement. “I’m honored to call Congressman Walker a friend who represents Southern Baptists and all people of faith with excellence, integrity and skill in the United States Congress.

“This important caucus is raising awareness of the dire state of religious freedom around the world.”

The caucus intends to advocate this year for religious liberty on such issues as health-care conscience protections, free-

dom for religious schools and employers’ hiring rights, according to a release from Lankford’s office.

Walker gained election to the House in 2014 after serving Southern Baptist churches for about 15 years in such roles as executive pastor, as well as lead pastor of a church plant. He most recently was associate pastor of music and worship at Lawndale Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C.

The second-term congressman said in the release he looks forward to “fighting to protect one of the foundations of our First Amendment” as the caucus’ co-chairman.

“Though politics can be divisive at times, prayer should be a uniting force for Congress and for our nation,” Walker said.

Forbes said in the release, “Freedom of conscience is part of who we are as a nation, and we must preserve this fundamental freedom in our nation. That’s why I founded the Prayer Caucus. Today, the strength and size of the Caucus is a testament to the importance of protecting and preserving our nation’s Judeo-Christian heritage.”

Lankford – the director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma’s Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center for 13 years before his 2010 election to the House – welcomed Walker as co-chairman and expressed his gratitude for Forbes.

“America is stronger because of his commitment to creating this Caucus, and being a consistent champion for religious freedom,” Lankford said in the release.

“Our nation is a diverse country that values the freedom to have faith or have no faith at all. It is vitally important that Congress respects these values in public



Rep. Mark Walker, left, will join Sen. James Lankford as co-chair of the Congressional Prayer Caucus. (Provided photo)

policy, as well as culture.”

In 2015, Lankford became the first member of the Senate to join the caucus. He won a special election in 2014 to complete a Senate term and was elected to a full term in 2016.

During its first 11 years, the Congressional Prayer Caucus’ efforts have included: helping pass a bill to confirm “In God We Trust” as the national motto; successfully working to protect religious

expression by military service members; defending the rights of student religious ministries at secular universities; and gaining reversal of a policy that prevented people from distributing religious material during visits to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Walker is also the new chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a caucus for conservative House GOP members. **BR**

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Report: Abortion rate hits all-time low

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

The abortion rate in the United States declined to an all-time low, while the number of lethal procedures dropped below a million for the first time since 1975, according to a new report.

The Guttmacher Institute reported Jan. 17 the rate fell to 14.6 abortions per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years old in 2014, which is a decline of 14 percent since its most recent survey in 2011. In its census of all known abortion providers in the country, Guttmacher found abortions totaled 958,700 in 2013 and 926,190 in 2014.

The abortion rate reached its zenith at 29.3 in 1980 and '81, and the total number of abortions peaked at more than 1.6 million in 1990, according to Guttmacher.

Pro-life advocates welcomed the report and pointed to the work of pro-life citizens and legislators as a reason for the dramatic decline in abortions and their rate. "The falling abortion number is due to the ceaseless advocacy and ministry of the pro-life community in neighborhoods all around this country," said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). "The pro-life movement advances by calling out to consciences with

the truth of what unborn human life is and matching that call with real ministry to women in crisis. While a lower rate is undoubtedly good news, the violent taking of the life of even one unborn child ought to cause us to weep and redouble our efforts to protect every human life and contend against the predatory abortion industry."

Americans United for Life (AUL), the country's leader in helping state legislators pass pro-life laws, cited such policies, as well as technology, in explaining the trend.

"Research has shown that life-affirming laws do have an impact on lowering the number of abortions, and with all the life-affirming laws passed since 2010, we have a reason to celebrate the number of lives saved and women protected as legislators worked to defend them from a predatory and rarely accountable abortion industry," AUL Acting President Clark Forsythe said in a written statement. "But another factor in lower[ing] the number of abortions is the power of beautiful pictures of life inside the womb, through ultrasound," he said. "Such pictures are worth more than a thousand words when it comes to helping people understand whose lives are on the line."

In 2016, 43 states considered more than 360 abortion-related measures, according to AUL's annual report released Jan. 10. The bills introduced included such measures as bans on government funding of abortion, restrictions on late-term abortions, ultrasound requirements and prohibitions on abortions based on sex, race or genetic abnormality.

The Guttmacher Institute, which is affiliated with the abortion rights movement, suggested the improved use of contraceptives attributed to the falling rate and total, but it also acknowledged state regulations and the declining number of abortion clinics may have contributed.

"Abortion restrictions and clinic closures mean that patients may need to travel greater distances to access services," said Rachel Jones, lead author of the study, in a written release. "The majority of abortion patients – 75% – are poor or low-income, and nearly two-thirds are already parents. It can be very difficult for them to arrange for time off from work, transportation and child care. While many find ways to access care despite these obstacles, some of the abortion rate decline is likely attributable to women who were prevented from accessing needed services."

The good news for pro-lifers came only five days before the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* – the Supreme Court's Jan. 22, 1973, decision that legalized abortion nationwide – and the observance of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on the Southern Baptist Convention calendar.

It also arrived shortly before the second annual Evangelicals for Life conference Jan. 26-28 in Washington, D.C. (See more about the conference and its speakers on page 7.) Conference attendees will be able to participate in the Jan. 27 March for Life.

The Guttmacher report also included the following information:

- Nearly half – 45 percent – of all abortions in the first nine weeks of gestation were performed using pills, and the percentage of such nonhospital abortions increased from 24 percent in 2011 to 31 percent in 2014.
- The abortion rate declined between 2011 and 2014 in all but six states and the District of Columbia.
- Ninety percent of all U.S. counties in 2014 contained no abortion clinic.
- Five states – Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming – had only one abortion clinic each in 2014.
- The number of abortion clinics fell by 17 percent from 2011 to 2014
- Abortion clinics made up 16 percent of all abortion facilities in 2014 but provided 59 percent of all abortions.

The Guttmacher Institute acknowledged its report has limitations. For instance, it reported only 58 percent of facilities it believes provided abortions in 2014 responded to the survey. Guttmacher used state health department information for 20 percent of facilities and made estimates on another 17 percent.

While the Guttmacher report is based partly on estimates, it covers all 50 states. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which also reported a decline in abortions in its December announcement, does not require states to provide information on abortions. Three states – California, Maryland and New Hampshire – did not provide data to the CDC. Forsythe said the country needs "a more complete picture of the impact of abortion on women, through verifiable tracking."

Visit guttmacher.org/journals/psrh/2017/01/abortion-incidence-and-service-availability-united-states-2014. **BR**

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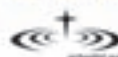
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Swinney

Continued from page 3

the disease. Realizing this gave her a 90 percent chance of developing breast cancer, Kathleen made the difficult decision to endure a hysterectomy and double mastectomy.

Adversity was not only limited to the coach and his family, but also Clemson’s five-star quarterback, Deshaun Watson. Born the eldest son of a single mom, Watson took on many responsibilities. It was Habitat for Humanity and his mother’s hard work that provided a home for the family of five. It also provided escape from crime and drugs.

Responsibilities increased for Watson when his mother was diagnosed with tongue cancer during his sophomore year in high school.

“I was scared,” Watson recalls.

His mother’s fight inspired Watson to do the same in his football career. Known for being calm under fire, Watson’s motivation made him a finalist for the Heisman Trophy two times, winner of the Davey O’Brien Quarterback Award twice and the recipient of the 2016 Bobby Bowden Award.

What Swinney lacked in childhood, he was determined to provide for his family. As a devoted husband and father, his family usually travels with the team, and he involves his sons as game score trackers. But that family atmosphere also extends to how he treats coaching staff and players.

The team is infused with a family-focus making everyone feel part of the team, treated with respect and given high expectations. The team usually watches an inspiring movie together the night before a game.

Swinney expects players to attend class, make an effort and be good citizens. Each staff member has a picture of their family outside their door.

Through family focus, Swinney provides players with the support and role models many never had.

Even still, expectations are high. And don’t be late for any meeting or team meal or you’d better have a good excuse. Former players are welcomed back to visit the family they established while there. It’s just a part of Swinney’s “all in” philosophy.

In a press conference after the Nation-

al Championship victory, Dabo said, “It’s been an unbelievable night. All of our teams get a piece of this trophy.”

He makes it a priority to train players to be successful in all aspects of their lives – work, community service and their families.

Swinney, a committed local church member, is unashamed of his commitment to Christ, which he made through the influence of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in high school.

