



# BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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## David Platt plans to resign as IMB president

BR staff

**D**avid Platt announced Feb. 12 that he plans to resign from his position as president of the International Mission Board (IMB) and asked trustees to begin searching for his successor, according to a press release at *IMB.org*.

Platt said he is “burdened to continue preaching and leading in the local church. ... I am more passionate today than I have ever been about getting the gospel to the nations, and I want to spend what little time I have left on this earth with urgency toward that end.”

Platt, 39, stepped into the IMB’s lead role in 2014, following an eight-year tenure as pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala. He will continue with the IMB until a successor is elected by the trustee board. The board’s presidential search committee will be named by chairman Rick Dunbar, member of First Baptist Church in Madison, Miss.

In late 2017, Platt took a volunteer position as teaching pastor at McLean Bible Church in metro Washington, D.C. He and IMB trustees agreed at that time to evaluate his involvement at McLean over the following months to ensure the dual roles were beneficial for both organizations and him personally.

“I have come to the realization that it is not viable long-term for me to lead as president of the IMB while serving as teaching pastor in a church,” Platt said. “This realization has been sobering, for I don’t believe I can choose between preaching and leading in the local church, and mobilizing and shepherding people in global missions. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that if I am going to serve in this way in the local

See Platt page 5

## I CAN ONLY IMAGINE

*movie delivers ‘rush of hope’*

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

**B**art Millard, lead singer for the Christian band MercyMe, wrote a song in 1999 that went on to become the most downloaded Christian song of all time, according to industry sources.

Within a few years it crossed over into other music genres, and now movie producer Andy Erwin has turned the song’s touching story into a feature length film, which opens in theaters March 16.

The song and the movie bear

the same title, “I Can Only Imagine.”

In a conversation with the *Biblical Recorder*, Erwin said he and his brother, Jon, are ecstatic about the early response to the movie. The first trailer has received more than 43 million views on

See Movie page 10

See Merger page 8

ANDY ERWIN

## WHAT’S INSIDE

Opinion: All other ground is sinking sand .....	2
Opinion: Practice fervent prayer .....	3
Opinion: What does the Bible say about immigrants? ...	3
Sessions offer diverse options for disciple-making event .....	4
Men with N.C. roots bond in Vermont .....	4
NAMB introduces ‘Send Puerto Rico’ .....	6
Pastors encouraged to participate in survey .....	11
Chowan University announces 23rd president .....	12
GuideStone offers health care solutions .....	12

## Cooperative Baptists end ‘absolute’ LGBT hiring ban

By **DAVID ROACH** | Baptist Press

**T**he Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s (CBF) Governing Board has voted to lift the Fellowship’s “absolute prohibition” of hiring homosexual and transgender employees.

But CBF “leadership positions in ministry” and missionary roles still will be limited to individuals “who practice a traditional Christian sexual ethic of celibacy in singleness or faithfulness in marriage between a woman and man,” according to a hiring “implementa-

tion procedure” also adopted by the Governing Board. Other positions will be open to “Christians who identify as LGBT.”

The new hiring policy and implementation procedure – adopted Feb. 9 at a CBF Governing Board meeting in Decatur, Ga. – replace the previous CBF hiring policy, which prohibited “the purposeful hiring of a staff person or the sending of a missionary who is a practicing homosexual.”

The 16-member Governing Board’s vote is binding

See Ban page 11



# All other ground is sinking sand: A portait of theological disaster

**T**heological disaster almost never strikes out of the blue. Trouble builds and disaster is somehow averted again and again, but anyone with eyes to see knows the time is running out. Time has run out for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF).

The CBF emerged in the early 1990s as churches aligned with the more liberal wing of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), self-identified as “moderates,” forged a new organization to replace the SBC, in which they no longer felt at home.

From the beginning, the CBF was largely funded by congregations that were not necessarily theologically liberal, at least self-consciously so, but nonetheless disagreed with the SBC’s determination to affirm and enforce the inerrancy of Scripture. Other issues were catalysts, including the SBC’s confessional principle against women serving as pastors.

The CBF had a more explicitly liberal wing, but the most leftward of the former Southern Baptists had left earlier, forming what was then known as the Alliance of Baptists.

There was a time when the SBC and the CBF were locked in competition for the loyalty and financial support of major churches. In turn, those congregations were often divided internally by the same conflict. Over twenty years later, that competition is long over.

