



THEY ‘PAID A  
BIG PRICE’  
FOR RACIAL  
RECONCILIATION  
page 7



OWEN  
RETIRES  
AFTER 48  
YEARS AT  
MOUNT CARMEL BAPTIST page 4

# BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

FEBRUARY 10, 2018 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • VOLUME 184 NO. 3 • BRnow.org

## Late-term abortion ban fails in Senate

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

**T**he Senate rejected an effort to prohibit late-term abortions Jan. 29, assuring the United States would maintain for now one of the world’s most radical policies on the procedure.

Senators voted 51-46 to bring the Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act, S. 2311, to the floor but fell short of the 60 votes needed to invoke cloture, as it is known, and proceed to a roll call on passage.

The bill would ban abortions on babies 20 weeks or more after fertilization based on scientific evidence that a child in the womb experiences pain by that point in gestation.

In October, the House of Representatives approved its version of the legislation, and the White House issued a statement saying it “strongly supports” the proposal.

The demise of the bill – which the Senate also rejected in 2015 after House passage – means the United States remains among the seven countries in the world that permit elective abortions after 20 weeks.

The other six from among 198 countries are Canada, China, Netherlands, North Korea, Singapore and Vietnam, according to the pro-life Charlotte Lozier Institute.

Pro-life advocates again grieved the Senate’s refusal to protect unborn children in the last half of pregnancy but vowed to continue the fight for the sanctity of human life.

“The fact that a vote over whether or not it should be legal to snuff out the lives of 20-week-old babies could not even pass a procedural hurdle in the United States Senate should be shocking to the conscience,” said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

“What some members of Congress who would vote against such a measure have been wrong to assume is that Americans will, given enough time, simply get over their convictions about abortion,” Moore told Baptist Press (BP) in a written statement.

“That is not going to happen. Not only that, but the church of Jesus Christ always has stood and always will stand for life at every stage.

“The reborn will stand for the unborn, and

See Fail page 13

## N.C. Baptists to run for SBC president

BR staff

**T**wo well-known North Carolina Baptists, J.D. Greear and Kenneth Hemphill, are bidding for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at this year’s annual meeting, according to recent news releases.

Ken Whitten, pastor of Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Fla., told the *Biblical Recorder* Jan. 29 that he will nominate Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham.

Louisiana’s *Baptist Message* reported Feb. 1 that Hemphill, mem-

J.D. Greear, left, and Ken Hemphill, right, have both been announced as candidates for the Southern Baptist Convention president. Greear is pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, while Hemphill serves at North Greenville University in South Carolina. (Contributed photo, left; Baptist Press photo by Kent Harville, right)

ber of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C., and former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will be nominated for the position, according to a “group of distinguished Baptists.”

At publication time it is unclear who will nominate Hemphill.

To find out more about Greear’s announcement, see page 10.

Turn to page 11 for more on Hemphill. **BR**

## Registration opens for messengers, child care

Baptist Press

**R**egistration for the Southern Baptist Convention’s 2018 annual meeting June 12-13 at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas is open.

Registration will be available around the clock at *sbcannualmeeting.net* for messengers and invited guests. The annual meeting is a private religious gathering open to registered messengers, invited guests of messengers, program participants and approved exhibitors.

Through online messenger registration at the designated *sbcannualmeeting.net* tab, each messenger will receive

an eight-digit registration code to present at the annual meeting’s Express Registration lane in Dallas. The code will be entered into a computer at the registration area and a nametag will be printed. The appropriate church-authorized representative must complete all online registrations.

Hotel registration has been available since October and continues through May 14, online at *sbcannualmeeting.net*.

While online housing reservations are preferred, housing may also be reserved by phone from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Eastern time (M-F) toll-free at (800) 967-8852.

See Opens page 10

## MORE INSIDE

Opinion: Strive for racial reconciliation .....	3	Lankford seeks shared values, honest dialogue .....	12
Opinion: How churchgoing builds community .....	3	Chowan University plans for new president .....	12
A ‘strong and healthy church’ in Pownal, Vt. ....	5	Trump State of the Union address urges unity .....	13
Opinion: What they won’t tell you about DACA .....	6	Three Forks launches gospel-spreading	
LifeWay Architecture marks 100 years .....	7	initiative in western Watauga .....	14
N.C. giving to CP, other offerings up in 2017 .....	8	N.C. literacy missions pioneer turns 100 .....	14
N.C. Baptists impacting lostness ‘more than ever’ .....	9	Gardner-Webb president announces retirement plans .....	16
Front Street Baptist families settle lawsuits .....	11	Longtime Billy Graham singer, Myrtle Hall Smith, dies .....	16
N.C. leaders part of ERLC council .....	11	Opportunity Corner .....	17
Baptismal waters stir again at Cedar Rock .....	12	SBC added as defendant in Pressler suit .....	19



# Are church attenders good disciple-makers?

It's time to stop attending church. If you're shocked at that statement, give me a chance to explain.

Have you noticed the shift in the language we use to describe our relationship with a specific church? There was a time when we heard someone say, "I'm a member of Third Baptist Church," or "I belong to Third Baptist Church." The trend has shifted to, "I attend Third Baptist Church." Did you catch that? The operative word is "attend."

That word is appropriate for those who move to a new city and visit a variety of churches in search of a new church home. It accurately describes one who dropped out of church years ago and is now attending churches to consider reconnecting with a body of believers. It is acceptable for the person who is a guest of a church member or similar situations. But it is not an accurate picture of one who has trusted Jesus as Savior, followed Him in baptism and united with a local church.

I attend a baseball or football game. I attend a Broadway show or concert as a guest. In those venues, I am merely

a spectator. I have no commitment to the athletes except to cheer them on to victory. I appreciate the skill of actors, actresses and musicians, but I attend their event for my own enjoyment. I mark it in my book of life experiences as a good memory and move on with my life.



**K. ALLAN BLUME**  
Editor

But my church family is different. I am not a spectator or guest when I meet with fellow believers on Sunday or any other time. I am both a worshiper and a team player. I am knitted to my fellow church members as followers of Jesus Christ who made a commitment to serve Him together. As church members, we use our spiritual gifts as one body. We are accountable to each other.

A local church is an identifiable gathering of believers who are committed to proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the world. My church home is not a place I attend.

An attender does not represent the biblical picture of commitment to God's design for the church. The whole idea waters down the purpose of the New Testament church and is counterproductive to our mission. It is not the message we want to communicate. It weakens the definition of who we are.

Attenders will not get the job done. The church can only advance with members who are committed to the Great Commission goals of the church – people who belong, people who serve.

The focus of North Carolina Baptists in recent years has been on the biblical lifestyle of making disciples. Many of our churches have already been equipping their members to be disciples who make disciples. Many other churches are joining the movement to impact lostness in North Carolina and around the world through disciple-making.

Surely pastors will agree that the church they lead cannot grow a reproducing, disciple-making strategy with casual church attenders. Committed

members must step up to the plate.

We hope Baptist churches will always welcome attenders, but we hope these guests will soon become fully committed, disciple-making members.

## North Carolina Baptists need to know

All North Carolina Baptists should read the reports on pages 8, 9 and 16 from the convention's recent board of director's meeting. It underscores the disciple-making strategy in every area – church revitalization, church planting, collegiate ministry and more. Significant progress is itemized in the report.

Please do not pass over the financial report. It reflects the mission goals of N.C. Baptists and contains important information that is cause for rejoicing.

John Butler, executive leader for business services at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina said ours is the only state convention to increase its Cooperative Program (CP) allocation to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in each of the past 11 years. North Carolina Baptists have also ranked first in giving to the SBC's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions in each of the past five years and first in

giving the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in four of the past five years and nine of the last 10.

Through CP, special offerings and other giving, North Carolina Baptist churches have contributed more than \$152 million to SBC causes in the past five years, which has included record single-year contributions in both 2016 and 2017.

"We are not only engaging lostness in North Carolina, but through the strategy and financial planning that we've been able to do, we are doing more to engage lostness in this nation and around the world than we ever have before," Butler said.

The only state convention that gave more in total gifts to CP, AAEO and LMCO last year was Florida. That state's total was boosted by a special one-time gift to CP of \$3,136,500, representing the proceeds from the sale of their convention's headquarters in Jacksonville. This gift was announced during the Executive Committee report June 13 at the SBC annual meeting in Phoenix, Ariz., and previously reported by the *Biblical Recorder*.

The generous giving record of Baptist churches reflects faithful church members, visionary pastors and mission-focused church leaders who are committed to consistent tithing and giving through the local church. It is an honor and a pleasure to be on this winning team! **BR**

**"The church can only advance with members who are committed to the Great Commission goals ..."**

## CORRECTION

In the Jan. 27 issue of the *Around the State* staff changes, the *Biblical Recorder* misidentified people in two photographs. Catherine Burr, associate provost for adult and distance education, and June Hobbs, the Fay Webb Gardner chair of students success, were misidentified. See pictures with correct identifications here.

Also, a photo cutline for the "N.C. Baptists make a difference in Vermont" story, left off a line of text. The full text should read "Lyandon Warren, left, lead pastor of the Castleton campus church of Mission City Church, Rutland, welcomes people to the Sunday service."



**CATHERINE BURR**



**JUNE HOBBS**



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## Strive for racial reconciliation

**A**s we approach Racial Reconciliation Sunday on Feb. 11, I'm thankful for the strong stands and statements against the sin of racism that have taken place within our denomination, particularly during the past year.



**MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.**  
BSC executive  
director-treasurer

North Carolina Baptists were among at least five state conventions that adopted resolutions denouncing racism during their respective annual meetings last fall, joining Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

Those measures on the state level came just a few months after messengers attending the national Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting last June in Phoenix, Arizona, passed a resolution "On the Anti-Gospel of Alt-Right White Supremacy." Resolutions that were adopted in

North Carolina and other states affirmed the sentiments expressed by the resolution adopted by the SBC.

In written comments made to Baptist Press, Russell Moore, president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said he thanked God "that our denomination has committed itself to opposing the satanic scourge of racism and to promoting racial unity."

I am glad that our state and national conventions have let it be known that racism in any form or expression is antithetical to the very gospel of Jesus Christ that we proclaim. Yet even as these resolutions were adopted, we saw ugly incidents and demonstrations across our land which showed that racism is still alive in our nation and underscored the reason why such statements need to be made by our denomination.

Although we have made good strides in our nation and even in our own denomination related to racial reconciliation and race relations, there is still a lot of work that remains to be done. While I applaud the resolutions that have been adopted and statements that have been made, I know that no resolution or statement about race or any other issue can change a person's heart and attitude. However, God can and He is willing to do that so you can change your behavior.

Consider the question that John the apostle asks in 1 John 4:20 about how can we profess to love God when we do not love our brother? I encourage us all to prayerfully examine our hearts both individually and corporately and then repent of any of the sins of racism that the Holy Spirit exposes to us.

Ask God to help you love individuals you have not loved because of their ethnicity. Reconcile means to come into a new and positive relationship with another person. Establish new relationships and show mutual respect to all people. While I am thankful for a day like Racial Reconciliation Sunday, let's strive for racial reconciliation every day and not just one day.

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" – 1 John 4:20 (NKJV). **BR**

## How churchgoing builds community

**T**he long-term decline in church attendance should trouble even those who are not personally religious. At this point, the benefits of regular church attendance (or any other kind of religious observance), both societal and personal, are virtually impossible to dispute.

For starters, it can literally add years to your life – two to three, to be exact. Though no one knows exactly why this is the case, it is well documented. At least part of the reason is that it promotes healthier lifestyles.

On average, regular churchgoers drink, smoke and use recreational drugs less than non-churchgoers do. They are also less likely to engage in sexual promiscuity.

That is what churchgoers don't do. As important, if not more important, is what they do. A few years ago, Stanford anthropologist T. M. Luhrmann, the author of *When God Talks Back*, told a story about a Bible study she attended while researching evangelicals (specifically, members of Vineyard churches).

When a member of the study tearfully told the group that she lacked \$1,500 for a necessary dental procedure, Luhrmann was amazed that the group paid for the procedure anonymously.

Luhrmann may have been amazed, but I suspect that regular churchgoers are not.

One of the characteristics of regular churchgoing is that it increases social ties and strengthens already existing ones. In other words, churchgoing creates communities that become the means by which people take care of another, as happened in the Bible study described by Luhrmann.

Then there is the effect of churchgoing on children. In his book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, sociologist Robert Putnam writes, "Compared to their unchurched peers, youth who are involved in a religious organization take tougher courses, get higher grades and test scores and are less likely to drop out of high school."

They also "have better relations with their parents and other adults, have more friendships with high-performing peers, are more involved in sports and other extracurricular activities." In fact, family churchgoing is so beneficial to academic performance

that "a child whose parents attend church regularly is 40 to 50 percent more likely to go on to college than a matched child of nonattenders."

Moreover, this is true regardless of socioeconomic status. The problem is that regular church attendance is increasingly tied to socioeconomic status. According to Putnam, while "weekly church attendance" among college-educated families since the late 1970s has remained more or less the same, it has dropped by almost a third among those with a high school diploma or less.