In 2014, Swinney’s faith was challenged by the Freedom From Religion foundation, but he held firm. As a man of conviction he said, “I try to be a good example to others and to live my life according to my faith.”

“Coaching,” he said, “Was God’s calling for me.”

Watson came to faith in Christ in the ninth grade – a decision that changed his path. Both coach and quarterback gave credit where credit is due on national television in the first moments after winning the title.

Speechless at first, Watson said, “It was what God wanted. It’s far bigger than us.”

Swinney’s words echoed that sentiment, “Only God,” he said, “Can take a guy like me ... I’m thankful to the good Lord.”

Alabama’s tenacious defense tried everything in their power to stop Watson, but his words in the huddle will never be forgotten.

“Don’t panic,” he said, “We were built for moments like these. ... Let’s be legendary.”

Clemson scored 21 points in the last quarter as part of a memorable comeback.

The winning touchdown was scored by the five-star quarterback’s pass to a walk-on wide receiver, Hunter Renfrow, who had overcome his own obstacles. Renfrow entered Clemson’s program at 5’11” and 155 pounds, making him vulnerable to a “runt” mentality.

That play gained Renfrow hero status in the eyes of fans, not to mention the cover of Sports Illustrated. He also acknowledged God in his comments after the game.

After thanking God, Swinney thanked his mom, calling her “a special lady,”

his wife – “My rock who has stood by me even when I didn’t have a car or was living at a friend’s house” – and his three sons.

Swinney even mentioned his late father: “I know he is here.”

Shep’s inspiring message earlier in the season was God’s way of preparing this team for a greater ultimate victory – one in which He would be glorified.

My father, Harry Dent, who was transformed from a politician to God’s kingdom strategist always gave this example in encouraging Christians to be salt and light in this world:

“Your pastor is the coach and you are the team. As you play the game of life, remember that folks around you in the stadium are watching every play you make. In this way, you will be His salt and His light in a darkening world.”

Never has that been truer than Jan. 9. And the Freedom From Religion Foundation is eating crow as God’s message through His messengers is reaching out to a world enamored by sports. It’s a message of hope for all who face adversity.

God can make a difference in our lives, and His creation of the family is an important building block. Adversity is a powerful teacher that can develop you into what God created you to be.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Ginny Dent Brant is a writer and speaker. Her book about her spiritual journey with her father, Harry S. Dent Sr., Finding True Freedom: From the White House to the World, was released in 2010. She is a former trustee of the International Mission Board. She and her husband, Alton, live in Clemson/Seneca, S.C. More info at ginnybrant.com.)

WHY PASTORS AND CHURCHES OFTEN DON'T GET ALONG

“If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now...” (Moses in Numbers 11:15).

When pastors are terminated from their churches, sometimes it’s easy to see what went wrong and other times no one knows exactly what happened.

But one thing is for sure, church leaders and pastors usually blame each other for the collapse.

It seems like it would take something sizeable to fire your spiritual leader, like moral failure or unethical or illegal behavior. Not even close.

Some of the reasons church leaders give for terminating a pastor include: he’s not a good preacher, he has a big ego and won’t listen and he never shows up when people are in the hospital.

Pastors frequently say they don’t know what happened. They may say things like the church never got over their last pastor. One group in the church was behind me, but another never liked me. I could never please these people no matter what I did.

Admittedly, all these reasons contain some truth, but none of them are the real truth.

What is the real truth? Why do people get so angry at pastors, enough

to want to get rid of him? Well, it seems that churches and pastors often don’t get along because he doesn’t make them happy. That’s right. He doesn’t make them happy.

They thought he could fix things in their lives and in their church. He couldn’t. When he doesn’t arrive at the hospital to visit, he doesn’t make them happy. When his preaching hits too close to home, or never hits home, he doesn’t make them happy.

When he changes things too soon, he doesn’t make them happy.

You get the idea. They chose him, and now they’re disappointed. However, it’s not a new story.

Moses sometimes made the Israelites very angry, especially over water and food. Once he even begged God to kill him if things were going to stay as they were. But Moses knew that keeping people happy wasn’t the same as them having miraculous encounters with God.

Moses knew God was the only one who could meet their needs. Good pastors know that and help people understand it, too.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Eddie Thompson is a pastoral ministries consultant for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact him at ethompson@ncbaptist.org or (800) 395-5102, ext. 5644.)



EDDIE THOMPSON

Christian persecution increases; North Korea still No. 1

Baptist Press

North Korea ranks as the most dangerous country for Christians for the 16th consecutive time after a year in which the persecution of followers of Jesus continued to rise, according to a new report. Release of the annual World

Watch List from Open Doors USA came as religious freedom advocates call for President-elect Donald Trump to act in the first 100 days of his administration to protect Christians and other people of faith overseas. About 215 million Christians underwent “high, very high or extreme persecution” last year. **BR**

Pro-life evangelicals to gather in nation's capital

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) partnered with Focus on the Family to host their second annual Evangelicals for Life Conference Jan. 26-28 in conjunction with the 2017 March for Life in Washington D.C.

The conference features more than 50 speakers and panelists, including ERLC President Russell Moore; Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family; Matt Chandler, teaching pastor of The Village Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and president of church planting network Acts 29; Jennifer Marshall, vice president of The Heritage Foundation; and many more.

Speaker and panel session topics include legislative and judicial issues, human trafficking, foster care, adoption, crisis pregnancy ministry, pro-life church leadership and others.

The event schedule reserves a block of time for attendees to participate in the 44th Annual March for Life on Jan. 27. Organizers encourage participants to join tens of thousands of pro-life

advocates for a rally near the Washington Monument at noon, followed by a march along the National Mall to the steps of the United States Supreme Court.

To offer a snapshot of the conference, the *Biblical Recorder* interviewed event speaker John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. Below is the lightly edited transcript.

Q: Why does the Colson Center exist?

A: To help Christians think clearly about culture and act in a way that helps to restore the culture. This is one of the legacies of Chuck Colson. After spending so many years in prison, [the former special counsel to President Richard Nixon] wanted to start focusing on what was happening in the culture that was creating an alarming spike in the prison population. We carry on that part of his legacy, helping to bring clarity to the church on what's happening in the culture through the lens of a Christian worldview.

Q: The title of your talk at the 2017 Evangelicals for Life conference

is “Respecting human dignity through civil discourse.” When life or death issues like abortion and euthanasia are part of the current cultural conversation, is civility really that important?

A: The reason we care about these issues is because of what we believe to be true. The reason we ought to be civil is because of what we believe to be true. In other words, it's not a strategy, it is a requirement because every person we meet is made in the image and likeness of God.

That's not a negotiable fact in the Christian worldview. It's central. It's one of the central questions of any worldview – “Who are we? What is a human person?”

Every single person, as C.S. Lewis observed, is someone eternal who reflects the image of God, who bears inherent

dignity of being an image bearer. So, civility is not an option. It's not a strategy.

We need to understand, too, that when you start talking about the darker cultural moments throughout church history, and even some of the issues we're dealing with

today, you can be as civil as you want and it's not going to work. There are few people more civil than Baronelle Stutzman, the florist grandmother [who was sued for refusing to make floral arrangements for a same-sex wedding], and yet she's still called a bigot, intolerant and hateful.

Civility doesn't win the day. You're civil because of what is true about human people.

Q: Why do you think people are tempted to become uncivil in public discourse?

A: The mediums of communication we use lend themselves to incivility, or either a lack of caring about civility. For example, Twitter allows us to be anonymous. We feel like we're talking to a handle instead of a real person. We say things on social media that we would never say to someone's face. It's mainly because of that illusion of anonymity. So, at some level, it's the mechanics of what we use.

Another thing is that the cultural conversation has lacked civility for so long, we think it's the rules of the game. We're not thinking differently on how to engage the public square.

The public square is an uncivil place in many ways. That's why the proverb, “A soft answer turns away wrath,” is one of the most familiar yet neglected. I mean, who does that? “A soft answer” – that's a revolutionary thing to say.

In reality, most of what we do is respond with the same attitude as the person who is challenging us. The idea of offering a soft answer doesn't even occur to us many times because of our human nature.

We're now in a culture-wide discourse that lacks civility.

The third thing is understanding that we're not just dealing with disagreements about specifics. We're dealing with disagreements about universals. We're not just talking about the color of a building's paint job. We're talking about the building's foundation, to use that metaphor.

When we disagree on who gets into which bathroom or the definition of marriage, these are surface level indications that we're disagreeing on the most important questions in human history – questions about the meaning of life, the purpose of our existence, morality and norms. These aren't just small disagreements.