The SBC and the CBF have each moved through history according to their chosen trajectories. They have grown steadily apart. The SBC solidified its conservative convictions and commitments, while a younger generation of leaders emerged in the CBF – a generation that did not long for a return to the SBC of the past, but identified with a far more liberal vision of theology and moral issues.

The identity crisis of the CBF was evident from the beginning. So was the fact that the LGBTQ revolution would be the fuse that would detonate the CBF and its identity.

In June of 2000, the SBC adopted a revision of its confessional statement, the *Baptist Faith & Message*. The confessional revision was a first in modern church history – the first time a major denomination had adopted a more conservative confession than it had previously held. The statement explicitly defined the office of pastor as limited to men, affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture and a host of other conservative convictions.

Daniel Vestal, then coordinator of the CBF, predicted that 5,000 churches were

ready to leave the SBC and join the CBF in reaction to the confession. In October of 2000, the CBF was under pressure to answer criticism that it was leaning leftward on the question of homosexuality and its Coordinating Council adopted a “statement of organizational value”

that precluded the hiring of non-celibate homosexuals for CBF staff or missionary field appointments.

The move was immediately criticized by many within the CBF, and especially those identified with its theological schools.

No such exodus from the SBC to the CBF occurred.

Within a decade, momentum was clearly building for a change in CBF policy. It

was well understood that the main factor holding the leadership from such a change was financial. The loss of support from churches outraged by any policy condoning homosexuality would have been devastating. The conflict was largely generational.

By 2012, an elected moderator of the CBF would openly call for a removal of the policy forbidding the hiring of non-celibate LGBT personnel. Again and again, calls for such a change were answered with delay.

Then came the wider LGBTQ revolution, the legalization of same-sex marriage and open floodgates of moral revolution. More conservative forces in the CBF may still refuse to join the revolution, but others, mostly younger, see the current CBF policy as morally wrong and oppressive.

Most of the seminaries and divinity schools serving the CBF joined the LGBTQ revolution long ago, and their graduates have been demanding that the CBF join as well.

David Gushee, perhaps best equipped to observe the CBF over the course of a generation, noted: “Over these 25 years, CBF life has produced far fewer leaders and people who could be described as evangelicals or moderate-conservative Baptists, and far more who could be described as something like mainline Protestants. Meanwhile, the original founding moderate-conservatives – often based in Texas, interestingly enough – are aging out.

“The CBF has become an uneasy coalition of moderates (who, it must be again remembered, were labeled moderate-conservatives back in the day) and real-life liberals. The latter are mainly, though not exclusively, younger, and among the clergy, most are products of the new Baptist seminaries.”



**ALBERT MOHLER**  
Guest Column

Some CBF churches have become fully LGBTQ affirming, some perform same-sex ceremonies and some have called openly-LGBTQ ministers and pastors.

Push came to shove as the CBF announced in 2016 that it would move forward through an “Illumination Project” that would allow for a new direction for the CBF on LGBTQ issues.

Last week, that project’s report was released. The fuse was detonated.

The report, “Honoring Autonomy & Reflecting the Fellowship,” has infuriated LGBTQ proponents and alienated more conservative churches. Its recommendations offer a ridiculous and unstable policy.

The report and related news reports reveal that the proposed policy will allow for the hiring of openly-LGBT CBF personnel in some positions, but not in positions of leadership or missionary field assignment. The new policy, if adopted, would create a dual morality – one for an estimated 80 percent of CBF staff and the other for supervisory staff and field personnel. The two moralities, contradictory by definition, would supposedly co-exist within one structure.

With amazing candor, the report states that “global partners (within and without Baptist life) have decisively rejected movement toward hiring or supporting LGBT field personnel or the inclusion of LGBT persons in ordained leadership.” In other words, international churches, with rare exceptions, will not cooperate with the CBF if it sends LGBT personnel to field assignments. The report also acknowledges that “less than a handful of our congregations have

called pastors who identify as LGBT.”

Nevertheless, it is hard to see how the CBF can survive with such a house divided and such an incoherent policy. One openly gay woman pastor of a CBF congregation responded over the weekend by accusing the CBF of creating “a tiered caste system where the opinions and lives of wealthy straight people are worth more than anyone else.”

We have seen this same pattern throughout mainline liberal Protestantism. The moral revolutionaries push and push until the denominational middle gives way or dies out. This drama is playing out a bit later on the stage of the CBF, but its end is clear enough. In the meantime, the “Illumination Project” has been truly illuminating.

This is the inevitable result of the abandonment of the full truthfulness and authority of Scripture. The CBF was born of controversy within the SBC over the inerrancy of the Bible.