The result is "a substantial class gap that did not

exist" 50 years ago. It is yet another way that poorer children are falling behind their more affluent counterparts.

Churchgoing benefits those outside of the church as well. A recent study by Brian and Melissa Grim of Georgetown University and the Newseum Institute, respectively, found that the "value of the services provided by religious organizations and the impact religion has on a number of important American businesses" totals \$1.2 trillion, roughly equivalent to the gross domestic product of Australia.

Thus, regular church attendance and religious observance are good both for individuals and for society as a whole. Unfortunately, this suggests that the opposite is also true: Fewer people going to church is not good news either for individuals or for their communities.

In a sad irony, this decline is most visible in vulnerable communities of the sort described by Charles Murray in his 2012 book *Coming Apart*. In the poorer, less-educated communities that he calls "Fishtown," what Murray calls the "religiously disengaged" have become the majority. While the label "religiously disengaged" does not mean that they are not morally upright – many of them are – it does mean that as a group, they do not generate the same level of social capital (i.e., social relationships that produce benefits) that the churchgoing population generates.

Thus, whether they realize it or not, those who are vulnerable and whose personal "margin for error" is already very thin are making their already precarious situation even more precarious by not attending church.

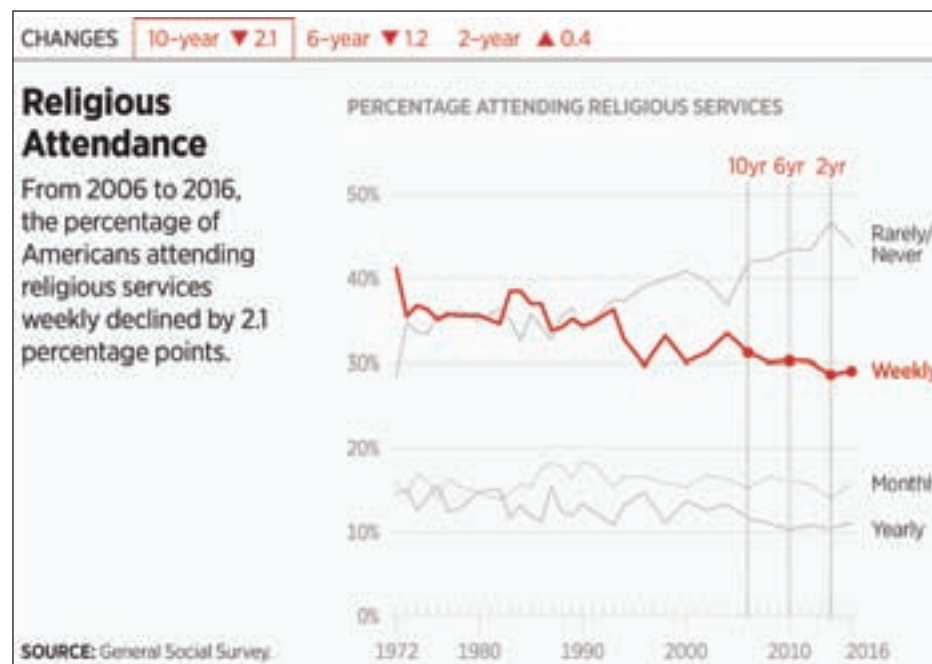
If the goal of a good society is to produce people

who can take advantage of opportunities for personal and familial advancement, then the decline in church attendance, which, as Murray notes, is most concentrated in poorer communities, will only make things worse.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – John Stonestreet is president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview and co-host of Break-Point, a daily national commentary on faith and culture. This article first appeared in The Heritage Foundation's 2017 Index of Culture and Opportunity. Used by permission.) **BR**



**JOHN STONESTREET**  
Guest Column





# Owen retires after 48 years at Mount Carmel Baptist

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

**A**fter serving as pastor of the same church for 48 years, Ronnie Owen baptized two adults and one child before preaching his closing sermon at Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Asheville on Jan. 28.

Owen and his wife, Nancy, came to the church in 1969 after serving two smaller churches in North Carolina.

The church launched a kindergarten ministry the next year that expanded to become the Child Enrichment Center in 1972. Today the impressive Family Ministries Center dominates the landscape across the street from the church's main worship and education facilities. During the week, families bring 65 children to the center for day care, and after school care is provided for children through grade 5. Children's Bible study classes use the building on Sunday morning.

The church has a flourishing Upwards Sports ministry. "On a typical Saturday, we probably have 600 folks through here," Owen told the *Biblical Recorder*. "We have 150-plus kids who are doing cheerleading or playing basketball."

Mount Carmel has experienced growth and seen progress in many areas of ministry. But with transparency, Owen said it has been challenging to reach millennials.

"The church has been successful in reaching some people of a different demographic but not on a large scale," he said. "With the changing demographic – and we are not a church that has kept up with reaching millennials – it is a challenge for us."

"How do we adapt to getting millennials engaged? I've tried to stay abreast of it through my reading and attending conferences on change, but it's been a huge challenge. Hopefully, the church will see more of that demographic reached in the future. We've got the tools for making that happen, and I'm praying for the new pastor."

Owen has some admonitions from his long tenured experience. It can be difficult to keep one's inner spiritual life refreshed, he said.

"The demands of counseling, sermon preparation, hospital visitation, etc., have a way of pulling one away from the priority of the 'quiet time.' A balance must be

found between the devotional and the duties aspects of ministry. We pastors preach that, but I think it's vital if we are to have fresh experience with our Lord daily. We must spend time with Him. That's our lifeline."

In a second word of counsel, Owen said he has felt the responsibility to bring "the unchanging truth of the gospel to an ever-changing culture." It is a challenge for pastors to stay on top of the changing demographics of their community and "... prayerfully seeking ways to bridge the communication gaps."

Appealing to his fellow pastors, Owen adds, "Find a way to get close to somebody who has been in the ministry longer than you. For pastors who face a tough time, make sure you've got a friend who you trust completely, let them pray with you, let them listen to you and you listen to them. We all need a mentor."

"I have been the beneficiary of having a great mentor. When I was a 16-year-old kid called into ministry, my pastor gave me a push when I needed it. Later, when I set foot in Buncombe County, some of the older pastors took some of us younger guys under their wing, took us out to lunch and just spent some 'pressure relief' time to encourage us."

Owen was quick to offer a lengthy list of "joys" from his extended ministry at the same church.

"The experience of visiting with mothers and babies at the hospital; enjoying his or her childhood; being there when they embrace Christ as Savior; when they earn their diplomas (and, frequently, their college degrees); enter their vocational careers; excel as spouses and parents; and seeing them become disciples and serving in ministries of the church is an incomparable joy," said Owen. "Also, serving alongside capable and complementary staff members has provided mutual benefits."

He said the role of his family in ministry has been profound. "One of the greatest blessings a pastor or any other human can experience is knowing that one's family is a forever family," said Owen.

His two daughters, their husbands and children are engaged in the life of this church. Both men have served as deacons in the past, but currently rotated off. "All six of our grandkids know the Lord and



While he may be retiring from Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Pastor Ronnie Owen, seen here with his wife, Nancy, plans to continue teaching at Fruitland Baptist Bible College. (Contributed photo)

are active in the church," he said.

Originally from Pisgah Forest, N.C., Owen's faith was nurtured at Turkey Creek Baptist Church where he responded to the call to ministry at age 16. He holds degrees from Mars Hill University and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Owen is the longest serving pastor of a single church in the Buncombe Baptist Association, and has rarely missed a wor-

ship service in his 48 years of service. The church recently conferred on Owen the title of "Pastor Emeritus." In retirement he plans to continue serving as a professor of Old Testament studies at Fruitland Baptist Bible College, mentoring new believers and enjoying more time with his family.

"I've never doubted that this is where I should be serving," he confidently added.

"With all my heart, I feel like the best days for this church are ahead." **BR**



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# A ‘strong and healthy church’ in Pownal, Vt.

Second part in a series

By MIKE CRESWELL | BSC Communications

**Y**ou could drive by and miss the town of Pownal, a sprawling rural town in Vermont’s southwest corner bordering New York to the west and Massachusetts to the south.

City slickers might say that about most of Vermont’s small towns, but Pownal really is harder to see.

The town has three sections, all of them rural, and beyond a small post office with a history plaque out front commemorating a 1946 event, there’s nothing like a Main Street that would tell you it’s a town.

A long-closed factory building sits rusting away. About 3,500 people live on Pownal’s hills and valleys that try to keep flat land at bay.

Jayson Dominey and his family moved to Pownal from New Bern, N.C., which has 10 times as many people and many more places to eat than one will find in Pownal.

But that’s not the main difference Dominey wants to talk about. It’s not even that Pepsi-Cola was invented in New Bern and not Pownal.

It’s much more serious: New Bern has many churches.

Pownal, on the other hand, has just two Bible-believing churches, including Faith Church, the Baptist church Dominey pastors.

If the two congregations had 100 people combined on a Sunday, it would be considered a very good Sunday.

The Pownal area is considered especially resistant to the gospel, partly because in earlier times it was settled mostly by non-believers.

“Some people here have had no contact with a Christian church in five or six generations,” Dominey said.

But again, that’s changing. Dominey is elated that three new families have joined Faith this year.

“Fantastic!” he exclaimed. Dominey is well aware that evangelism is a slow process here.

Faith was first established by American Baptists back in 1784 and Dominey figures its heyday was in the 1940s and 1950s. By the 1980s, the church had lost members and was struggling. Conservative Baptists replanted it in 1988.

A Conservative Baptist pastor led Faith for 28 years before retiring and moving back to Pennsylvania. Dominey, who had come here in 2015 as associate pastor, was asked to become lead pastor in January 2017.



ABOUT THIS SERIES: Vermont is a unique mission field, but North Carolina Baptists are helping increase the gospel influence in this New England state. Visit [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org) for more stories and look for stories in our *Biblical Recorder* print edition.

Jayson Dominey moved to Vermont in 2015 to become pastor of Faith Baptist Church, which has been extensively renovated by N.C. Baptist volunteers. He is from New Bern, N.C. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

Moving here was a big step for the Domineys and their now six children. “We knew it would be an adjustment, but we decided this was where God wanted us to be,” he said.

Just as the Domineys have North Carolina roots, so does Faith Church in a sense.

N.C. Baptist volunteers renovated the sanctuary so that it is by far one of the nicest-looking structures around.

And the adjoining 1,100-square-foot home was well built – and, importantly, well insulated – by volunteers from North Carolina.

That house is heated by a single wood-burning stove.

Dominey admits learning to start a fire and keep it going was a challenge the first winter.

Mount Nelson Missionary Baptist Church in Eureka, N.C., has sent teams to Pownal twice to work. They held Bible clubs for local kids.

A team from Buncombe Baptist Association, made up of churches in the

Asheville, N.C., area held a Vacation Bible School in a local community and reached 35 to 40 kids during the week in mid-2017. They also gave kids backpacks packed with food.

Teams have repainted the church’s exterior, installed cabinets and lighting in the kitchen area and poured work into the 106-year-old building in many other ways.

This kind of help from the South has been absolutely critical to the church’s survival, Dominey said.

“We want the church to be strong and healthy. That’s our long-term goal,” Dominey said.

“We’re able to touch so many more lives because of their help than we could ever do on our own.

“We’re five generations into lostness here, but it only takes a generation to lose the church,” Dominey said, adding that he is also concerned that the same generational decline is happening to some rural churches back in his home state of North Carolina. **BR**



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# What they won't tell you about DACA

**D**ACA has been in the news a lot lately. On Sept. 5, 2017, President Donald Trump rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that President Barack Obama initiated through executive action in 2012 and gave the program six months to sunset. DACA gave approximately 800,000 young immigrants, often called “Dreamers,” who were brought here illegally the opportunity to have work authorization, go to school and have a few other protections.

DACA did not provide legal status. It simply protected them from deportation and allowed them to work legally. To receive DACA, they had to pass background checks, meet other qualifications and renew every two years.

According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), an undocumented immigrant may request consideration for DACA if they:

1. Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Came to the U.S. before reaching their 16th birthday;
3. Have continuously resided in the U.S. since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
4. Were physically present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012, and at the time of requesting consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
5. Had no lawful status on June 15, 2012, meaning that: they never had a lawful immigration status on or before June 15, 2012, or any lawful immigration status or parole obtained prior to June 15, 2012, had expired as of June 15, 2012;
6. Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and
7. Have not been convicted of a felony, a significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

But, DACA was ended last September and on March 5, the six month grace period that President Trump gave for Congress to work out a permanent solution will expire.

When that happens, approximately 1,700 young immigrant Dreamers will lose their status each day and will be subject to deportation like all other undocumented immigrants.

President Trump has declared it is the job of Congress to solve this issue and that is what is now being debated.

With polls showing over 80 percent of Americans favoring an earned pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants brought to America as children, there is a good amount of pressure on President Trump and Congress to come to an agreement.

Evangelical leaders have been very clear about the need to protect Dreamers from deportation by providing them legalization.

A recent statement prepared by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and signed by many evangelical pastors and leaders states, among other things:

“We believe it is unjust to punish children for offenses they did not commit. We recognize that Dreamers are a special category of immigrants because they broke no law and committed no offense.