The public discourse right now is divided by opinions on the most important questions of any culture. We're dealing with very deep rifts. And we're dealing with them in a culture in which the discourse has already gotten out of hand, and we're using tools that are inadequate to treat people well. What could possibly go wrong?

Q: Can you offer any practical tips on how to sustain civil discourse when we disagree passionately with someone over pro-life issues?

A: We don't want to pretend like those deep rifts don't exist. The answer is not just, “Well, be nice.” We're dealing with issues in which there is an awful lot at stake, including human destiny, human value, dignity and so on. To pretend like there is really no disagreement is foolish.

We need to be clear. The level of clarity that we need is as great as ever. Part of that clarity, then, is understanding the difference between those things that are political divides and those that are theological essentials.



In an age in which the discourse has become so uncivil and politically divisive, it's kind of all-or-nothing. There's no room for people who agree on certain things but not on the whole package – the whole Republican package or Democratic package. Christians need to be clearer than that.

We can't just go down the party line because that's where the platform is. We need to have the ability to discern and distinguish between those things that are essential and those that aren't.

The other thing is there's just no substitute for relational capital. If you tend to know someone and know the names of their children, you're probably less apt to send out a tweet that is uncivil.

We need to get past the devices that separate us into places where we can actually look each other in the eyeball and know each other's name and think about what's best for each other.

In our culture, there's not always the opportunity to get to know people with whom you deeply disagree. We need to be razor sharp and laser clear on this idea that every single person is made in the image and likeness of God.

Now is the time for clarity, courage and conviction – and that should lead us to compassion. We've got to have it now, because the issues that we're debating are so important. **BR**

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for a free simulcast.**

LifeWay releases new Christian Standard Bible

By **AARON EARLS** | LifeWay

LifeWay Christian Resources released its newly revised Bible translation recently. The full text of the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) is available at CSBible.com, with print versions releasing in early March.

As a revision of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), the CSB balances linguistic precision to the original languages and readability in contemporary English.

“We believe this is a translation that combines accuracy and readability without compromise,” said Trevin Wax, Bible and reference publisher at B&H Publishing Group, part of LifeWay Christian Resources.

Independent research from the Global Bible Initiative reported the CSB had the best combination of adherence to the original text and readability for a modern audience.

“With the CSB, Bible readers and teachers can rest

assured they have a translation that communicates ancient truths to a contemporary audience as faithfully and clearly as possible,” Wax said.

More than 100 Bible scholars from 17 denominations translated the HCSB from the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

The CSB revision and oversight committee, a team of top biblical scholars, incorporated advances in biblical scholarship since the original translation, as well as input from Bible scholars, pastors and readers to provide an accurate and readable translation.

“This team has delivered a translation that hits the sweet spot between fidelity and readability,” Wax said.

Tom Schreiner, professor of New Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and David Allen, dean and professor of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, co-chaired the multi-denominational committee.

LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer said he was excited about the release of the CSB.



**CHRISTIAN
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Faithful and True

Danny Akin reminds students to ‘be doers of the Word’

By **HARPER MCKAY** | SEBTS

Faculty and staff of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) and The College at Southeastern welcomed students to a new spring semester at the Jan. 19 convocation service. President Danny Akin delivered the convocation address, speaking from Matthew 7 about obedience to God’s Word.

“Every one of us in this room today has a source of authority that shapes our worldview,” said Akin, adding that these sources of authority come from four main categories, including reason, experience, tradition and revelation.

“Revelation is that which affirms that I think the way I think because God’s word says so,” he said. “This is the only reliable source of authority and the only place we gain knowledge and wisdom.”

Akin offered his definition of wisdom as the ability to look at life as God sees life and then to respond accordingly.

Turning to the familiar parable of the house on the sand in Matthew 7, Akin warned against amassing knowledge of God’s word without applying it to one’s life.

“It is not enough just to hear the Word, just to study the Word,” he said. “If all you are is a collector of knowledge, you are a fool.”

Fitting for the beginning of a semester, Akin told students to keep in mind they could earn all the degrees in seminary and still be far away from God.

“On the surface initially, there doesn’t seem to be any difference between the two men who built the houses,” he said. “What then is the difference? Their foundation and obedience to the word.”

In his final encouragements, Akin added, “I plead with you my brothers and sisters, as you enter into your studies, don’t just be a hearer of the word. Be a hearer and a doer, and let the Lord bless you in your work.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Harper McKay is a news and information specialist at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.) **BR**



“It is not enough just to hear the Word, just to study the Word,” said Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, to students at the convocation service Jan. 19. “If all you are is a collector of knowledge, you are a fool.” (SEBTS photo)

“We know millions of pastors, teachers and Bible readers have a commitment to God’s Word. At LifeWay, we share that commitment.

“Because God’s Word is faithful and true, we wanted to provide a translation that is faithful to the original

See Bible page 11



SBC Continued from page 1

Housing may be reserved at special convention rates through May 17.

Organizers for the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference have been busy as well.

Attendees to last year’s conference voted to chart a new course when they elected as president Dave Miller, pastor of Southern Hills Baptist Church in Sioux City, Iowa.

Miller ran on a platform that promised to feature an ethnically diverse lineup of preachers from “average-size” churches. Baptist Press reported in late December that six Anglo, three African Americans, one Jamaican American, a Cuban American and an Asian American are scheduled to preach at the June 11-12 event.

The preaching roster will also teach passage-by-passage through the book of Philippians, breaking from the conference norm of focusing on a topic or theme.

Fellow pastors aided Miller in developing the platform through a collective blog to which he contributes, SBCVoices.com. He also credited other pastors, SBC entities and the Caskey Center for Church Excellence at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with helping to coordinate the logistics for the event.

Well-known Christian artists and songwriters Keith and Kristyn Getty will lead worship for the event, according to an announcement at SBC Voices.

For more information visit the pastors’ conference website at sbpc.net.

The North American Mission’s Board’s yearly outreach event is set to feature a change to its regular programming too. Crossover Arizona 2017 has forged a partnership with Southern California pastor Greg Laurie’s evangelistic Harvest America crusade.

The Crossover crusade, which will include a gospel message by Laurie and music from top-name Christian artists, is set to be simulcast nationally just before the SBC annual meeting.

Visit namb.net/crossover. **BR**

God & inaugurations: Baptists continue tradition

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

The participation of at least five Southern Baptist pastors in inaugural activities for President Donald Trump continues a tradition of prayer, scripture and references to God surrounding presidential inaugurations dating back to George Washington.

Dallas pastor Robert Jeffress preached Jan. 20 at a private worship service for the families of Trump and Vice President Mike Pence at St. John's Church near the White House. The service is a pre-inauguration tradition dating back to the 1933 inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt, according to the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

A Jan. 21 National Prayer Service at the National Cathedral in Washington featured Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd, Texas pastors Jack Graham and Ramiro Peña and California pastor David Jeremiah. The National Prayer Service tradition also dates to at least 1933, according to a press release from the Presidential Inaugural Committee.

The inauguration ceremony itself featured prayers, a scripture reading by evangelist Franklin Graham, two Bibles used for Trump's oath of office and a continuation of the tradition of presidents' invoking God in their inaugural addresses.

"This is a time of change for America and the world," pastor Jack Graham said in a statement. "At moments, it has felt as if so much hangs in the balance. Yet, I believe we can approach this new era of our nation's history with hope, for one thing hasn't changed – we remain 'One Nation Under God.'"

Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, preached from the biblical book of Nehemiah. His sermon was titled "When God Chooses a Leader," according to Jeffress' Twitter account.

"I told you that you would be the 45th president of the United States long before the first primary vote," Jeffress told Trump in the sermon according to a tweet by Trump social media and senior advisor Dan Scavino.

At the National Prayer Service, Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, led a prayer "for those who serve," according to the Inaugural Committee. Peña, pastor of Christ the King Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, led in The Lord's Prayer. Scripture readings were presented by Floyd, former Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, and Jeremiah, pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, Calif.

Jeffress, Jack Graham, Floyd and



President Donald Trump reportedly used two Bibles during his inauguration Jan. 20. (C-SPAN screen capture)

Jeremiah all serve on Trump's 25-member Evangelical Executive Advisory Board.

Franklin Graham's appearance at the inauguration was the sixth at a presidential inauguration by either Graham or his father, evangelist Billy Graham, according to media reports. Richard Nixon's 1969 inauguration was the first time Billy Graham offered an inaugural prayer.