“How we treat this category of immigrants is therefore not just a policy or political issue – it is a moral issue.

“Subjecting Dreamers to deportation or lives of perpetual insecurity in the shadows of our communities is an offense to the rule of law and to the purpose of government, which is for the good of people.”

## Is DACA amnesty?

There are differing views on what should be done with young immigrant Dreamers. Some have said that anything short of deporting them all would constitute “amnesty,” a violation of the “rule of law,” and an acquiescence to “open borders.”



ALAN CROSS  
Guest Column

In reality, an earned pathway to citizenship for Dreamers that would take 10-12 years is, by definition, not amnesty.

Amnesty is a pardon for crimes committed. Dreamers were brought here or sent here as children. They have grown up here and many do not even have a memory of their home country. Providing them an earned, legal pathway is not “amnesty.” It gives them a chance to earn a way to stay in the only country they have ever known. Congress legally changing the law to create this earned pathway does not violate the rule of law. It actually upholds it.

## Are Dreamers criminals?

I know many Dreamers who were brought here from 6 months to 3 years old. They have been educated in American schools, speak English perfectly, are working or going to college, have American born, U.S. citizen children, and are contributing in every way, even paying taxes.

Many of the ones I know are Christians. They have no memory of their home country. They do not want to be lawbreakers, but rather, they want to be right with the law and go on to live a productive life in the only country they know.

## Why should Christians care?

As a Christian, I believe that vulnerable people should be treated well.

Leviticus 19:33-34 says, “*When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*”

No matter what is decided by Congress before March 5, a permanent fix and earned pathway for citizenship for Dreamers should be included. I believe it is the right and moral thing to do.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Alan Cross is a Southern Baptist minister serving as a missional strategist for the Montgomery (Ala.) Baptist Association and speaks on behalf of immigrants and refugees throughout the Southeast.) **BR**

# Adoption, foster care common in churches, study says

By **BOB SMIETANA** | Facts & Trends

**T**he Bible has a lot to say about caring for orphans. Protestant churches in the United States appear to be listening.

About four in 10 Protestant churchgoers say their congregation has been involved with adoption or foster care in the past year, according to a study released Jan. 24 by LifeWay Research, which conducted the survey Aug. 22-30.

The church's involvement on this issue may be because the Bible tells them to, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “Foster care appears to come naturally for churchgoers,” he said. “It's not surprising, since the Bible commands them to care for widows and orphans.”

Since the early 2000s, many Protestant churches have commemorated “Orphan

Sunday” every November to draw attention to the plight of orphans around the world.

In the past, they've often focused on international adoption and orphanages. But in recent years, foster care – both in the United States and abroad – has become a focus as well.

LifeWay Research's survey of 1,010 churchgoers – those who attend a Protestant or nondenominational church at least once a month – found 25 percent say someone from their church has been involved in foster care over the past year. Seventeen percent say someone from their church has adopted a child from the U.S. in the past year. Fifteen percent say someone from their church has adopted a child from another country.

Those at larger churches, with 250 or more in attendance, are most likely to know someone in their church who has

provided foster care (37 percent). Those who attend smaller churches, with fewer than 250 in attendance, are less likely (20 percent).

Those who attend nondenominational churches (39 percent) are the most likely to know someone who has fostered children. Churchgoers from nondenominational churches are also most likely to know someone at church who had adopted a child from the United States (25 percent). Baptists (15 percent), Lutherans (12 percent) and Pentecostals (10 percent) are less likely.

Churchgoers from larger congregations are more likely to know someone who had adopted from abroad (30 percent) than those from smaller churches (7 percent). So are those from nondenominational churches (34 percent).

White (20 percent) and Hispanic (15 percent) churchgoers are more likely

than African-American churchgoers (4 percent) to say someone from their church has adopted a child from another country.

Still, church leaders in general don't talk much about adoption, according to LifeWay Research's survey.

Fourteen percent of churchgoers say church leaders have encouraged families to consider adoption.

Twelve percent say church leaders encouraged them to become involved in foster care. Eight percent say church leaders raised funds for families that are adopting. Six percent say church leaders provided training for foster parents.

Overall, about half (45 percent) of churchgoers say their church has had no involvement with or conversation about foster care and adoption.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – See full story at [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org).) **BR**

# They ‘paid a big price’ for racial reconciliation

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

**S**triving for racial reconciliation was costly for some Southern Baptist pastors in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. It cost Jack Kwok his property, Paul Turner a beating by angry segregationists and Thomas Holmes his pastorate.

But Kwok, now executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, says the price pastors and other ministers paid was worth the result: Today, though more progress is needed, nearly one in five Southern Baptist churches is non-Anglo, and about half of North American Mission Board church plants are predominantly non-Anglo.

“A lot of guys really paid a big price along the way,” Kwok told Baptist Press (BP), downplaying his own sacrifice. “They’re the heroes.”

## Black and white opposition

As a 19-year-old student at what is now Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Ark., Kwok was called in 1969 to pastor Mallory Heights Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn. Kwok prioritized multiethnic ministry in what was then a transitioning neighborhood. Eventually, African Americans comprised some 40 percent of worship attendees and numerous blacks professed faith in Christ through church outreach ministries, Kwok said. Consequently, Kwok met resistance from blacks and whites alike.

Church members voiced opposition. Kwok’s house was broken into seven times by people he believes opposed his ministry. His car was vandalized, and at times he was surrounded by threatening groups on the street. “I’d let them get all the way around me,” Kwok said. “Then I’d say, ‘I’m glad you all are gathered here tonight. Let me give you a little piece of paper that tells you about Jesus.’” The



In 1956, Clinton, Tenn., became a hotbed of racial strife amid controversy over integrating the town’s high school. (Screen capture from YouTube)

formerly threatening crowds would scatter so quickly that “I’d have to chase them down to give the piece of paper to them.”

Kwok went on to lead interracial ministries for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention before taking leadership in the Ohio convention in 1996.

## ‘I thought they were ... killing him’

Turner, pastor of First Baptist Church in Clinton, Tenn., was beaten by whites who were angry with his decision to escort six black teenagers to the previously all white Clinton High School in December 1956.

Because of a judge’s desegregation order, the black students “had a moral right to attend [school] unchecked and unhindered and unharassed,” Turner told CBS News at the time. “It was this that prompted me to accompany them.”

Turner previously had taught a biblical view of race at First Baptist and helped

organize community support for peaceful school desegregation, according to a 1977 essay by Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary student Mary Cleveland, who interviewed Turner, then a professor at the seminary.

Already the focus of intense opposition in Clinton, Turner’s walk with the students led a group of men to attack him on his way back to First Baptist.

The beating was so severe that one witness told CBS News, “I thought they were actually killing him.”

The following Sunday, Turner told First Baptist that the Bible “never compromises with sin, with pride, with prejudice or with hate,” according to a CBS video of his sermon.

Turner committed suicide in 1980. His family and friends said he had experienced depression ever since being mistreated in Clinton, according to a 2015 profile by the online publication Narratively.

## ‘I refused to go out the back door’

Holmes, pastor of Tattnall Square Baptist Church in Macon, Ga., ran afoul of some in the congregation after he did not prevent black teenagers at a Mercer University summer program from attending worship in 1966.

The month following their visit, the church voted 289-109 to close its doors to blacks, according to Holmes’ 1969 memoir *Ashes for Breakfast*. In September, the church voted 250-189 to fire all three of its pastoral staff members over their belief worshipers of all races should be permitted to attend.

“Hundreds of southern churches had pressured ministers with racial views like mine to resign quietly and slip out the back door,” wrote Holmes, whose case

drew national media attention.

“These churches had thus avoided the glare of publicity revealing their unchristian machinations. Then they had gone on in their evil course. Often they had blacklisted their former pastors for all future years.

“At whatever the cost, I refused to go out the back door. The principle of human rights and the freedom of the pulpit are too important not to make a fight for them,” wrote Holmes, who died in 1985.

## Willing to ‘stick it out’

Carlisle Driggers, retired executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, said staff members at Baptist state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention entities also sacrificed for racial reconciliation.

As an example, he cited Bill Davis of the Mississippi Baptist Convention staff, who was run off the road, pulled out of his car and beaten one Sunday night after speaking at an African American church. Staff members at other state conventions and the Home Mission Board (HMB) – the North American Mission Board’s precursor organization – made similar sacrifices, Driggers told BP.

Some men who dedicated their lives to working for racial reconciliation through denominational service “were excellent preachers and good pastors,” said Driggers, who pastored an interracial church in Kentucky, worked in the HMB’s black church relations department and attempted to help integrate First Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.

“The sacrifice was that they could have been pastors of influential churches and made fine salaries and fringe benefits for themselves,” Driggers said.

“But they didn’t do that. They chose instead to work in state conventions [and SBC entities] where their salaries were nominal and they traveled and traveled and traveled.”

Emmanuel McCall, hired by the HMB in 1968 as the first black staff member at any SBC entity, told BP via email that pastors and other ministers who stood for racial reconciliation in the mid-20th century “had several things in common”:

- “A sense of divine call to a priority in justice issues”;
- “They joined the Apostle Paul in finding ‘joy’ in suffering for the sake of the [g]ospel”;
- “They took Jesus seriously in ‘turning the other cheek’ or ‘walking the extra mile’”;
- “They knew how to find humor even in situations that distressed them”; and
- “They were willing to ‘stick it out’ to see what the end will be.” ■■

## LifeWay Architecture marks 100 years

LifeWay Christian Resources

**L**ifeWay Architecture began 2018 working toward the next 100 years of serving local churches, having marked its centennial anniversary in 2017.

“This is an important milestone in the history of LifeWay,” said Eric Geiger, LifeWay’s senior vice president and chief business officer.

Since 2013, LifeWay has partnered with Visioneering Studios – a nationwide faith-based, design-build firm with multi-disciplinary studios and national architecture and construction licensure.

In 1917, after spending several years advising churches on their new buildings, restructuring their existing facilities and maximizing space for multi-purpose use, the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay) established a church architecture department with Prince E. Burroughs as its department leader. LifeWay Architecture hired its first architect in 1922, survived the Great Depression and grew to more than 60 employees by the post-World War II era.

For more information on Visioneering Studios, visit their website at [visioneeringstudios.com](http://visioneeringstudios.com), email [contact@visioneeringstudios.com](mailto:contact@visioneeringstudios.com), or call (888) 539-1957. ■■



# N.C. giving to CP, other offerings up in 2017

By **CHAD AUSTIN** | BSC Communications

**N**orth Carolina Baptist churches increased their support to missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program (CP) and other special offerings in 2017, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) officials reported to the BSC Board of Directors at a meeting held Jan. 29-30 at Caraway Conference Center and Camp near Asheboro.

Year-over-year giving through CP, the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO), the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) increased significantly from 2016 to 2017, BSC officials said.

CP giving totaled more than \$29.9 million in 2017, which was up by more than \$1 million (3.7 percent) from 2016. Although total giving receipts fell about \$428,000 (1.4 percent) below last year's \$30.375 million budget, the convention still finished 2017 operating in the black.

"We are very grateful that God continues to bless us as we are seeking to be faithful to the strategy that He has given us to impact lostness in North Carolina," said John Butler, the BSC's executive leader for Business Services.

Giving to the NCMO, which supports a variety of ministries including disaster relief and church planting, totaled more than \$2 million in 2017, an increase of more than 10.5 percent from 2016.

Although NCMO giving fell about \$18,000 short of the offering's \$2.1 million goal last year, BSC Associate Executive Director-Treasurer Brian Davis said the increase in total giving shows that churches are recognizing the value of supporting NCMO in addition to making designated gifts.

"Many times when we have multiple disasters in the fall when the North Carolina Missions Offering is received, that tends to have a negative impact on the NCMO," Davis said. "This year, that was not the case. Our churches gave generously to the North Carolina Missions Offering and generously to a number of different designated causes for hurricanes and other disaster relief."

Last year also saw increased support from North Carolina churches for the Southern Baptist Convention's annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Giving to the AAEO in North Carolina totaled more than \$6.2 million in 2017, an increase of more than 4 percent. Giving to the LMCO in North Carolina totaled nearly \$14.9 million in 2017, an increase of nearly 14.7 percent.

Although Butler said some of the increase in Lottie Moon giving for 2017 could be attributed to how accounting deadlines fell at the end of both 2016 and 2017, he said last year's total marked the highest amount ever given to the LMCO by North Carolina Baptists.

Butler also said North Carolina ranked first among all state conventions in LMCO gifts and second in AAEO gifts last year.

## Board officers elected

In other business, the board elected officers and at-large members to the board's Executive Committee.

Marc Francis, pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Durham, and John Mark Harrison, pastor of Apex Baptist Church, were both re-elected as board president and vice president, respectively.

Four board members were also elected to serve as at-large members of the Executive Committee. They were:

- Ken Jones, pastor of evangelism and discipleship at Shady Grove Baptist Church in Cherryville.
- Matt Ledbetter, pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church in Sylva.
- Clay Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Matthews.

- Melanie Wallace, member of Hephzibah Baptist Church in Wendell.

In addition, six other individuals joined the Executive Committee by virtue of being elected as chairmen of one of the board's committees. They are:

- Rick Byrd, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Greensboro and chairman of the Evangelism and Discipleship Committee.
- Lawrence Clapp, pastor of South Elm Street Baptist Church in Greensboro and chairman of the Church Planting and Missions Partnerships Committee.
- Troy Grant, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Hickory and chairman of the Christian Life and Public Affairs Special Committee.
- George Hunnicutt, pastor of Mill Creek Baptist Church in Monroe and chairman of the Communications Committee.
- Boyce Porter, pastor of Geneva Baptist Church in Camden and chairman of the Convention Relations Special Committee.
- David Richardson, associate pastor at First Baptist Church of Creedmoor and chairman of the Business Services Special Committee.

The board also approved seven individuals recommended by BSC President Lee Pigg to serve on the convention's Committee on Nominations. They are:

- Mark Brady, associate pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Moyock.
- Carolyn Fowler, member of Meherrin Baptist Church in Murfreesboro.
- Sam Harvin, pastor of Anderson Creek Community Church in Spring Lake.
- Connie Millsaps, member of Pine Grove Baptist Church in Franklin.
- Josh Pruitt, pastor of West Point Baptist Church in Rutherfordton.
- Jason Wilkinson, pastor of Union Chapel Baptist Church in Zebulon.
- Robin Fisher, pastor of Sunset Avenue Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, who will fill the 2018 unex-

pired term of Joseph Phan.

The board also approved recommendations for two individuals to serve as at-large members of the Business Services Special Committee. They were:

- Eric Chetwood, member of the Summit Church in Durham.
- James Zik, associate pastor of Beach Road Baptist Church in Southport.

## Caraway motion approved

In other business, the board approved a motion brought by the Business Services Special Committee authorizing the convention to negotiate a contract with the Piedmont Land Conservancy for a conservation easement on up to 235 acres of land at Caraway Conference Center and Camp.

Conservation easements are legal agreements between landowners and private organizations or public agencies which limit certain uses and development on a specified piece of property.

The Caraway easement would prohibit any future residential or commercial development on the tract of land, but would still permit Caraway to use the property for its camps and other recreational and educational programs and activities.

Convention officials said they estimate the easement would generate between \$400,000 and \$500,000 based on an appraisal of the property.

The Piedmont Land Conservancy would raise funds from private donors to purchase the easement rights and all proceeds would be placed in a fund earmarked for future development projects at Caraway.

Caraway and convention officials said the easement would not impact the camp's plans for future growth. The easement property is not part of Caraway's long-term development plans, and even with the easement, the camp still owns about 500 acres of land that could be used for development.

"This wouldn't restrict us in any way or affect our long-range plans for Caraway ... or our activities at Camp Caraway and the conference center," Butler said.

Caraway Director Jimmy Huffman called the proposed easement a "win-win" situation.

"It's a property that we can continue to use just as we have, and we'll get some compensation for it," Huffman said, adding that among the places at Caraway to designate for preservation, "this would be the space."

Any negotiated easement agreement and contract would be presented to the BSC Board of Directors for discussion and a final vote.

The next meeting of the board is scheduled for May 21-22 at Caraway Conference Center. ■



## McRaney v. NAMB lawsuit to proceed

*Biblical Recorder*

**I**n the latest developments of a lawsuit involving Will McRaney, former executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware (BCMD), and the North American Mission Board (NAMB), a U.S. district court judge decided Jan. 18 not to dismiss some claims made by McRaney that NAMB wrongfully interfered in his business engagements, although one claim was rejected.

The suit alleges that NAMB defamed McRaney, causing his termination from the BCMD, and subsequently influenced others to remove him from speaking engagements in Florida and Mississippi.

NAMB filed a motion to dismiss McRaney's claims on multiple grounds.

Judge Glen Davidson of the Northern District of Mississippi dismissed the allegation related to a Florida speaking engagement, but ruled that other claims met the minimum requirements for consideration. ■



# N.C. Baptists impacting lostness ‘more than ever’

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

**N**orth Carolina Baptists are pushing back spiritual darkness and making disciples in the state, across the nation and around the world at increasingly growing rates, according to Executive Director-Treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr. and other Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) ministry leaders.

More and more churches have embraced the BSC strategy of “impacting lostness through disciple-making” since its implementation in January 2014. The result has been steady growth in the number of people engaged with the gospel who are growing and making disciples through efforts like missions giving, church planting, collegiate ministry, missions partnerships and more.

Hollifield and other leaders provided an update on the progress being made in fulfillment of the strategy to the state convention’s Board of Directors during a meeting held Jan. 29-30 at Caraway Conference Center and Camp near Asheville.

“This [strategy] drives what we are about,” Hollifield said.

## Pockets of lostness

Hollifield said the strategy utilizes an “Acts 1:8 model” which emphasizes

evangelizing and discipling individuals from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, beginning in local communities and extending to North America and the entire world.

Based on research conducted prior to the strategy’s implementation, state convention officials identified 250 “pockets of lostness,” which are small geographic areas where the overwhelming majority of people do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The top 100 of these pockets are located in and around the eight major urban areas across

North Carolina – Asheville, Hickory, the Triad (Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point), the Triangle (Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill), Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greenville and Wilmington. The remaining 150 pockets are located in rural areas all across the state.

BSC strategy coordinators assigned to each region work with local churches to identify and engage pockets of lostness in their respective areas. To date, strategy coordinators have worked with churches to begin reaching 68 of the top 100 and 51 of the next 150 pockets of lostness.

BSC Associate Executive Director-Treasurer Brian Davis said that while the

convention and local ministry leaders have learned a great deal in working to reach pockets of lostness, the ongoing work “is going to take our best investment over the long haul.”

## Reaching unreached people groups

Additionally, state convention leaders have identified representatives from 158 unreached people groups living in North Carolina. An unreached people

**“We give God the glory for the great things He is doing.”**

**– Milton Hollifield**

group is one whose total population has less than 2 percent who are evangelical Christians. Many

members of unreached people groups living in North Carolina also reside in one of the 250 pockets of lostness.

Thanks to the BSC Office of Great Commission Partnerships working alongside local churches, 85 of those 158 unreached people groups in North Carolina have been engaged with the gospel.

## Increase in missions partnerships, church plants

Additionally, the Great Commission Partnerships’ office has seen tremendous growth in the number of N.C. Baptist churches that have engaged in North American or international missions partnerships. In 2014, just 79 N.C. Baptist churches were involved in a missions partnership in North America or around the world. That figure has grown to 348 churches through the end of 2017, an increase of more than 340 percent in four years.

“We’re making great strides in the area of mobilization,” said Chuck Register, BSC executive leader for the Church Planting and Missions Partnerships Group.

Register also said the BSC has welcomed 408 new churches to the convention’s fellowship since 2014 as either new church plants or new affiliate churches. Of these churches, 290 (71 percent) were non-Anglo congregations, and 127 (31 percent) were located in one of the 250 identified pockets of lostness. In 2017 alone, the convention worked with 101 new churches that reported more than 6,800 professions of faith and more than 5,400 in average weekly worship attendance.

## Reaching college students

The implementation of the convention’s disciple-making strategy in 2014 marked a new approach to collegiate ministry. BSC consultants now work with local churches to help them engage college, community college and university campuses in their area.

In 2014, only nine of the state’s 148

campuses were being engaged with the gospel by a ministry affiliated with the state convention. Through the end of 2017, 52 campuses are being engaged by local churches, which represents an increase of 478 percent in four years.

In 2017, 310 college students in North Carolina made professions of faith, more than 1,900 were disciplined in groups, more than 1,000 received evangelism training, more than 750 received leadership training and more than 400 served as summer missionaries, Register said.

## Church revitalization

In addition to planting new churches, the convention strategy also emphasizes strengthening existing churches through church health and revitalization efforts.

Lynn Sasser, BSC executive leader for the Evangelism and Discipleship Group, said studies show that the “great majority” of churches nationwide are either plateaued or declining, adding that approximately 900 Southern Baptist churches close each year.

While acknowledging that church revitalization is a “spiritual issue” and ultimately a work of God, Sasser said convention staffers and contract workers have connected with more than 2,100 associational leaders, pastors and lay leaders representing nearly 850 different associations and churches to assist with revitalization.

“Our revitalization specialists help pastors and church leaders assess their current reality, envision a future of making disciples and build strategies to impact their communities with the gospel,” Sasser said.

## Reaching the next generation

One of the underlying goals of the strategy is to reach individuals at every age and stage of life, Sasser said. Each year, numerous middle and high school students respond to the gospel during Summer Youth Weeks sponsored by the BSC Youth Evangelism and Discipleship Ministry at the N.C. Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell.

Since 2014, nearly 26,000 people have attended youth weeks, with nearly 1,500 making first-time professions of faith, more than 6,800 rededicating their lives to Christ and more than 1,100 answering a call to vocational ministry.

Additionally, in 2017 the convention launched a ministry titled “Faith at Home,” which is designed to help churches equip parents and grandparents to be the primary disciple-makers of their children and grandchildren. In the Faith at Home ministry’s first year, more than 70 pastors from 32 N.C. Baptist churches learned how to implement Faith at Home

**See Lostness page 16**

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# J.D. Greear first announced SBC president candidate

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

**N**orth Carolina pastor J.D. Greear will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at this year's annual meeting, Florida pastor Ken Whitten announced Jan. 29.

"I believe in J.D. Greear as a pastor and as a person, but I also believe in his vision for Southern Baptists," said Whitten, pastor of Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Fla.

The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., where Greear is pastor, has been applauded for its evangelistic and church planting emphasis.

"J.D. walks the walk and talks the talk when it comes to evangelism and missions," Whitten told the *Biblical Recorder*. "The tongue in his mouth and the tongue in his shoe go the same direction."

The Summit has led North Carolina churches for the past two years in Cooperative Program (CP) giving, contributing more than half a million dollars each year, according to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

The church allocated nearly 20 percent (\$3.8 million) of its 2017 budget for Great Commission Giving to SBC missions and ministries, including \$275,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions and \$100,000 to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions.

During Greear's 16-year tenure, the church has grown from a few hundred attendees to more than 10,000 across multiple campuses. It began as Homestead Heights Baptist Church in 1962, and started a revitalization process in 2002, the year after Greear was called as pastor. The Summit has started 248 churches, including 208 outside the United States. More than 630 people were baptized last year at The Summit.

In addition, 158 Summit members currently serve as International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries, with 17 participants in the "limitless pathways" initiative, meaning those missionaries continue to work in professional careers while partnering voluntarily with an IMB team. Greear previously served as an IMB missionary in Southeast Asia.

The church has sent nearly 1,000 people to do mission work over the years, both domestically and internationally, and committed in 2014 to give \$500,000 over a five year period to help fund an endowed chair at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, N.C.

The Summit also values diversity, with

nearly 17 percent of its congregants being non-white, including Spanish and Mandarin speaking campuses.

Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., said, "I hope J.D. is elected as our new SBC president. He is an inspiration for us all as pastor of [The] Summit Church in the amazing number of people that are baptized there; in the awesome number of new campuses and church plants they have begun; and in the astounding number of people being sent out from Summit in international missions. I really believe he is God's man for this day to lead Southern Baptist Christians into the future."

Greear previously ran for SBC president in 2016, along with current president Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., and Louisiana pastor David Crosby. He withdrew from the race in an effort to promote unity across the convention after two close votes failed to settle the election.

The *Recorder* reported last year that Gaines offered in 2016 to nominate Greear for SBC president in 2018 upon hearing that Greear would withdraw from the election. Gaines told the *Recorder* Jan. 29 that, after discussing the matter, they both agreed a nomination by a sitting president would establish an unhealthy precedent for the convention. Gaines said he did not want to play "kingmaker."

Greear told the *Recorder* that Gaines's impromptu offer "ought to be classified as a statement of support rather than some well thought out promise to nominate."

Gaines said Greear would enjoy his "full support" if elected president in 2018.

"He is a wonderful pastor and preacher," Gaines said. "He has preached for us at Bellevue and our people loved him. He is extremely evangelistic. The church he leads is growing and baptizing hundreds every year. I believe J.D. is a magnanimous, gifted leader who would seek to be a unifier among all the various groups within the SBC."

Gaines also told the *Recorder* that, if Greear is elected this year and decided in due course to bid for a second term, he would be willing to nominate Greear for re-election in 2019.

Relating Greear's upcoming nomination to the 2016 election and Gaines's subsequent two-term presidency, Whitten said, "I believe God has been orchestrating that what Southern Baptists needed to do was focus on revival and prayer before anything else. I do not see



J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., preaches during the last session of the 2015 Pastors' Conference in Columbus, Ohio. It was announced Jan. 29 that Greear would be nominated for Southern Baptist Convention president. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

[Greear's vision for the SBC] competing with Pastor Steve Gaines's vision, or any presidents prior, but I think it is a continuation and a deepening of where we need to go and where we need to be as Southern Baptists."