Trump set a record with six total invocations and benedictions, inauguration historian Jim Bendat told Baptist Press in an email.

The tradition of prayers at presidential inaugurations dates back to Franklin Roosevelt, *The Hill* reported.

To take his oath of office, Trump placed his hand on two Bibles: one used by Abraham Lincoln in 1861 and again by President Obama at both of his inaugurations, and another given to Trump by his mother in 1955.

Though the tradition of using a Bible for the oath of office is not a legal requirement, the custom dates back to Washington's first inauguration in 1789, Bendat wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed. Washington's Bible was used by four subsequent presidents: Warren Harding, Dwight Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush.

"Records from 1793, 1797 and most of the first half of the 19th century are silent on whether a Bible was used, and in 1825, John Quincy Adams placed his hand on a book of constitutional law instead," Bendat wrote.

Private inaugural ceremonies with no Bible, Bendat stated, were conducted for Rutherford Hays (1877), Chester Arthur (1881), Theodore Roosevelt (1901), Calvin

Coolidge (1923) and Obama in 2009 after Chief Justice John Roberts incorrectly recited the oath of office during the public ceremony.

The Museum of the Bible, set to open in Washington later this year, posted a series of videos on social media about Bibles used by various presidents for the oath. Among the historical facts noted:

- Harry Truman took his oaths in 1945 and 1949 on a Bible opened to The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. In 1949, he also used a copy of the Gutenberg Bible opened to the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17.

- Lyndon Johnson took his 1965 oath on a Bible given to him by his mother, opened to 2 Chronicles 1:10. Johnson was the first president whose wife held the Bible during his oath.

- Carter took his 1977 oath with Washington's Bible and a Bible given to Carter by his mother, opened to Micah 6:8.

- Ronald Reagan took his 1981 and 1985 oaths on his mother's King James Bible opened to 2 Chronicles 7:14.

With Trump's mentions of God in his inaugural address, including a quotation



Evangelist Franklin Graham read from 1 Timothy 1 and 2 at President Donald Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration. (Fox News screen capture)

of Psalm 133:1, every U.S. president to be inaugurated has referenced prayer or the Bible in his inaugural address.

Though some counts of divine references in inaugural addresses exclude Hays and Theodore Roosevelt – for example, a 2013 assessment by National Public Radio – Hays referenced "guidance of that Divine Hand" in 1877 and Roosevelt referenced "gratitude to the Giver of Good" in 1905. **BR**

Congress majority Christian but less Protestant

Baptist Press

Congress has remained majority Christian and Protestant for as long as the Pew Research Center has been tracking data, but the number of Protestants has declined by nearly 20 percentage points.

Since Pew began tracking religion in 1961 during the 87th Congress, the

body has declined from 95 percent to 91 percent Christian. Protestants, while still maintaining a majority, have declined from 75 percent in 1961 to 56 percent today, Pew announced. The 72 Baptist Congressional members comprise 13.5 percent of the body, trailing the 15 percent of U.S. adults that are Baptist, as well as the 14.8 percent of Baptists in the 114th Congress of 2015-2016. **BR**

ERLC names 73-member Leadership Council

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) announced Jan. 19 its 73-member Leadership Council for 2017.

The council's 73 pastors and leaders receive training from the ERLC through events and conference calls to help them and their churches apply the gospel of Jesus to all areas of life. Council members also provide counsel to commission staff and sometimes write for the ERLC's website.

The ERLC inaugurated the council in 2014, seven months after Russell Moore became president. Each January, the commission unveils a new list of council members, who typically serve for one year.

"Churches around the country are on the front lines of engaging some of the most difficult cultural and societal questions imaginable, ones that our parents and grandparents often never had to consider," Moore said in a written release announcing the latest council members.

"With our Leadership Council, I'm thrilled to be able to partner with a new group of leaders from around the country who are eager to address these issues with a gospel focus both in the life of their churches and in the public square," Moore said.

Among the members of this year's Leadership Council, which includes women for the first time, are:

- H.B. Charles, pastor-teacher of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church of Jacksonville and Orange Park, Fla.
- James Merritt, lead pastor of Cross Pointe Church in the north metro Atlanta area and former president of

the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

- Jen Wilkin, author and Bible teacher, member of The Village Church in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.
- Byron Day, senior pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Laurel, Md., and president of the National African American Fellowship of the SBC.
- Matt Chandler, lead pastor of teaching at The Village Church in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.
- Clint Pressley, senior pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.
- Kevin Smith, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.
- Jimmy Scroggins, lead pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Fla.
- Bart Barber, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmersville, Texas.
- Willy Rice, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Fla., and a former president of the SBC Pastors' Conference.

Other North Carolina pastors among the leaders of this year's Leadership Council are Andy Davis, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Durham; Matt Kendrick,

next generation pastor of Biltmore Church, Asheville; and Jeff Long, senior pastor of Parkwood Baptist Church, Gastonia.

In written comments provided by the ERLC, Merritt said he is part of the Leadership Council because of his deep interest "in the political and social issues which have spiritual ramifications for the church and culture today" and his "confidence in the ERLC leadership in its engagement with these issues."

Day said, "The current cultural climate in America demands a Christian worldview response," adding the ERLC "is essential to equipping the followers of Jesus to stand in grace and godliness in an ungodly society."

Wilkin said she is "looking forward to learning from the other members and gaining exposure to new ideas."

For Pressley, "There is not another organization, like the ERLC, that helps evangelical Christians think through the pressing issues with a genuinely Christian framework. To be a small part of such a great organization is a rare privilege."

The entire list of council members is available at erlc.com/about/leadership-council. **BR**

Judge in mosque case: Baptist church treated 'better'

Baptist Press

A federal judge's ruling that a New Jersey Islamic society faced unlawful religious discrimination has noted local Baptists were treated "differently and better" under similar circumstances. U.S. district judge Michael Shipp ruled Dec. 31 that the Planning

Board of Bernards Township, N.J., violated federal law when it required the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge, N.J. (ISBR), to include more than twice as much parking in its site plan for a proposed mosque as it required for local Christian and Jewish houses of worship. The ruling came in a case that stirred discussion among Southern Baptists last year. **BR**

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Bible

Continued from page 8

text, while being highly readable,” Rainer said. “I believe the CSB will engage more people in reading and sharing God’s Word.”

Already, the CSB has been endorsed by numerous pastors including Tony Evans, Robby Gallaty, Eric Mason and Derwin Gray, as well as Bible teachers Kelly Minter, Lisa Harper and the team behind the popular women’s Bible study, She Reads Truth.

For Wax, who also serves as a teaching pastor, the CSB makes an easy transition from the pastor’s study to the pulpit. “As a pastor, I’ve grown more confident in the CSB’s accuracy and precision,” he said. “It is a text I can use for sermon preparation and serious Bible study.”

He also believes the new revision makes discipleship and evangelism easier. “Because it is clear and easy to read, I can share it with people who are new to the Word of God as well as those who are already regular Bible readers.”

A full version of the CSB is available at *Read.CSBible.com*. Beginning this month, the translation will be available through other Bible apps and websites. CSB Bibles will be available at LifeWay Stores in March.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Aaron Earls is a writer at LifeWay Christian Resources.) **BR**

Siblings combine for 140 years of praise music

By MIKE CRESWELL | BSC Communications

Tempted to skip choir practice? Maybe you should think about Mallory Carrick and his sister, Katy Palmer.

Carrick led the choir at Mountain View Baptist Church near Lexington from about 1945 to just a couple of years ago – about 73 years. He’s now 88 years old.

His sister, Katy Palmer, has played piano and organ at Mountain View for about 67 years. She’s now 82 years old, still playing on Sundays.

Between them, that’s 140 years of commitment to praising God through music nearly every Sunday.

Music wasn’t all they had done in their church. “They’ve done everything – Vacation Bible School, kids ministry, deacon, missions. Their lives have existed in and around the church. We just love them. They are precious people,” said Tim Miller, Mountain View pastor who’s a relative newcomer with his 11 years of service there.

That precious label is seconded by Mountain View member Bonnie Carrick, a distant cousin of Mallory and Katy through her husband.

“Mallory and Katy have always been available for everything – weddings or funerals. They would take time off work when needed. Mallory would always put his heart into whatever music he chose, and he would come up with appropriate music to sing. His love for missions has been overwhelming,” she said.

Besides music, Katy has always loved missions, whether overseas or home, Carrick said. “They’re always there for whatever.” Carrick has been a member of Mountain View for 56 years, and yes, Mallory and Katy were already serving when she joined the church.

Larry Phillips agrees with Carrick. He got to know Mallory and Katy between 1969-1973 as he served as pastor of Mountain

View, his first pastorate. “I have known and observed Mallory and Katy for some 47 years. Since leaving Mountain View in the summer of 1973, we have maintained a close, personal relationship with the folks there. So much of who I am is what I learned from Mallory and Katy over these years. I will always cherish and value their touch upon my life and ministry,” he said.

It was Katy who encouraged Phillips to have a world missions conference at the church, and a Southern Baptist missionary from Africa wound up staying a week in the Phillips’ home. Phillips said that visit was the beginning of a missions journey for him and his wife, Kathy.

After he served at one other North Carolina church, they went on to serve as Southern Baptist missionaries in Peru for 20 years. Of late, Phillips uses the Spanish he learned in Peru to serve as immigrant ministries strategist for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina; he has ministered with the state’s Spanish speakers in several capacities for the convention over the years.

Phillips recalled how Mallory was able to “calm and encourage” his young and inexperienced pastor’s heart. “I knew him at his sock factory in Denton, at the local ball field, in his home, in the community, at the beach. In all those times and places, he has always been himself – one of the few Christian statesmen we still have with us,” he said.

Katy Palmer said it was in 1949 that Mountain View’s previous pianist had to quit for maternity leave. “So I started playing then,” she recalled. “I’d hate to hear what it sounded like,” she said with a grin.

She took piano lessons only during during grades five through seven. After that, it was mostly practice that honed her skills. She took on playing the organ after one was given to the church around 1970.

See Siblings page 16

Ruling

Continued from page 1

transgender rights. Officials with the Departments of Education and Justice told public school districts, as well as colleges and universities, to allow transgender students to use the restrooms and locker rooms of their gender identity. The guidance was not legally binding, but it implied noncompliance could result in the loss of federal aid.

The high court has said it will rule on two issues in the case – whether the Obama administration’s interpretation that protections against sex discrimination include gender identity is valid and whether a federal agency letter to that effect should be granted deference by the courts.

The Department of Education said in a letter last January, “When a school elects to separate or treat students differently on the basis of sex ... a school generally must treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity.” In its opinion, the Fourth Circuit panel said the department’s interpretation should be “accorded controlling weight.”

The ERLC and the other signers of the brief said the Department of Education’s interpretation contradicts the belief of their faiths and other religious traditions

that “a person’s identity as male or female is created by God and immutable.”

“Not surprisingly, then, interpreting ‘sex’ to include gender identity would create thorny conflicts between federal civil rights law and widely held religious beliefs,” according to the brief.

Such an interpretation, the brief said, could result in students being taught beliefs contrary to those of their parents and in religious colleges and universities having problems in preserving single-sex dormitories and maintaining privacy in showers and changing rooms.

If expanded beyond federal law in the field of education, the inclusion of gender identity under sex discrimination could produce legal problems in such areas as employment and housing, the ERLC and its allies said in the brief.

If the high court affirms the Department of Education’s view, it “would also take a long step toward delegitimizing traditional religions,” according to the brief.

“Making gender identity a protected class under Title IX implies that traditional attitudes toward gender identity are discriminatory. That implication, enshrined in federal civil rights law, would

impose a stigma on religious people and institutions whose faith dictates that gender identity is determined by one’s birth sex.

“[R]eligious Americans could find themselves increasingly marginalized for believing that gender is immutable and divinely ordained.”

Congress – which has not added gender identity as a protected class in federal law – is the appropriate branch to “balance competing interests” and settle the issue, the brief said.

“Legislators and local authorities can step in where reasonable solutions are not offered voluntarily,” according to the brief. “But if bureaucratic fiat supplants the democratic process, gender identity will become yet another flashpoint for social tension and conflict.”

The brief includes statements of belief on gender from nine different faith perspectives, including the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC section cites statements from the Baptist Faith and Message, the convention’s confession of faith, and resolutions approved at the annual meeting in 2014 and 2016.

The 2014 SBC resolution “affirm[ed] God’s good design that gender identity

is determined by biological sex and not by one’s self-perception.” The resolution “regard[ed] our transgender neighbors as image-bearers of Almighty God and therefore condemn[ed] acts of abuse or bullying committed against them.”

The resolution also said, “We invite all transgender persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the gospel.”

Others signing onto the brief were the National Association of Evangelicals, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and Christian Legal Society.

The Gloucester County (Va.) school district had provided a separate restroom for the student who brought suit, but she said being forced to use the alternative restroom further stigmatized her. The Obama administration backed her position. She underwent hormone therapy, legally changed her name to a male name and asked to be treated as a male before her sophomore year of high school in 2014.

The case is *Gloucester County School Board v. G.G.* **BR**

Mars Hill president to retire in 2018

Mars Hill Communications

Mars Hill University President Dan Lunsford announced Jan. 11 that he will retire next year from the position he's held for 15 years. The exact timing of his retirement will depend on the completion of a successful search for a new university president, but Lunsford said it will be in the first half of 2018.

Lunsford became president on an interim basis in January 2002, following the resignation of the late Max Lennon. The board of trustees of what was then Mars Hill College made the position permanent in May 2003.

In announcing his retirement plans, Lunsford thanked the students, staff and faculty for their efforts over his tenure as president. He also thanked the trustee board, which he described as "incredibly supportive." Lunsford said his promise to the board, when he accepted the position, was that, "whenever I finished my tenure, that Mars Hill would be stronger than when I began. I believe that we have achieved that promise." He promised that in his remaining months in the presidency he "will remain as active and engaged in the life of the institution as I have been from 'Day One.'"

Wayne Higgins, current chair of the trustee board and a member of that board when Lunsford became president, said Lunsford's "passion for and dedication to Mars Hill is widely recognized." Higgins called him "truly a visionary and academic leader," adding, "Dr. Lunsford will be tremendously missed at Mars Hill University but we know he will continue to be very supportive and engaged with the university."

Lunsford's tenure at Mars Hill University has been



DAN LUNS福德

marked by growth in many areas, fitting the theme of his presidency: Preserving the Past, Assuring the Future. Under Lunsford the school transitioned from a college to a university in 2013; completed its first comprehensive capital campaign (and is in the final stages of its second); saw the largest building boom in campus facilities since the 1970s (with the addition of three new residence halls and three new classroom and laboratory buildings, as well as the building and renovation of several athletic facilities); established the Asheville Center for Adult and Graduate Studies in south Asheville; added a large portion of the campus to the National Register of Historic Places; strengthened and added academic programs (including an Honors Program, master's degrees in elementary education and in management and a nursing school); and increased funding for scholarships and other financial aid for students.

Lunsford is a 1969 Mars Hill graduate, earned his graduate degrees at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, and participated in postdoctoral study at Vanderbilt University and the UNC-Chapel Hill Institute of Government. He began his career as a sixth grade teacher in Durham; was a principal, director of instruction, associate superintendent and assistant superintendent for Orange County Schools before serving that district as superintendent from 1983-1990; and was superintendent of Henderson County Public Schools from 1990-1998. He began his employment at Mars Hill in 1998 as dean of the School of Education and Leadership.

He and his wife, Beverly, are active in the life of the university and the town of Mars Hill. **BR**

Colorado Baptists seek new leader

Baptist Press

The Colorado Baptist General Convention (CBGC) is receiving applications for a new executive director to replace Mark Edlund, retiring in July after 15 years of service. The executive director would serve a unified and healthy convention of 391 churches and church plants in one of the fastest growing states in the nation, said CBGC President Mike Routt, citing Edlund's tenure.

"Dr. Mark Edlund has provided excellent spiritual guidance and counsel during his tenure," Routt said. "When he leaves his office in July, Mark departs with a difference-making legacy of servant leadership."

The new leader would continue Edlund's focus on planting new churches and helping revitalize existing congregations, Routt said, in efforts to reach the state that has no Southern Baptist churches in 115 of its 200 zip codes. Colorado Baptists have especially focused on church planting along the state's front range, extending from Fort Collins to Pueblo and housing 80 percent of the state's 4.24 million people. Among new residents, 80 percent are drawn to the region, the CGBC said. The new leader should be an experienced and active leader in Southern Baptist life with at least five years of administrative experience, a history of sound financial management, and knowledge of Southern Baptist Convention polity and structure. A master's degree (or equivalent) from an accredited seminary is required.