Greear said in a blog post Jan. 30, "after a lot of prayer, encouragement and counsel, with the consent of our leadership team and Veronica my wife," he will accept the nomination, adding the emphases – "God laid on my heart" for the SBC haven't changed since 2016:

- "Gospel above all"
- "Cultural and racial diversity"
- "Intentional, personal evangelism"
- "Church planting"
- "College mobilization"
- "Engaging the next generation in cooperative mission."

Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, said Greear is "wise, gifted and qualified at every level to lead Southern Baptists. I am personally grateful for J.D.'s willingness to serve and represent our convention of churches."

## Opens Continued from page 1

### Child care, youth registration

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief child care volunteers will care for preschoolers while Giant Cow Children's Ministries will lead the 5-12 year olds and Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) will guide the Youth on Mission curricula and activities.

All activities for children and youth will be housed at the Kay Bailey Hutcheson Convention Center, the annual meeting site.

Youth who have completed grades 7-12 will begin their days at the convention center with worship each morning before going into the community for hands-on mission projects.

Pre-registration is required and will be handled online at [sbcannualmeeting.net](http://sbcannualmeeting.net) under the "children/youth" tab. The deadline for registration is May 11 for

James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Ga., echoed that sentiment, "The racial, generational and denominational vision he would bring to this position is exactly what the doctor has ordered for where we are today. J.D. will build on the great leadership of our current president has given, and I am honored to give him my personal endorsement."

Greear, 44, has four children, and is a two-time SEBTS graduate, with master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees. He has authored multiple books, including *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*, *Gaining by Losing* and the forthcoming *Not God Enough: Why Your Small God Leads to Big Problems*.

Kenneth Hemphill, member of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C., and former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will also be nominated for SBC president. See story on page 11.

The SBC annual meeting is June 12-13 in Dallas, Texas. **BR**

most programs, or when the space limitation of 125 children is reached. There will be no on-site registration.

### Missions, Harvest America

There are other opportunities to serve in Texas. Visit [harvestamerica.com](http://harvestamerica.com) to plan to participate June 10 in a crusade in Arlington, Texas.

Crossover Dallas is also planned prior to the meeting to reach people for Christ. Visit [namb.net/evangelism/crossover](http://namb.net/evangelism/crossover).

A revitalization/church planting lab is also planned prior to and after the meeting with efforts with Reach Houston Initiative. Visit [sbtexas.com/mobilization](http://sbtexas.com/mobilization).

Visit the [sbcannualmeeting.net](http://sbcannualmeeting.net) page to find out other related events and check future issues of the *Biblical Recorder* as well as its website, [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org). **BR**



# Ken Hemphill joins race for SBC president

*Biblical Recorder*

**K**enneth Hemphill, member of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C., and former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS), will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at this year's annual meeting, Louisiana's *Baptist Message* reported Feb. 1.

The announcement came from a "group of distinguished Southern Baptists," according to the *Message*. At this time it is unclear who will make the nomination at the SBC annual meeting June 12-13 in Dallas, Texas.

"Some interested Southern Baptist pastors and leaders have been thinking together for several weeks about whom God might raise up to follow Dr. Steve Gaines as our SBC president," David Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, told the *Message*.

"We desire to elect a man who is a Southern Baptist through and through, values our understanding of the gospel and has an established record of affirming the cooperative work of our local churches through the associations, state conventions and national entities.

"We sought Ken out because of his record in these areas as well as his impeccable character, remarkable breadth of experience in Southern Baptist life, passion for missions and evangelism and an active ministry of re-vitalization to pastors and churches."

Hemphill, 69, was SWBTS president from 1994-2003 and national strategist from 2003-11 for the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG) emphasis, an initiative launched in 2002 calling Southern Baptists to renewed passion for God's Kingdom.

When EKG transitioned from the SBC to North Greenville University (NGU) in 2011, Hemphill became founding director of the university's Center for Church Planting and Revitalization, continuing EKG's emphases under the acronym CPR. After retiring from that position, he returned to NGU to serve as special assistant to the president for denominational relations.

Hemphill also pastored churches in Kentucky and Virginia and led the Home Mission Board's (now the North American Mission Board) Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth in the early 1990s.

Hemphill told Baptist Press (BP) he wants the SBC to "reclaim our heritage of cooperative partnerships."

"I think there has been an erosion of how local churches, associations, state conventions and the national convention really function together in every dimension of the Great Commission," Hemphill said.

In a written statement to BP, he underscored his commitment to the Cooperative Program, the Baptist Faith and Message and the "Statement of the Tradi-

tional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation."

First Baptist Hendersonville recorded 20 baptisms in 2017, with an average worship attendance of 1,475, according to Annual Church Profile data. Over the past decade, the church saw a high of 78 baptisms in 2009.

The *Message* reported First Baptist Hendersonville's Cooperative Program (CP) giving exceeded \$860,000 for the last two years combined.

A church representative told BP it has given 10 percent of undesignated receipts through the CP annually since at least the mid-1990s. It is among the top CP-giving churches in North Carolina.

Richard Land, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte and former president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, endorsed Hemphill, saying "Ken has served Southern Baptists his entire adult life, having been a successful pastor and seminary president," according to the *Message*.

"He has championed the local church and has challenged Southern Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission," he continued.

"I believe that Dr. Hemphill's entire ministry until now has been used by God to prepare him to serve as our Convention president at this propitious moment."

NGU President Gene Fant called Hemphill a "great convention statesman."

"Dr. Hemphill's passion for the local church, for personal evangelism, and for intentional and careful cultural engagement is a model for all of us," he said.

"His desire for discipleship is exemplary, as is his love for cooperative missions. I am grateful for his willingness to extend his lifelong service to us in this way."

Rick Patrick, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sylacauga, Ala., said, "God has given Dr. Ken Hemphill a brilliant mind, a pure heart, a passion

for souls and a clear vision to make Southern Baptists great again."

The *Message* also reported endorsements from Alex McFarland, radio host and director of NGU's Center for Christian Worldview and Apologetics, and Kie Bowman, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

Hemphill and his wife, Paula, live in Greenville, S.C. He holds degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Cambridge University and has authored multiple books, including *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur*, *The Antioch Effect* and *Life Answers: Making Sense of Your World*.

J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., is also a candidate for SBC president. See story on page 10.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Compiled from reports by Baptist Press and Louisiana's Baptist Message.) **BR**



It was announced Feb. 1 that Ken Hemphill would be joining the race for Southern Baptist Convention president. (BP photo)

## Front Street Baptist families settle lawsuits

From wire reports

**L**awyers reported Jan. 30 that families of five Statesville church members killed in a 2013 crash have settled lawsuits relating to an Oct 2, 2013, accident.

The lawsuits, which are for wrongful death, are against South Korean tire manufacturer Hankook Tire Co. Ltd. Twelve others who were hurt in the accident on Interstate 40 in Tennessee had already settled personal injury complaints.

Members of Front Street Baptist Church's Young at Heart Seniors Ministry bus crossed the median, hitting an SUV and then a tractor trailer near Knoxville, Tenn. The group was returning from an event in Gatlinburg, Tenn. Both the driver of the truck (Moses Farmer) and a passenger in the SUV (Trent Roberts) were killed, along with the bus driver and his wife, Randy and Barbara Morrison and church members: Cloyce Matheny, Marsha McLelland, Brenda Smith and John Wright. Other church members were injured in the crash.

Investigators blamed failure of a front tire on the church's bus.

Lawsuits brought by three other families – Farmer, Roberts and Randy Morrison – remain pending in court. Terms of the settlement are confidential, the lawyers said. **BR**

## N.C. leaders part of ERLC council

Baptist Press

**T**he Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) announced Jan. 24 its 2018 Leadership Council.

The 75 pastors and leaders on the council will receive equipping from the ERLC staff designed to help them and their churches apply the gospel of Jesus to all areas of life. The commission, which initiated the council in 2014, unveils its latest list of council members each January.

ERLC President Russell Moore said he is excited each year "to be able to partner with a new group of leaders from around the country who are eager to address issues of great importance with a gospel focus both in the life of their churches and in the public square.

"As an organization, we exist to serve churches, as they engage some of the most difficult cultural and societal questions imaginable every day," Moore said in a written release. "I'm thrilled to be able to serve alongside these men and women to do all we can to model faithful Christian witness."

Among the 2018 members are leaders in North Carolina:

- J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh/Durham, N.C., area;
- Ronnie Parrott, lead pastor of Christ Community Church in Huntersville, N.C.;
- Seth Brown, content editor for the *Biblical Recorder* and lay pastor at Imago Dei Church in Raleigh;
- Jeff Long, senior pastor at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia;
- Laura Thigpen, pastor's wife (Imago Dei Church), adoptive mom, freelance writer and administrative assistant at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Parrott said he is elated to serve on the council. "In a time when cultural confusion runs rampant, the ERLC is shining a bright light on biblical convictions such as life, sexuality and gender," he said.

Council members receive training from the ERLC through events and conference calls. They provide counsel to commission staff and sometimes write for the ERLC's website.

The entire list of council members is available at [erlc.com/about/leadership-council](http://erlc.com/about/leadership-council). **BR**



# Baptismal waters stir again at Cedar Rock

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

**C**edar Rock First Baptist Church in Castalia, N.C., filled its baptistry Jan. 14 for the first time in nearly a decade, said Pastor Nathaniel Williams.

Two people in their 20s, Casey Bolton and Angel Sauls, were baptized that Sunday morning.

Williams said the congregation was encouraged by the special occasion, calling it a sign of “God’s faithfulness to us and to this community.”

Baptism numbers have been declining in Southern Baptist churches for several years, according to data compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources, falling by almost 5 percent in 2016.

Williams said widespread concern about depressed figures in the Southern Baptist Convention has created pressure for churches to respond.

“It’s kind of intimidating,” he said, referring to the number of articles and opinions about downward trends. “We’ve tried to ignore the noise and focus on the main thing ... let the Word do the work.”

Williams has spent the majority of his two years at



Nathaniel Williams, pastor of Cedar Rock First Baptist Church in Castalia N.C., conducts a baptism service. (Contributed photo)

Cedar Rock, his first full-time pastoral position, preaching verse-by-verse from the Gospel of Matthew.

“I was learning how to preach,” he said, “and there’s no better way to learn how to preach than letting Jesus preach.”

The congregation is committed to prayer, Williams added. A “steadfast” group meets on Wednesday

nights to pray for the church, in addition to a number of elderly members who are unable to attend services that pray persistently, he said.

“My encouragement to them has been that in those times where you probably thought God wasn’t at work, He was.”

Williams also pointed out that Cedar Rock’s recent baptisms involved young adults, an age set not typically associated with church involvement.

Less than one in four born again believers become Christians after age 21, according to a Barna study.

“God can still do these things,” Williams said. “He’s not out of the business of saving people.”

In a day when many Christian ministries and mission strategies focus on cities, Williams wants to remind others that, “God hasn’t forgotten the rural churches. ... God loves and cares for these people. If we come to them with a posture of love, God can work through that.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – In addition to his pastoral role at Cedar Rock First Baptist Church, Nathaniel Williams is editor of IntersectProject.org, a blog about the intersection of faith and work.) **BR**

# Lankford seeks shared values, honest dialogue

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

**S**enator James Lankford, R-Okla., wants more pro-life policies and legislation enacted in the United States, and the way to do that, he said at the 2018 Evangelicals for Life conference, is to acknowledge common interests in preserving life and persuade others through honest dialogue.

“I don’t want to be hateful with people, and I don’t want to be grotesque,” said Lankford.

“But I do think many people have flippantly chosen words like pro-life and pro-choice, and have never really thought about the next step.”

Lankford was a featured speaker at the Jan. 18-20 event in Washington, D.C., where he gave an address entitled, “Human Dignity and Public Policy: Why Pro-life Laws Matter.”

The former Southern Baptist youth minister and director of Falls Creek Conference Center in Davis, Okla., pointed out instances where human life is valued across a broad spectrum of American society.

He spoke about government funded medical research teams studying cancer treatments in zebrafish and widespread media attention on a professional basketball player, J.R. Smith, whose daughter was born prematurely at 21 weeks.

“It became a national conversation,” he said, “... about very early births and viability.”

Lankford encouraged people to consider facts about abortion and religious freedom.

“191 countries in the world will not allow late-term abortions, after 20 weeks.



Sens. James Lankford of Oklahoma (pictured) and Ben Sasse of Nebraska delivered keynote speeches Jan. 18 on the first day of the third annual Evangelicals for Life conference in the nation’s capital. (Photo by Rocket Republic)

There are only seven countries in the world that will allow abortions at five months, and we’re one of those,” he said. “In fact, there are only four countries in the world that will allow elective abortions at 25 weeks. ... China, North Korea, Vietnam and the United States. What an elite group we’re in – the worst human rights violators in the world.”

Referring to an Illinois nurse fired for refusing to participate in abortion related services, Lankford asked, “Are you willing to take a vegan that works in the grocery store and compel them to work in the butcher shop?”

Most people would answer no, he said.

“We would rightfully be furious to hear about a man who fired a woman at work because she didn’t receive his advances,” Lankford added.

“In America we should be able to have different points of view, and find a way to have real dialogue and conversation.”