Applications and recommendations for the position can be sent to: 11200 W. 32nd Ave., Wheat Ridge, CO, 80033, or at cwittman@applewoodbaptist.com. **BR**

Old Testament scholar, theologian dies at 70

SEBTS & Gateway Seminary reports

Well-known professor of Old Testament, John Herbert Sailhamer, 70, died Jan. 9 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease and Lewy Body Dementia.

During his career, Sailhamer served a number of institutions, including Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), where he worked from 1999-2006. Most recently, Sailhamer taught at Gateway Seminary, formerly Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, until he retired in 2012.

Sailhamer's work at SEBTS was marked by service to students, as he spent much of his time advising master of theology and doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) students through the thesis and dissertation process.

During this time he also served as the president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2000 and wrote his last major publication *The Meaning of the Pentateuch* in 2009. That work was called his magnum opus and was listed among *Amazon.com*'s top 100 sellers.

He served on the review and editorial

teams for the New Living Translation and the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

The SEBTS community remembers Sailhamer for his contributions to Old Testament scholarship and the greatness of his character.

"John Sailhamer was the quintessential Christian scholar.

His thoughtful writings will continue to bless the Church for years to come," said SEBTS President Danny Akin. "His ability in the classroom is truly legendary. I do not choose my words lightly. He was that good and how we will miss him."

"John Sailhamer was not only a great man but a profoundly good man. He was great in that he was the consummate research scholar and a master classroom instructor who received standing ovations at the end of his courses," said Provost Bruce Ashford.

"But more significantly he was a good man, a humble and loving servant of the Lord who was loved by his peers and students."



JOHN SAILHAMER

Tracy McKenzie, associate professor of biblical studies, worked closely with Sailhamer as a teaching assistant and Ph.D. student at SEBTS. In a tribute to Sailhamer, McKenzie wrote, "Much could be said of Sailhamer's career in teaching and publishing ... The numbers of his students who now serve in the academy – both inside and outside of evangelicalism – not to mention the pulpit, attest to his profound influence in the field through teaching and supervising Ph.D. students."

The Library at Southeastern is home to Sailhamer's personal library, a collection of rare volumes documenting the history of the Old Testament interpretation in post-Reformation Europe. Through this special collection, students have and will continue to benefit from Sailhamer's work for years to come.

The author of more than 15 books, various articles and essays, his writing centered on reading the Bible, the Pentateuch in particular, as a unified, coherent whole.

Sailhamer earned a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from California State University, Long Beach, and worked as a general assignments reporter for the Dallas Morning News before completing a master of theology degree in Old Testament from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1974, a master of arts degree in Semitic languages from UCLA in 1976, and a doctor of philosophy degree in ancient Near East languages and literature from UCLA in 1981. He was ordained by the Evangelical Free Church of America in 1983.

His 36-year teaching career began in 1975 at Los Angeles Bible College and continued at Biola University, Bethel Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Western Seminary before starting work at SEBTS.

He is survived by Patty Engdahl Sailhamer, his wife of 45 years; his children, David Sailhamer, Elizabeth Sailhamer Soukup, John Christian Sailhamer and Peter Sailhamer; eight grandchildren; brother, Paul Sailhamer; and sister, Claudette Miller.

Memorials to: the Compassion Fund or Disability Family Fund and the First Evangelical Free Church. **BR**

OPPORTUNITY CORNER



BAPTISTS ON MISSION

The Baptists on Mission Regional Rallies will highlight the variety of opportunities North Carolina Baptists have to be involved in missions across our state, in our nation and around the world. Worship, testimony, mission video and a prayer time for missions will be featured at these 10 rallies across the state in February.

A main focus of these rallies will be state, national and international partnerships and projects that are supported by the North Carolina Missions Offering. A meal is provided for the N.C. Mission Rallies at no charge, but reservations are necessary.

The deadline for reservations is one week prior to the event.

Visit baptistsonmission.org/events/region-rallies.

● **Feb. 1 – Region 1:** Cale Conference Center, Hertford;

● **Feb. 6 – Region 2:** First Baptist Church, New Bern; **Region 6:** Hopewell Baptist Church, Monroe;

● **Feb. 7 – Region 3:** Scotts Hill Baptist Church, Wilmington; **Region 9:** First Baptist Church, Waynesville; **Region 4:** Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest;

● **Feb. 13 – Region 8:** South River Baptist Church, Statesville; **Region 10:** First Baptist Church, Robbinsville;

● **Feb. 16 – Region 5:** Cross Road Baptist Church, Asheboro; **Region 7:** Union Grove Baptist Church, Lenoir.



BAPTISTS ON MISSION

Baptists on Mission or North Carolina Baptist Men (NCBM) is offering disaster relief training to believers who have a passion to serve others.

Disaster response is a unique mission experience because of the sudden nature of the event, difficult conditions and high expectations from other relief organizations and survivors. Options for training include basic training, cross training, recertification and advanced training.

Training sessions are in odd numbered regions across the state for 2017:

● **Region 1:** Feb. 24-25, Chowan County;

● **Region 3:** March 31-Apr. 1, Robeson County;

● **Region 5:** Apr. 21-22, Rockingham County;

● **Region 7:** May 5-6, Surry County;

● **Region 9:** May 19-20, Buncombe County.

Specific locations will be announced later.

Cost ranges from \$30-45 depending on which course is being taken and generally includes training manual, hat, shirt, ID badge, background check (if needed), temporary accident insurance and up to three meals. Housing is provided but participants must bring their own bedding and toiletries.

Visit baptistsonmission.org/training/disaster-relief-training.

Leading Change in the Church is a one day event, March 7, for your entire church staff focused on leading change in the local church. The conference features Thom Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, and nearly two dozen ministry leaders from around the country.

Individual registration is \$10 and includes lunch. Church staff pricing for more than five attendees is only \$50

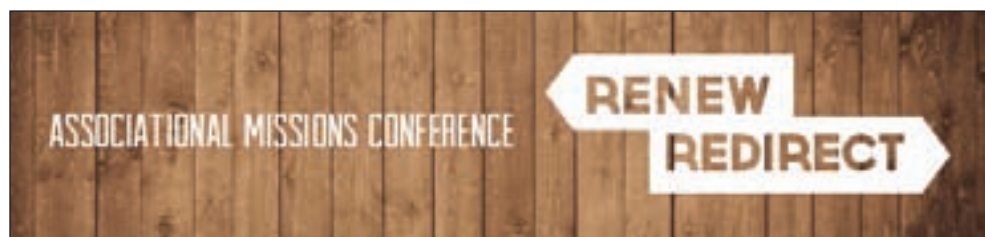


for the entire group. Email questions@leadingchange.church or visit leadingchange.church to register.



Operation Transformation and Crosspointe Baptist Church in Concord are hosting Revitalize 2017 April 8. The conference, which will be held at Crosspointe, is a one-day training and equipping conference for pastors and church leaders lead by nationally recognized church revitalizers.

The focus will be on renewing churches and changing lives and will include two sessions (four keynote speakers) and several relevant breakouts with a time for dialogue with the speakers. Registration is \$35 and includes all conference materials and lunch. Visit operation-transformation.com/revitalize.



The 2017 Associational Missions Conference is being held April 10-13 at Caraway Conference Center in Asheboro. The theme is Renew and Redirect, Moving from Theory to Practice. Participants will learn how to experience renewal in the areas of personal and spiritual health and will be lead in developing and imple-

menting a written intentional strategy plan for the revitalization of churches and church leaders in relation to the mission-calling to fulfill the Great Commission. Registration is \$95 for a single room, \$85 for a double, or \$40-60 for commuters. Deadline to register is March 28. Visit ncbaptist.org/renew.