Lankford concluded by emphasizing the need for local churches to care for vulnerable families, encouraging foster



The third annual Evangelicals for Life (EFL) conference, co-hosted by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Focus on the Family, took place Jan. 18-20 in Washington, D.C., where Christian leaders from across the country called for a whole-life, pro-life ethic. The event coincided with the March for Life, the largest pro-life gathering in the world. EFL speakers included ERLC President Russell Moore; Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family; Rich Stearns, president of World Vision; Jenny Yang, senior vice president of advocacy and policy for World Relief; and many more. (ERLC photo)

care, adoption and other types of aid.

“There is a focus among some to say government is getting too big, too complicated and too expensive,” he said. “But really, what’s happening is families are collapsing, and as families are collapsing, government is trying to rise to fill the gaps ... more penitentiaries, pouring more money into education, more as-

sistance for moms who are left out there exposed with their children. And government continues to rise with programs, so we at times try to jump on the stack of government and push it down. Really what we need to do is jump underneath families and push them up.”

Watch the full talk at [facebook.com/erlc-sbc/videos/1820115151331915/](https://facebook.com/erlc-sbc/videos/1820115151331915/). **BR**

## Chowan University plans for new president

(Chowan University) A press conference is planned Feb. 15 at 11:30 a.m. to announce the next president of Chowan University. Frank Rose, Chowan’s chair of the Board of Trustees, will announce the name in front of McDowell Columns Hall.

Following an internal selection process, the Board of Trustees, search committee, and M. Christopher White, the current president, are pleased to introduce you to the second president of the educational institution since it became a university and 23rd president in its 170 year history. It was founded in 1848 as Chowan Female Institute. **BR**



# Trump State of the Union address urges unity

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

President Donald Trump called for unity across party lines Jan. 30 in his first State of the Union speech following a contentious opening year for his administration.

Speaking to a joint session of Congress and a national television audience, the president told Democrats and Republicans, “[I]t is not enough to come together only in times of tragedy. Tonight, I call upon all of us to set aside our differences, to seek out common ground and to summon the unity we need to deliver for the people. This is really the key. These are the people we were elected to serve.”

Trump pointed to the accomplishments of his first year in the White House, citing – among other achievements – growth in new jobs, tax relief for middle-class Americans and small businesses, a record-setting stock market, historic government deregulation, recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and defeat of the terroristic Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in those two countries. He also referred to the appointment of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court and appeals court judges “who will interpret the Constitution as written,” as well as the defense of the right to bear arms and “historic actions to protect religious liberty.”

His proposals included the reduction of prescription drug prices, at least \$1.5 trillion for infrastructure and foreign aid only for America’s friends.

In another request for unity, the president said, “All of us, together, as one team, one people and one American family, can do anything. We all share the same home, the same heart, the same destiny and the same great American flag.

“Together, we are rediscovering the American way. In America, we know that faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, are the center of American life. The motto is: ‘In God we trust.’”

The president’s appeals did not gain a unified response, however. Democratic leaders criticized the speech, which was not unexpected, especially given the close election that put Trump in the White House.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer of New York tweeted, “After a long and divisive year, many Americans were yearning for the President to present a unifying vision for the country. Unfortunately, his [State of the Union] address stoked the fires of division instead of bringing us closer together.”

Also on Twitter, House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi

of California said Trump “presented a self-congratulatory speech w/o vision. He promised unity, but sowed division. America deserves better.”

Republicans, meanwhile, commended their party’s standard-bearer.

Trump “said it right – the state of our union is strong,” said Speaker of the House Paul Ryan of Wisconsin in a tweet. “He laid out a clear agenda tonight with an open hand toward bipartisan cooperation. Together, we can continue making America safer and stronger for the 21st century.”

Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma said in a written statement, “The President set a very conciliatory tone as he walked through various topics. ... The President’s terms, his tone and his presentation were focused on the good that is happening” in the country.

Trump largely declined to address explicitly moral and social issues. He did not comment on the pro-life gains his administration achieved or supported during his first year in the White House.

One pro-life juncture came when he told the story of Ryan Holets, an Albuquerque, N.M., police officer who last year saw a pregnant, homeless woman on the verge of injecting herself with heroin. When he warned her she would harm her unborn baby, she wept and told him she longed for a safe home for her child.

“In that moment, Ryan said he felt God speak to him: ‘You will do it, because you can’ He heard those words,” Trump said.

“He took out a picture of his wife and their four kids. Then he went home to tell his wife Rebecca. In an instant, she agreed to adopt. The Holets named their new daughter Hope. Ryan and Rebecca, you embody the goodness of our nation. Thank you.”

The Holets and their daughter Hope were seated with First Lady Melania Trump.

On immigration reform, the president called for support of his recently released framework that called for a path to citizenship for about 1.8 million undocumented immigrants brought into this country as children, \$25 billion for a wall on the southern border and other security measures, an end to family sponsorship beyond spouses and children and elimination of the visa lottery system for countries with low rates of immigration. The proposal has met resistance from some among both liberals and conservatives.

In his speech, Trump described the plan as “a down-the-middle compromise



Donald Trump addresses the joint session of Congress Jan. 30. (Whitehouse.gov screen capture)

and one that will create a safe, modern and lawful immigration system.”

“My duty, and the sacred duty of every elected official in this chamber, is to defend Americans, to protect their safety, their families, their communities

## Fail Continued from page 1

we’re not going anywhere.”

Catherine Glenn Foster, president of Americans United for Life, said in a tweet, “Tonight may not be our night but we look forward to the day America once again sets the tone worldwide when it comes to defending women and unborn children from the horrors of later-term abortion.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the bill’s sponsor and a Southern Baptist, said after his measure failed, “[W]hile today was a small setback, I have no doubt that we will eventually be victorious.

“The more we discuss this matter, the more support we get from the American people.”

A Marist Poll survey conducted in December showed 63 percent of Americans, including 56 percent of both Democrats and pro-choice citizens, support the late-term ban.

That is an increase from 59 percent overall and 49 percent for Democrats in last January’s poll.

Abortion-right supporters welcomed the bill’s failure.

Calling it a waste of “time and taxpayer money,” NARAL Pro-choice America President Ilyse Hogue said the Republicans’ effort “reveals their true priorities: to punish women, ban abortion and try to score an ideological win to appeal to their fringe base.”

Three Democrats – Sens. Robert Casey of Pennsylvania, Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Joe Manchin of West Virginia – joined nearly all of the Republicans in voting to bring the ban to the floor.

Two Republicans, Sens. Susan Collins

and their right to the American dream, because Americans are dreamers, too,” he said in an apparent takeoff on the use of Dreamers to refer to those who were brought to this country by their undocumented, immigrant parents.

The president called for prison reform that will help “former inmates who have served their time get a second chance at life.” Trump did not address directly the racial turmoil that has marked his first year in office and which has sometimes been fueled by his comments. He said he is “very proud” African American unemployment “stands at the lowest rate ever recorded.”

His comment at one point about proudly standing for the national anthem seemed to be a follow-up to his criticisms in the fall of National Football League players who knelt during the “Star Spangled Banner” to protest social injustice. ■

of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, joined most of the Democrats in opposition.

More than 15,000 abortions are performed each year in the United States after 20 weeks, the Centers for Disease Control estimated in a 2008 study. At least 275 clinics perform abortions past 20 weeks, according to the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC).

Abortion doctors often use a technique known as dismemberment or “dilation and extraction” abortion from about 14 weeks of pregnancy into the third trimester, according to NRLC. In the method, a doctor uses instruments such as forceps, tongs, clamps or scissors to cut off or rip off parts of an unborn baby or crush the child’s body.

While efforts at the federal level have been unsuccessful, 16 states have enacted pain-capable abortion bans, according to NRLC.

They are Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals invalidated Idaho’s law in 2015.

Ohio also has enacted, along with Tennessee, an abortion ban for any unborn baby who is determined to be able to survive outside the womb with or without medical assistance.

The measure requires a viability test beginning at the 20th week of pregnancy and establishes a state presumption of viability at 24 weeks since the mother’s last menstrual period. ■



# Three Forks launches gospel-spreading initiative in western Watauga

By JESSICA ISAACS | Special to the Recorder

The Three Forks Baptist Association hosted a “Impacting Lostness” meeting Jan. 16 and 30 at the Western Watauga Community Center aimed at rallying local Christians to spread the gospel to unsaved people in the area.

Led by Garland Honeycutt, director of missions for Three Forks, and North Carolina pastor Marcus Redding, the meeting launched what they hope will become an evangelical movement in western Watauga County that can later be modeled in other parts of the High Country.

Beginning in 2014, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina began collecting information through a series of religious surveys and other methods, which included help from some secular research companies, related to whether or not people across the state considered themselves to be Christians and/or followers of Jesus.

Research showed the most significant numbers of lost, or unsaved, people were found among the state’s most heavily populated regions.

The state convention’s website explains: “Although lost people live throughout the entire state, the most concentrated areas of lostness in North Carolina are in eight population centers: Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greenville, Hickory, Wilmington, the Triad area (Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point) and the Triangle area (Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill).”

Upon further research, the convention identified 100 “pockets of lostness,” or smaller communities with high concentrations of unsaved people, that surround the eight major population centers in the state. That number was later expanded to include an additional 150 pockets of lostness, which can be clearly seen on a map on the convention’s website.

“It was a surprise to me, as it may be a surprise to you, that three of those additional pockets of lostness were found within the Three Forks Association,” Honeycutt said to the group. “One of them was Boone ... another one was the Foscoe/Banner Elk area. What really caught me off guard is that Vilas was noted as the other pocket of lostness in our area.”

The state convention has since developed a strategy for intentionally engaging these pockets of lostness across the state by encouraging local churches to reach out into their own communities to spread the gospel through discipleship and church planting. It uses a digital resource called MissionInsite to help iden-



Three Forks Baptist Association Director of Missions Garland Honeycutt stands before members of several local churches at the inaugural “Impacting Lostness” meeting Jan. 16. (Contributed photo)

tify certain demographics within specific areas across the state, which associations and churches can also use to develop a more specialized approach to getting the gospel in front of neighbors in their own backyards.

“If you were to put a pin just .2 miles up the road at 226 Henson Hollow Road and draw a seven-mile radius circle around that center point, you would have a very large pocket, a great number of people ... who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior,” said Honeycutt, who previously served as director of missions for Avery Baptist Association. “We’re here tonight to make you aware of that.”

Redding noted that 22,000 lost or unsaved people live within that seven-mile radius in Vilas, and that reaching them all will require a lot of prayer and a concerted spiritual effort among the churches and Christ followers that surround it. MissionInsite shows many different nationalities and languages are represented in that same circle, too, also proving that local folks must be willing to learn about and begin to understand different cultures in order to reach many of their neighbors.

“Even if we said we’d use the churches we’ve got, that’d be fine if each church could fit 1,000 people and if all those people could fit in the same building and speak the same language,” he said. “There’s 22,000 people that need to know about Jesus. How to go about that is the question that’s on the table.”

Redding, who formerly pastored Hull’s Grove Baptist Church in Vale and later served the North American Mission Board in Baltimore before returning to N.C. last year, challenged folks in the room to bring the conversation to their own home churches and begin seriously praying for the lost people in Watauga County, as well as for God to equip local Christians with the resources and boldness they spread the gospel within their own neighborhoods.

“We have the data to prove that the

people are here. The question is: are we going to let God use us to reach them?” he said.

“The beauty of this is that God created the body of Christ for a reason. You may not be the person to reach everyone on your road ... but he has called every Christian to be a disciple-maker, not just preachers. You don’t have to do that by yourself.”

Although the presentation touched on some important numbers, Redding urged attendees to remember that this is a spiritual endeavor first and foremost.

“When we’re talking about demographics, it worries me that this will turn into a technical conversation instead of a spiritual conversation,” he said. “We must see this as the souls of men and women ... there are people around us that may not look like us or act like us or live like us, but God made them and the gospel is to go to them.”

As leaders of the initiative in the High Country, Honeycutt and Redding hope the meetings will be the first of many aimed at addressing lostness in western Watauga County. Additionally, they hope the strategy that will unfold in the Vilas community can be a model for similar



North Carolina pastor Marcus Redding shares demographic information from Vilas communities with attendees of a Jan. 16 “Impacting Lostness” meeting. (Watauga Democrat photo by Jessica Isaacs)

progress in the areas of Boone and Foscoe/Banner Elk.

“This pocket of lostness did not happen overnight. We’re not going to solve the world’s problems overnight, but we can open your eyes to some things,” Redding said. “Our dream is that we’ll start working on this together on a regular basis. This is the first layer of introduction, and my prayer is that you’ll come back and we’ll dig a little bit deeper and a little bit deeper, and we’ll learn how to find the people who need the gospel.”

To get connected with the local initiative, contact Three Forks Baptist Association at (828) 264-4482 or visit [3forksassoc.org](http://3forksassoc.org).

For more information regarding the Baptist State Convention’s discipleship and church planting strategy, visit [ncbaptist.org/strategy](http://ncbaptist.org/strategy).