GRADUATES

Thirteen students graduated from Gardner-Webb University Divinity School in Boiling Springs, N.C., in December:

● **Master of divinity in Christian education** – Linda Lockhart, Shelby; and Taura Glaze, Matthews

● **Master of divinity in intercultural studies** – Jamie Efird, Cherryville

● **Master of divinity in missiology** – Keith

Miller, Charlotte

● **Master of divinity in pastoral care and counseling** – Alexander Ballard, Charlotte; Allison Greene, Kings Mountain; Kathryn Bonapart, Charlotte; and Christopher Hensley, Ellenboro; Jerry Elmore, Forest City

● **Master of divinity in pastoral ministries** – Robert Murphy, Gastonia; and Stephen Rushing, Mount Holly

Local business leaders present Phantoms check

On Fri., Jan. 13, Fred and Doris Huebner, from left, representing local McDonald's owners/operators, present a check to Baptist on Mission's Paul Langston, along with Marty Clayton of Duke Energy and Tim Stevens of Show N Tell Ministries. The \$51,899.49 check was raised during the Three Phantoms in Concert Nov. 29 in Raleigh. The event starred three former phantoms in concert. Corporate support from Duke Energy and McDonald's covered the concert's expenses so all ticket proceeds could be donated to hurricane relief. The funds included a grant from the John Williams Pope Foundation. All of the funds will be used to help with Hurricane Matthew recovery efforts. (BSC photo by K Brown)



ADVERTISE – (919) 459-5691

February 5

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

February 12

Following with Joy

Focal passage: Philippians 2:1-11

Paul challenges us to consider that the path to living in real joy is by following Christ. To follow Christ means to demonstrate humility, then we find joy.

This approach to finding joy is of course countercultural. Our culture proclaims that temporary measures, such as a purchase of a new car or taking a certain vacation will bring joy. These momentary fixes are all about supposedly meeting our needs and giving us what we deserve. After all, we have worked hard or proven ourselves worthy of such things. However, as Christians, we understand that we only actually deserve an eternity apart from God due to our sin.

True joy comes from the amazing gift of eternal life that we receive through the grace extended to us in the saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Out of that realization, we want to obey Christ and experience true joy.

I AM SECOND, is a movement that has helped many individuals consider who or what was being placed first in their lives. The *iamsecond.com* site states they “in-

spire people of all kinds to live for God and for others.” Each person who shares on their site has come to the realization that instead of placing Jesus first in their lives, they had sought to meet their needs through allowing other things to take precedence. The list of celebrities, sports icons and television faces includes Chip and Joanna Gaines, Darrell Waltrip and Josh Turner. Each testimony concludes with the celebrity stating their name followed by “I am second.”

Perhaps we could reflect on what we might share in a similar testimony. After all, following Jesus is a 100 percent commitment. As the familiar hymn reminds us, “... the world behind me, the cross before me, no turning back, no turning back.”

Following Jesus gives each believer love for others and purpose in each day. As we love others, we find many opportunities to practice humility as we strive to follow the example of Jesus. This leads to true joy.



SHERRA STILL
Member,
University Hills Baptist
Church, Charlotte

Focal passage: Philippians 3:12-21

The spiritual giant, Paul, acknowledges that even he had not perfected following Christ. He realized that it is a process as we move toward the goal of a full understanding of obedience to Christ.

He points out that there always has been and there always will be, those who make different choices. It is up to each individual believer and to the church to keep our focus on our “*citizenship in heaven*” (v. 20).

We can find joy in the growth process. A child most likely gets discouraged when he struggles to ride a bike or tie his shoes, and as parents we respond. We don’t sit back and just tell our child to give up! Instead, we encourage them to keep trying and to maybe look for new ways to accomplish the task.

Paul is encouraging us. We can know that day-by-day, as we “*press on*” (v. 12), we can do it with joy.

One way to take joy in this journey is to follow the example of mature believers. There is a couple in my church who recently celebrated 60 years of marriage and ministry as together. They have served side by side from the time of seminary, in churches and now in numerous roles in our church.

They each have joy in their eyes and voices as they share about their Savior. They tell funny stories about living on practically nothing during the seminary years and stories of warmth as they share about the latest grandchild who they are influencing for the cause of Christ.

The wife shares the gospel with those God places in her path at the grocery store and the doctor’s office. The husband ministers weekly to the senior adult choir.

If you compliment them for their service, they very quickly direct the praise and glory to God. It is beautiful and inspiring!

They will also let you know they “*eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body*” (vv. 20-21).

They demonstrate growing with joy!

February 5

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

February 12

Timid Warrior

Focal Passages: Judges 6:11-16, 25-32

Michael Oher became nationally known following the debut of the movie “The Blind Side.” The teenage Oher was encouraged to play football, where he initially proved to be a very large but very timid warrior. He did not want to hurt his teammates or anyone else.

Another issue perplexing the young Oher was family. If he accepted the very generous offer of the Tuohy family, would he be betraying his race and friends? Still later, after he had proven to be a mighty warrior on the high school gridiron, he wrestled with the decision of what major university to play for.

Would his decision be to please the Tuohys, himself, or both?

Likewise, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon as he was trying to protect his family’s wheat crop from the Midianites, Gideon was identified as “mighty warrior.”

Gideon responded, “*Who me? You must have the wrong guy. I’m the last person you should choose*” (v. 15).

Then the Lord tasked Gideon to do something that would take real guts

and real faith. He was commissioned to tear down the altars of Baal and Asherah (Gideon’s name means to “hack or cut down.”)

But these particular objects were not the idols of a foreign enemy or a benign neighbor. These altars belonged to his father. And while Gideon could understand that his father was wrong to have erected and worshiped these false gods, he knew there would likely be severe consequences for himself if he obeyed God.

He could lose his life.

In fact, Gideon was so petrified by the thought of obeying God that he demolished his father’s altars at night when no one could see his actions. The next day was reckoning day.

Fortunately for Gideon, his father loved him more than the idols and declared that if Baal and Asherah have power, let them punish Gideon.

The jump from “timid” to “mighty” comes when God’s children have the courage to risk an uncertain future for a certain God.



WAYNE PROCTOR
Pastor, Eure
Baptist Church, Eure

Focal Passages: Judges 16:4-6, 13-20

Len Bias was an All-American and all-everything college basketball player. For years he had terrorized his Atlantic Coast Conference opponents. Bias so impressed Boston Celtics great Larry Bird of his potential that Bird recommended that Celtics general manager Red Auerbach draft Bias as the overall number two pick in the 1986 NBA draft.

Auerbach did, and the Celtics’ world celebrated. Tragically, two days later Len Bias was pronounced dead, presumably as a reaction to a cocaine overdose: compromised potential.

Samson would be the last of Israel’s judges. His rise from obscurity to greatness is well known. Manoah’s wife was barren, but God intervened by sending His angel to her with the message that she was to birth a son, and this son would take the Nazarite vow – no alcohol consumed, nothing unclean eaten and uncut hair.

The boy was born, was given the name Samson, and God blessed him (13:24).

Samson’s life was defined by his biceps and riddles. No one was a match for the mighty and witty Samson. He infuriated his enemies to the point that the Philistines stayed awake at night plotting his demise.

They watched Samson and discovered his greatest weakness was women. Therefore, when Samson hooked up with the beautiful and persuasive Delilah, they believed she could deliver Samson for them. And she did.

The story of Samson began with such promise – a loving family, the blessing of God, extreme ability and strength. All Samson had to do was keep his vow, his promises to God.

But in his search for pleasure, he wasted God’s gift.

Potential is an elusive word. We all have it, but we don’t all reach it. Len Bias reached his potential while at the University of Maryland. It was assumed he could reach even higher potential as a Celtic. It didn’t happen.

Samson, likewise, was the poster boy for “potential.” He had it by the bucket loads. Unfortunately, his faith and commitment to God didn’t match his potential.

Compromised Potential

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

BARBARA ANN RAVERT VOORHES, 81, of Mauldin, S.C., died Jan. 14.

A New York native, Voorhes was a member of First Baptist Church, Mauldin, S.C. Her husband, Bill Voorhes, served as pastor of churches in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. She was founding director of KOALA, an adult day care service in Transylvania County, N.C.

She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Bill Voorhes; daughter, Cyndee York of Greenville; sons, Anthony S. Voorhes of Wilson, N.C., and John H. Voorhes of Woodstock, Ga.; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Memorials to: Open Arms Hospice, 1836 W. Georgia Road, Simpsonville, SC 29680, or Mauldin First Baptist Church, 150 S. Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662.

LARRY D. THOMPSON, 81, died Jan. 11 at Moses Cone Hospital.

A West Virginia native, Thompson attended Concord College before enlisting in the U.S. Army.

He was ordained into the ministry at Holston Creek Baptist Church, Inman, S.C., and went on to pastor at Wood Baptist Church, Wood, N.C.; First Baptist Church, Campobello, S.C.; Central Baptist, Oak Ridge,

N.C.; Conrad Memorial Baptist, High Point, N.C.; Sumner Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; Immanuel Baptist Church, Greensboro; and Bethany Baptist, Julian, N.C.

Early in ministry, he and his wife were involved in working with international students.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Allie Blankenship Thompson; and three children, Gary, Barry and Linda.