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Jessica Isaacs writes for the Watauga Democrat in Boone, where this article originally appeared. Visit [wataugademocrat.com](http://wataugademocrat.com). Dianna L. Cagle, Biblical Recorder Production Editor, contributed to this report.) ■■

## N.C. literacy missions pioneer turns 100

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Staff Writer

Sally Lennon, a former long-time member of Winter Park Baptist Church in Wilmington, N.C., spent more than 40 years teaching Adult Reading and Writing (ARW) and English as a Second Language (ESL) throughout North Carolina, more than 20 other states and four countries. Lennon celebrated her 100th birthday Jan. 12.

When she started teaching adults how to read and write and training new literacy tutors in 1968, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) did not have organized literacy missions yet.

“She was a true pioneer,” said Barbara

Martin, BSC literacy missions consultant.

According to Marsha Cook, a retired North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary, Lennon was one of the first to participate in a Laubach Literacy workshop and become certified as a tutor through what was then the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, later renamed NAMB.

In 1970, Lennon volunteered with the Wilmington Literacy Group, a mission project of the Wilmington Baptist Association. The group eventually helped found the Cape Fear Literacy Council in 1984, the council’s website states.

Lennon’s focus shifted to ESL in 1972,

See Pioneer page 15



# Pioneer

Continued from page 14

when she met employees of a Japanese business who were new to Wilmington and sought help in improving their English proficiency.

"She helped churches and other volunteer groups begin these ministries also and even went overseas to teach missionaries how to minister and reach people for Christ using these two literacy missions ministries, ESL and ARW," Martin said. "She says her greatest joy was helping people learn how to read the Bible for the first time in their lives."

Lennon's friend Clara Huff met her in 2004 when she moved to Wilmington and inquired about teaching ESL. Huff volunteered as a tutor under Lennon's leadership.

"There were at least 10 of us volunteer teachers ... we were all younger than her, but we had to hurry to keep up with her."

"She was never appointed by any missionary sending agency, but she has been a missionary to the world," Huff said, recalling the relationships Lennon built with the Japanese community in Wilmington.

Huff told the *Biblical Recorder* about a young artist from Japan named Tatsuro, who Lennon hosted in her home for three weeks. Lennon instructed him to visit an international church upon returning to Japan, so he could learn English and come back to the United States to live with relatives.

He went, became a follower of Jesus and later led his family to faith. Back home in Japan, he began offering art lessons for children every Saturday, teaching them Bible stories through drawings.

Tatsuro wrote in a letter to Lennon, "I want to

express my joy that God has not only given me the opportunity to know you, but also led me to His salvation. Such great joy I never imagined in my life. ... It's more important that I learned about Jesus than to come to the United States to live with my family."

Cook and Huff said throughout Lennon's work in literacy missions, she trained more than 2,000 ESL tutors who, in turn, taught English to thousands. She trained more than 1,000 literacy tutors who helped adults earn GED diplomas, college degrees and jobs. Her devotion to literacy missions led to the growth of Chinese, Korean and Spanish-speaking churches.

Lennon said she gives credit to Caraway Conference Center and Camp for helping expand the ministry by hosting literacy workshops.

Lennon and her husband, Woodrow, also volunteered together at the International Seamen's Center at the Port of Wilmington for 25 years. She continued serving there after Woodrow died in 1994. The port saw about 8,000 seamen arrive every year from 35 countries. For decades, Lennon told them about Jesus, praying they would go back home and tell others.

In a video posted online by her son, Lennon said she doesn't know how God answered all of her prayers, but she committed to being faithful in sharing His word to the nations.

"You can't stop God when He's working. You just have to be faithful to share His story in any way He leads you to," she said.

"Even now at 100, Sally is still reading the prayer calendar every day and praying for missionaries on their



Sally Lennon, known as a literacy pioneer, recently celebrated her 100th birthday. (Contributed photo)

birthdays," said Huff. "Early in her life she decided there were certain ideals she wanted for her life: to love God and serve Him, to love people and do mission work, and to take care of her health and always be ready to fulfill the Great Commission."

Sally and Woodrow were married for 54 years and have three children, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She now lives near her son in Winston-Salem, N.C. **BR**



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## AROUND THE STATE

### Obituary

**DORIS ROSE MORGAN**, 95, of Winston-Salem, died Jan. 30.

Born in Johnston County in 1922, Doris attended Campbell College (now university) and was a 1948 graduate of Wake Forest College (now university). In 1959, after serving as minister of education in two North Carolina churches, she joined the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina staff. Her work training children's ministry leaders, leading conferences and organizing programs like the State Children's Bible Drill, took her across the state for 28 years, retiring in 1985. Doris moved from her Raleigh home to the Brookridge Baptist Retirement Community in Winston-Salem.

She is survived by nieces and nephews. She is also survived by 54 great-nieces and nephews and their children.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. at College Park Baptist Church in Winston-Salem on Feb. 17.

Memorials to: College Park Baptist Church, 1701 Polo Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27106 or Baptist Retirement Homes Benevolent Ministry, P.O. Box 11024, Winston-Salem, NC 27116.

### Ordination

Barberville Baptist Church, Waynesville, ordained **BRENT STEWART** into the gospel ministry on January 7. Stewart is the discipleship pastor at Barberville Baptist Church and a graduate of Western Carolina University and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Amanda, have three daughters.

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Send to [dianna@BRnow.org](mailto:dianna@BRnow.org) or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.

### Award

The **NORTH CAROLINA BAPTIST AGING MINISTRY** received the 2017 Outstanding Community Service Award for North Carolina from the Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging. The award recognizes agencies that have made positive contributions to the lives of older people in the community.

### Retirement

**HARVEY H. WHALEY JR.** retired from Aversboro Road Baptist Church, Garner, after serving as senior pastor for 20 years. Whaley earned a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary. He served as senior pastor at Peters Creek Baptist Church, Roseboro, and Wrightsboro Baptist Church, Wilmington. He and his wife, Ramona, have been married 47 years.

**ANDY ROYALS** retired Jan. 28 from Salem Baptist Church, Lincolnton, after serving as pastor for more than 13 years, with a total of 39 years in the ministry. He earned a doctor of ministry from Luther Rice Seminary. Royals served as pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; Southgate Baptist Church, Thomasville; Florida Street Baptist Church, Greensboro; and Sedgfield Baptist Church, Jamestown. He has written two books, *It Could Happen Any Moment* and *Expository Sermon Outlines/Commentaries for the Savior's Servants*.

He and his wife of nearly 49 years, Joyce, have two children, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren. The couple will retire to High Point. Royals plans to go into full-time evangelism, revivals and Bible conferences. He is also available for interim work or pulpit supply. Contact him at (980) 241-4660.

## Gardner-Webb president announces retirement plans

Gardner-Webb Office  
of University Communications & Media Relations

**G**ardner-Webb University's (GWU) 12th president, Frank Bonner, announced his plans to retire in January 2019. At that time, he will have served Gardner-Webb in Boiling Springs for more than three decades in total and as president for nearly 14 years.

"One year from now, it will be very difficult for me to cease doing what I love," Bonner shared recently in a press release from the university. "However, my wife, Flossie, and I look forward to more time together, more travel and more time with six wonderful grandchildren who are growing up before our eyes."

Bonner joined Gardner-Webb in 1987 as vice president for academic affairs. His role later evolved into vice president for academic and student affairs and then provost and senior vice president. In May 2005, he was named president and took office on July 1. Prior to GWU, he was a faculty member and associate dean



FRANK BONNER

for Special Programs at Anderson College (now university) in Anderson, S.C. A 1969 graduate of Furman University in Greenville, S.C., with a bachelor's degree in English, Bonner earned his master's degree from the University of Georgia in 1971 and his doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1977.

Some highlights of his tenure include leading the university's largest-ever capital campaign raising \$46 million, receiving gifts for the Hunt School of Nursing and Godbold School of Business, starting new doctoral programs in education and nursing, launching a physician assistant studies program, building the 110,000-square-foot Tucker

Student Center, purchasing and renovating the former Crawley Hospital for the College of Health Sciences, adding a science lab annex facility and joining the Big South Conference as a full member for athletics. Bonner was also instrumental in developing several programs of academic enhancement and building state-of-the-art athletic facilities. **BR**

## Longtime Billy Graham singer, Myrtle Hall Smith, dies

From wire reports

**M**yrle Hall Smith, 71, died Jan. 10 at McCall Hospice House in Simpsonville, S.C.

A Greenville, S.C., native, she was known for her trademark soprano voice. She sang with the Billy Graham Crusades for 25 years.

She began singing while in elementary school, and later received support to attend Julliard School of Music in New York.

It was while attending Julliard that she was given the opportunity to sing

at a Billy Graham Crusade in 1966. After graduating, she joined the ministry full time until 1991.

She battled with drug addiction, was arrested in 1996 and served three years probation. She went to rehab, got steady work and began to sing again.

She is survived by her husband, Russell Smith; two step-daughters, Shelita Smith and Sheena Williams; three grandchildren; four brothers, Sammy Roberts, Oscar Cureton, Thomas Cureton and Tony Cureton; and four sisters, Princess Way, Maude Shell, Ann Howell and Jean Albert. **BR**

## Lostness

Continued from page 9

principles into their churches through a series of conferences held last spring.

### Increased missions support

North Carolina Baptists continue to be generous financial supporters of local, state, national and international missions and ministry efforts, said John Butler, the BSC executive leader for Business Services.

Butler said North Carolina is the only state convention to increase its Coop-

erative Program (CP) allocation to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in each of the past 11 years.

North Carolina Baptists have also ranked first in giving to the SBC's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions in each of the past five years and first in giving the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in four of the past five years and nine of the last 10.

Through CP, special offerings and

other giving, North Carolina Baptist churches have contributed more than \$152 million to SBC causes in the past five years, which has included record single-year contributions in both 2016 and 2017.

"We are not only engaging lostness in North Carolina, but through the strategy and financial planning that we've been able to do, we are doing more to engage lostness in this nation and around the world than we ever have before," Butler said.

### 'We give God the glory'

Hollifield said the missions and ministry progress of the past four years has been a work of God as pastors, leaders and members of N.C. Baptist churches have become "personally engaged" with the strategy.

"We give God the glory for the great things He's doing," Hollifield said. "It's the people in the churches who are making this happen, and we give God the praise and the glory." **BR**



## OPPORTUNITY CORNER



Wilmington Celebration Choir will be performing at several places across N.C., including some North Carolina Baptist churches. It is a traveling gospel choir representing 15-20 churches and several different denominations from all over southeastern N.C.

The choir ministers through a variety of styles of Christian music including southern gospel, praise and worship, traditional hymns, black gospel and more,

with an excitement and level of energy that will have participants singing, praising and moving into the presence of God. Concerts will be held Feb. 17 at First Baptist Church, Salisbury; Feb. 25 at Antioch Baptist Church, Lumberton; and Apr. 15 at Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Clinton. All concerts will be held at 6 p.m. Concerts are free and a love offering will be received.

Visit [wilmingtoncelebrationchoir.com](http://wilmingtoncelebrationchoir.com).

### Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Please send information immediately following an event, or for opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance. Include cost and contact information in your email or correspondence.

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## RESOLUTION FOR TIMES OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

find that people often do not have transformational worship because they get caught up in negativity about style issues. We must get beyond our personal preferences in order to truly offer God the worship He deserves. If you find yourself criticizing or scrutinizing the use of old songs, modern worship songs, the instruments used, the clothing worn, the pulpit furniture, or anything else that hinders your worship, consider these resolutions for the new year. You will find that your worship once again can bring renewed life.

This year I resolve to:

- Worship throughout the week in such a way that my worship at church is an overflow of all God is doing in my life.
- Pray for those that lead worship at my church that God will empower them and inspire them in their leadership.

- Arrive at worship on time and ready to engage.
- Sing every song with an open mind and willing spirit, not requiring the style to be what best suits my own preferences.
- Embrace the opportunities many people have to exercise their gifts in worship even if I may not like the instrument they are playing.
- Never complain about the songs that aren't my preferred style being too emotional, repetitive or not as scriptural when I do not put my own favorite songs through those same filters.
- Make worship all about God and not about me.

Make this year a great year of sacrificial worship to your Savior!

RENEWING  
worship



KENNY LAMM

EDITOR'S NOTE – Kenny Lamm is a consultant for worship and music with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact him at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5638, or [klamm@ncbaptist.org](mailto:klamm@ncbaptist.org). Visit his blog at [renewingworshipnc.org](http://renewingworshipnc.org).

## CHURCH FINANCIAL SEMINAR

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's Davis Blount plans to help associations and churches with financial tips at various locations. The event is designed for ministers, financial administrators, treasurers, church committees and lay leaders. Topics include: preparing for retirement, compensation planning, the church retirement plan, employer provided benefits, managing designated

funds, reporting charitable giving, tax updates and more.

- **Feb. 20:** Pineview Baptist Church, Goldsboro, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- **Feb. 26:** Yadkin Baptist Association, Yadkinville, 6-8:30 p.m.
- **March 5:** Greater Cleveland Baptist Association, Shelby, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Visit [ncbaptist.org/financialseminar](http://ncbaptist.org/financialseminar).

## worshipleader BOOT CAMP EXTREME

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring Worship Leader Boot Camp: Extreme. This event is for those who want to understand and apply the material covered in the Worship Leader Boot Camp. Participants will be expected to complete some work before the intense three-day conference.