Staff changes

JACOB LEWIS has been called as pastor to Haw Bluff Baptist Church, Ivanhoe. He was ordained Jan. 15 and is enrolled at Southeastern Seminary.

New Prospect Baptist Church, Shelby, called **CHRIS DEVINE** as pastor. Devine was previously the interim pastor.

H. WOODROW “WOODY” FISH has been chosen as Gardner-Webb University’s vice president for university advancement. Fish previously was vice president for external affairs and special assistant to the president.



H. WOODROW FISH

Carol Pipes to lead LifeWay communications

Baptist Press & LifeWay

LifeWay Christian Resources has announced the promotion of Carol Pipes as the ministry’s new director of corporate communications. Pipes will replace Southern Baptist Convention veteran communicator Marty King who will retire in February.

LifeWay Executive Vice President Brad Waggoner made the announcement saying Pipes “brings nearly 20 years of communications expertise and experience, as well as a strong commitment to LifeWay’s mission and purpose.”

Pipes joined LifeWay in 2012 as manager of editorial services and editor of *Facts & Trends*. Previously, she served as team leader of content development at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and editor of *On Mission*. Prior to NAMB, she worked for The Salvation Army and the former Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

She is a native of Tennessee, and a graduate from the University of Memphis with a degree in journalism. She and her husband Keith have been married 18 years. They attend Friendship Community Church in Mount Juliet, Tenn., where Keith serves as director of worship ministries.

King and his wife Barbara have relocated to Jackson, Tenn., to be near family. **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Moon’s Chapel Baptist Church in rural Siler City, NC, is a multi-generational congregation seeking a **full-time Pastor**. We are a SBC affiliated church seeking a man filled with passion to work with our congregation and community, with an evangelistic mindset to reach the lost and driven to preach God’s Word. Send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, 175 Moon’s Chapel Rd., Siler City, NC 27344.

First Baptist Church in King, North Carolina, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor**. Must have a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Bible teaching, strong administrative skills, someone who can shepherd our youth and young adult program, have good communication skills, must be self-motivated and can motivate church staff. Please send resumes to: fbkpastorsearch@gmail.com. Pay compatible with experience and ability.

Hallsville Baptist Church, Beulaville, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **Pastor** to faithfully preach and teach the Word of God and lead our congregation. We are a mission-minded Southern Baptist church located in rural Duplin County. We have traditional Sunday School and worship services with average attendance of 50-80 with expectation to grow. The Pastor will lead three services each week (Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday evening). Please send resumes to: Hallsville Baptist Church, c/o Pastor search committee, 1291 Hallsville Rd., Beulaville, NC 28518.

Church Staff

Lawndale Baptist Church, Greensboro, NC, is seeking **Associate Pastor of Married Adults**. Overall responsibilities include planning, coordinating and leading married adult ministry. These duties include: development of classes to equip parents at different stages of life. Leading enrichment classes to better equip husbands and wives. Developing methods and materials which facilitate mentoring of couples. Counseling couples in marriage issues and provide a biblical approach to marriage. Enlisting and training leaders for on and off campus groups working within the community. Expected skills are solid judgment and decision-making ability. A knowledge of membership and how best to meet the needs of that membership through planned programs. And a sensitivity to problems and fluency of ideas to meet the demands of the many areas of ministry. The successful candidate will have a master of divinity and five years ministry experience. Please send resume and salary history to: jthomas@lawndalebaptist.org or employment@lawndalebaptist.org.

Jennies Branch Baptist Church of Shallote, NC, is receiving resumes for our **Music Minister** position. This position will provide leadership and direction for the Jennies Branch Music ministry. The Minister of Music is responsible for planning, conducting and promotion of the worship programs. Send resume to jenniesbranch@gmail.com.

White Level Baptist Church, Louisburg, NC, is in search of an **Associate Pastor/Youth Minister** to serve our youth and our body. You must be ordained and we prefer that it not be the first youth group that you have led. This is a part-time position with plenty of opportunity to deliver Sunday morning sermons when Pastor is absent or on occasional special event Sunday mornings but most importantly a huge opportunity to impact youth at a critical point in their lives. Please email resume to sjjgharrison@gmail.com.

Cornerstone Baptist Church seeks **FT director of Music Ministry**. Blended worship style which includes choir and praise team. Knowledge and utilization of audio/visual. Email harvbags@hotmail.com or mail resumes to 8947 Albemarle Rd., Charlotte, NC 28227.

Hopewell Baptist Church, Monroe, NC, seeks an **Associate Pastor of Discipleship** to oversee the discipleship ministries of a large conservative church and supervision of several staff members. Candidate should have a master’s degree or higher and experience in these areas. Resumes accepted until 2-28-17; Kim@whatasavior.com.

Miscellaneous

Fred Lunsford’s newest book, “Bloom Where You Are Planted” is now available. Milton Hollifield, Executive-Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of NC has the following to say about it: “This book is a collection of inspirational sermons that pastors and Christian leaders will benefit from reading because it reminds us of ways that God is at work in our life and ministry. These messages are packed with Biblical truths, wonderful testimonial stories and practical illustrations you can use in Bible studies and sermons.” For pricing and to order, call: 828-837-2605 or 828-837-6530.

Coffee Shop Contents For Sale. Baptist Pastor selling entire contents of Coffee Shop located in Fremont, NC. Includes La Cimbali espresso machine, tables, chairs, counters etc. \$8,250. If interested please call, 919-273-5358.

Senior adult leaders from around the state will meet in Thomasville on May 2 for the 3rd annual AAIM roundup! Call NCBAM at 877.506.2226 to learn more about AAIM (Aging Adults Innovating Ministry).

MOVED? Don’t forget to change your address with the *Biblical Recorder*. Contact Liz Tablazon at (919) 459-5693 or liz@BRnow.org.

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- Send e-mail to: alison@BRnow.org.
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For more information, call the office at (919) 459-5691.

Cost for Baptist churches/organizations is \$1.20 per word, number and stand-alone initial (\$1.42 for commercial and non-Baptist entities) with a minimum charge of \$35. Classifieds also are carried online.

Siblings Continued from page 11

Mountain View presented Mallory and Katy with plaques of appreciation in a special service Nov. 6, 2016.

“It was real nice for people to come out and to be appreciated in that way,” Mallory said. “Of course, the work that has been done over the years was accomplished by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We don’t take any credit for it. It has been a real honor and privilege that the Lord let me be here these many years.”

He has missed a few Sundays of late because of his wife’s heart attack, but said, “I’m 88 years old and still coming to church.”

These days, Mallory is careful when he walks but is still firm of voice and handshake – and still drives his Chevy Impala to and from church.

He graduated from the local high school in 1945 and began his music ministry about then. “I love to hear a choir join together and sing praises. It’s just something that always built me up and helped me to worship. It was a blessing to me, and I think it’s good for people to sing,” he said.

He has stayed with hymns in the Baptist Hymnal over the years and is not overly fond of the changes he has seen



Katy Palmer, left, along with her brother, Mallory Carrick, right, were recognized by their church, Mountain View Baptist Church near Lexington, led by Pastor Tim Miller, center. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

creep in over the years. He gives “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” as an example of a good, solid hymn.

Mountain View has been a presence in the surrounding Southmont Community near Lexington for many years. It’s a rural area, but development around nearby High Rock Lake has brought in new people.

Some of the newcomers from other states come looking for a spiritual home

and find a warm welcome at Mountain View.

Miller said the church averages around 100 in attendance on Sundays, way up from the 30 or so in church when he began serving as pastor. The lively church is growing, and he praised the spirit of unity he sees. There is no hint of decline or plateau in Mountain View; a children’s church time each Sunday morning is a key part of the service.

He is especially pleased with the church’s outreach ministry to children. The ministry uses two vehicles to collect 15 to 30 children around the community on Sunday morning and evening and bring them to services. The church provides them with dinner and supper as well as Bible teaching and other activities.

“If we’re late, they’ll call the church and ask if we’re coming to get them today,” Miller said.

The church also supports missions beyond the local community by contributing through the Cooperative Program and the Southern Baptist mission offerings.

On Miller’s office wall are an architect’s sketches for a multi-purpose building he would like to see the church construct one day; it would house several community-focused ministries and be built onto the present building, which originally was a one-room schoolhouse built in 1939.

Just as that modern new building will be added onto an earlier foundation, Mountain View’s present and future growth in membership and faith will be added to the foundational ministry of members like Katy and Mallory and their long-time commitment to the gospel. **B3**

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