Additionally they will set goals for personal and ministry improvement at the event and will be involved in months of follow up. Focus areas for the camp include: planning worship services, planning music sets and their connections, rehearsing bridges to connect songs in

a set, modeling a worship arts team for worship planning and exploring biblical, missional, cultural and discipleship issues and how they relate specifically to local church settings.

There will be a maximum of 12 participants per event. Camps will be held at Caraway Conference Center, Sophia, and available dates include March 1-3, June 7-9 and August 16-18.

Interested persons should fill out an online survey and slots will be filled on a first come, first served basis of those selected for the program.

Visit [ncbaptist.org/bootcampex](http://ncbaptist.org/bootcampex).

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring Basic Training for Disciple-Making on March 10 at Scotts Hill Baptist Church in Wilmington. Participants will join N.C. Baptist senior consultants Josh Reed and Rick Hughes for this half-day workshop that explores the basics of disciple-making. Reed will lead sessions that focus on the gospel and the "Four Fields" of ministry, and



Hughes will lead a session on the importance of disciple-making within community. The event will conclude with a Q&A luncheon. Cost is \$7 per person and includes program materials and lunch. Visit [ncbaptist.org/basictraining](http://ncbaptist.org/basictraining).

Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina is hosting Food Roundup 2018 during the month of April. The goal this year is to collect \$400,000 in non-perishable food, supplies and gift cards for Baptist Children's Homes' boys and girls. This equals approximately 700,000 meals and snacks – enough to feed them for one year. Food pick up from collection points begins Mon., April 23. For a list of food



and supplies needed and a list of collection points, visit [bchfamily.org/involved/food\\_roundup](http://bchfamily.org/involved/food_roundup).

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February 18

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

February 25

## I Am Just Passing Through

**Focal passage: 1 Peter 2:11-17**

**A**fter 16 years of growing up in Colorado, I attended a university in Kansas and lived in the Sunflower State an additional two years post-graduation. Through a series of noteworthy events, too perfect to be coincidental, I felt led to move to North Carolina.

It's been four trips around the sun since I made it to Durham, still, my reference to "home" has more to do with my audience than location.

More often than not, Colorado is home. When I'm catching up with college friends, we share Kansas as "home." During vacation, North Carolina is the home I miss.

Scripture explains that none of these temporary areas are the true dwelling place for which we were made.

First Peter 2:11 calls us "sojourners and pilgrims" reminding us to abstain from the temptations of this fleeting abode in an attempt to point others to what is eternal.

Life has a way of reminding the

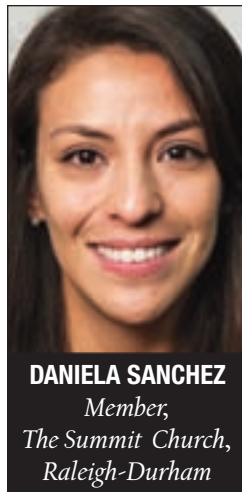
believer that we were made for another world – another home.

During these times, we can recall 1 Peter 2:13-17 regarding our responsibilities on this side of heaven. We are to submit ourselves "to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good" (1 Peter 2:13-14, 16).

The purpose of these responsibilities is to show love and honor to others. "... Yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

We can pray for those we'd rather condemn, ask God for humility when it'd be easier to prove our point, and love God and one another more than anything the world offers us.

By doing so, the broken world can deny but not evade that we were made for Someone greater.



**DANIELA SANCHEZ**  
Member,  
The Summit Church,  
Raleigh-Durham

**Focal passage: Ephesians 5:8-14**

**C**hristine Caine, an activist against human trafficking, spoke at a conference when I was in college and shared a story I'll never forget.

Caine and her daughter, Sophia, were shopping for a flashlight. Sophia was thrilled with the one she'd chosen and, itching to go home, said to her mother, "Let's go find some darkness!"

Their new flashlight was no use under the bright store lights; it would only serve its purpose within the contrast of darkness.

Believers have a new identity as "children of light" that are called to walk in obedience to the Lord as they learn what is pleasing and acceptable to Him (Ephesians 5:8-10). This means that anyone who does not know Christ as Lord and Savior remains in darkness.

Just like Sophia's flashlight was in-

distinguishable among the incandescent store lights, missing its objective, the light Christ placed in us does not fulfill its intention when it fears exposing the darkness. Ephesians 5:11-13 reads, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things that are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light."

There was a time when we, too, were in darkness. Because of the Fall, everyone was born into sin, and whether we were 7 years old or 52 when we believed in the Lord, there was a time when there was no light in us either. Even still, having tasted the sweet salvation of Jesus Christ, we are not exempt from falling into sin. This understanding should lead us to humility, compassion for those in darkness and a deep desire to see the lost be found.

May we long to hear the Lord say unto others as He has graciously called out to us, "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:14).

February 18

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

February 25

## Answering Critics

**Focal passage: Acts 26:19-29**

**T**his time last year, my wife and I were driving home to Kentucky to visit my side of the family, when just 20 minutes into our trip the transmission began malfunctioning. Leaving a red light, I pushed the gas pedal, but the car would barely move. It would take a couple miles to reach the speed limit of 55.

Deciding to continue on for another 30 miles, thinking the issue would resolve itself, we drove until we came to another stop. To test whether or not the issue was still there, I slammed on the gas, only to have the car move at a snail's pace. I told Ashley that we had a serious issue and needed to turn around.

The word repent means to have a change of mind or to turn. After admitting we had a problem, we had to turn around. This is exactly what Paul proclaims as he

makes his case to King Agrippa in Acts 26. He said, "repent and turn to God." Stop living a self-ruled life and allow God to rule. Of course, this message is not always met with joyful acceptance (Luke 21:17). Paul was almost killed by the Jews (Acts 20:21) and Festus said he was "out of his mind" (Acts 20:24). Yet Paul did not back down. He continued to try to persuade Festus and others to follow Christ.

The same should be true for you and me. When we share the message of Jesus, it is important that we don't shy away from telling people they must repent. In fact, this should be something we should be used to doing ourselves as followers of Jesus.

Martin Luther's first of 95 theses said the entire life of the believer should be one of repentance. It should be something we practice daily. Thus, our familiarity with repentance allows us to communicate the gospel from a posture of humility. And when we are rejected, we don't give up. We continue praying the world would "become as we are" (Acts 26:29).



**JAMES ZIK**  
Associate pastor,  
Beach Road Baptist  
Church, Southport

**Focal passage: Acts 28:17-28**

**O**ne of my responsibilities at the church where I serve is to train disciple-makers. Each semester I lead a class on how to fulfill the great commission Jesus gave to His disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). During our 12 weeks together, I use a phrase over and over that goes something like this: "We stand on the shoulders of the saints who have gone before us and were faithful to their God-given task."

Think about it. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are saved because at some point someone shared with you the life-changing message of Christ.

In His sovereign plan, God appointed a time for you to come into contact with someone who had what you needed. In a sense, you stand on their shoulders.

In the last chapter of Acts, Paul explains to the local leaders how he ended up in Rome.

**In His sovereign plan, God appointed a time for you to come into contact with someone who had what you needed.**

## Always on Mission

From a heavenly perspective, it was because God knew he would come in contact with people who were eager to hear the message he was proclaiming (Acts 28:22).

Paul wouldn't have had this audience if the circumstances hadn't turned out the way they had.

God was working even in the midst of the struggles and trials Paul was facing. Because some accepted this message, he now had saints that were standing on his shoulders, because he was faithful in sharing what had transformed him.

The same is true for you and me. As you finish your study in the book of Acts, if you have taken away anything, my prayer is that you've developed a passion and commitment for personal evangelism.

You are a steward of a message that has eternal consequences. And because of a parent, grandparent, pastor, Bible study teacher, friend, co-worker, sibling or even a total stranger, your position with God is one of peace (Romans 5:1) and not wrath (Romans 1:18). Now, go! Go and make disciples of all nations!

**When we share the message of Jesus, it is important that we don't shy away from telling people they must repent.**



# SBC added as defendant in Pressler lawsuit

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

**T**he Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has been added as a co-defendant in a lawsuit accusing retired Texas state judge Paul Pressler of sexual abuse.

A Jan. 12 amendment to a suit originally filed last October claims the SBC, among other defendants, had a “duty to exercise reasonable care so as to control” Pressler, who helped engineer a strategy to turn the SBC back to its theologically conservative roots in the late 20th century.

Pressler denies the allegations by plaintiff Gareld Duane Rollins, who claimed Pressler sexually abused him repeatedly between the late 1970s, when Rollins was 14, and 2004.

Rollins’ petition, filed in Texas state district court, alleges he was enrolled in a young adult Bible study which Pressler led at Houston’s First Baptist Church, and later served as Pressler’s office assistant. Pressler, 87, was a justice on the Court of Appeals of

Texas, 14th District, and a member of the Texas state legislature.

He also served Southern Baptists in various volunteer capacities.

Other defendants in the lawsuit – all of whom have denied Rollins’ allegations that they facilitated and concealed the abuse – include Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS), its president Paige Patterson, Pressler’s wife Nancy, Houston’s First Baptist Church, Pressler’s former law partner Jared Woodfill and the Woodfill Law Firm.

The suit demands more than \$1 million in relief from the defendants collectively, claiming the alleged abuse contributed to Rollins’ life of substance abuse and crime.

Among the suit’s allegations against the SBC:



PAUL PRESSLER

- It made “minors sexually available to Pressler.”
- It “fraudulently misrepresented and continue[s] to misrepresent material facts concerning the safety of children” at cooperating churches.
- It “had actual or constructive knowledge” of Pressler’s alleged conduct and “concealed” it.
- The convention and others “continue to assist Pressler through obstruction of justice.”

In other developments, Pressler filed a Dec. 21 motion asking Harris County district judge R.K. Sandill to dismiss Rollins’ suit because the statute of limitations has expired on its claims of abuse, the last of which allegedly occurred more than a decade ago.

A hearing on that motion is scheduled Feb. 23.

SWBTS and Patterson filed a motion to separate themselves from other defendants and move the case against them to Tarrant County, where the seminary is located.

A hearing on those motions was canceled Jan. 17 and has yet to be rescheduled, according to the Harris County District Court. **BR**

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### Pastor

Eureka Baptist Church, Fayetteville, NC, is searching for a **full-time pastor**. We are in a rural suburban area, with 75 members enrolled. We are a conservative Southern Baptist, loving and mission minded church. Seeking a pastor that can lead services 3 times a week, must be SBC ordained pastor with seminary education and 6 or more years of experience as a pastor. Willing to work with all ages. We are looking for the pastor that God wants/calling for our church. Please send résumés to Anthony Simpson, 931 Bucknell Rd., Fayetteville, NC 28311.

Beaver Dam Baptist Church, Roseboro, NC, is seeking a **full-time Pastor** (due to retirement). We are a loving, mission-minded, conservative, Southern Baptist church located in the rural community of Beaver Dam. Sunday worship sees an average attendance of 150. We are prayerfully seeking a pastor with a special heart for pastoral care. Please email résumé to Pastor Search Chairman, Bill West, at [bwest002@nc.rr.com](mailto:bwest002@nc.rr.com).

### Church Staff

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

First Baptist Church, Clemmons, NC, is seeking a **part-time organist** to play for Sunday morning services, Wednesday evening choir practice and special services throughout the year. Compensation will be based upon education, experience and playing ability. Please submit résumés to Organist Search Committee, PO Box 279, Clemmons, NC 27012, or email them to [jpoplin@cfbctoday.org](mailto:jpoplin@cfbctoday.org).

Concord Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Anderson, SC, is seeking an **Associate Pastor for Worship and Music**. This person must have the calling, gifting, training and heart to lead a large and diverse ministry of worship. We are excited about our future! For a job description and/or to submit a résumé/profile please contact [jjames@concord-baptist.com](mailto:jjames@concord-baptist.com). Please also visit [concordbaptist.com](http://concordbaptist.com) for more information about our congregation.

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

**Full-time preschool and children’s pastor.** The First Baptist Church of Mauldin, S.C. is seeking a full-time Preschool and Children’s Pastor. Send résumés to First Baptist Mauldin, 150 South Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662, or email [wleonard@fbcmauldin.org](mailto:wleonard@fbcmauldin.org). For more information, visit [www.fbcmauldin.org](http://www.fbcmauldin.org) to view the job profile and job description.

### Miscellaneous

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**Southern / Bluegrass Gospel Music Strings of Victory** is an established NC based, regional gospel group. Old standards and fresh, original songs in authentic, acoustic style. Our music appeals to Southern Gospel and Bluegrass Gospel fans. Plan now, special worship service, festival, event. [StringsofVictory.com](http://StringsofVictory.com); Contact Jeff 704-213-9091; [jeff@stringsofVictory.com](mailto:jeff@stringsofVictory.com).

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

**Do you have staff changes at your church or association?** Or special news you would like to share (significant church or church staff anniversaries or a mission effort to reach your community)? Let the *Biblical Recorder* know by calling (919) 847-2127 or email [editor@BRnow.org](mailto:editor@BRnow.org).

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- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

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

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