On July 9, 1991, the CBF (which would adopt that name the following day) approved an “Address to the Public” that included one and only one clear theological statement, and that statement rejected the inerrancy of Scripture. “The Bible,” said the statement, “neither claims or reveals inerrancy as a Christian teaching.” Once the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Bible are abandoned, theological revisionism is inevitable. The CBF report does not even attempt the exegesis of Scripture.

This is also the logical consequence of adopting a hermeneutic that allows for the service of women as pastors – for

**See Sand page 15**

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## Practice fervent prayer

In late January, I had the privilege of reporting to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's Board of Directors about the progress that N.C. Baptist churches and their members have made related to our strategy of "impacting lostness through disciple-making."

The many highlights of my report included stories and examples of more individuals being engaged with the gospel, more churches being planted, more young people and college students being reached and disciplined in their faith, and increased financial support of missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program and other special offerings.

I give all praise and glory to our God for how He is working in and through North Carolina Baptists to advance the gospel and make disciples, I reminded the board that all of the progress we are celebrating in fulfilling this strategy is happening because of the prayers of His people.

Prayer has been at the forefront of the disciple-making strategy from the beginning. Prayer guided the strategy's development as it was considered and adopted by our board and our messengers in 2013. And since the strategy's implementation in January 2014, prayer by convention staff, pastors, church leaders and laity has undergirded every aspect of our work.

In fact, as the strategy was being developed, we revisited the seven pillars for ministry that I had written in 2006 soon after my election as the executive director-

treasurer. These biblical concepts serve as core values to help us as a convention stay focused on our mission of assisting N.C. Baptist churches to achieve what God has called them to do. The very first one of these seven pillars is practice fervent prayer because it aligns our hearts and minds with God's heart and His mission.

A number of people who attended the special "Broken Before the Throne" prayer gathering held in conjunction with last November's Annual Meeting have conducted similar prayer services in their churches. Others have inquired about how they could do so. I encourage your church to have observances similar to this while asking God to do a spiritually refreshing work within your local fellowship.

Convention staff have made all of the resources from the prayer gathering available for pastors and ministry leaders to access and utilize in developing a prayer gathering in your church or region. These materials, as well as a video recording of the prayer gathering from the Annual Meeting, are available online at [ncbaptist.org/prayergathering](http://ncbaptist.org/prayergathering). Contact us if you need help in planning a prayer event.



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



Also, I want to encourage you and members of your church to attend a most important upcoming statewide prayer gathering during the weekend of March 9-10 at Lake Hills Baptist Church's Candler campus in Candler, N.C., near Asheville. The theme of this year's prayer gathering is "Awaken: Return to Me."

Chris Schofield of our state convention's Office of Prayer and host church pastor James Walker invite you to participate in a rich time of prayer, worship and preaching of God's Word during this year's event. More information is available at [ncbaptist.org/awaken](http://ncbaptist.org/awaken). Come believing and expecting God to do a new work of revival in you.

In closing, I also encourage you to be in prayer for this year's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. The designated week of prayer for this year's offering is March 4-11.

Because of your generosity, North Carolina Baptists have ranked at or near the top in financial support of this special offering for many years. Prayer resources, missionary profiles and other resources are available at [anniearmstrong.com](http://anniearmstrong.com).

N.C. Baptists, thank you for praying and for allowing God to work through you to impact lostness and make disciples.

*"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving"* – Colossians 4:2. **B3**

## What does the Bible say about immigrants?

Immigration is one of the most polarizing topics in America. Our two major political parties habitually yell sensational slogans and exaggerated criticisms of one another.

To make matters worse, many news outlets have sworn allegiance to either a donkey or an elephant, and bend facts to suit their needs. The average American latches on to a news source, and drinks deeply from their wells of immigration rhetoric.

Unfortunately, many Christians are no different. Most of us think about immigration through the lens of our favorite news network. The Bible, however, has much to say about the topic, if we will look first to the scriptures.

The believer's primary identity is not one of American or Republican or Democrat; it is one of immigrant. Throughout redemptive history, God's people have been called immigrants, people sojourning to a place where Jesus will reign as king (Ezekiel 36-37; Isaiah 40-66; Revelation 20-22).

We have never been exhorted to identify with our present geographic or political boundaries. Instead, the Christian identifies with fellow citizens of the Kingdom of God. That means that we have more in common with a Mexican, Guatemalan or Iraqi Christian – regardless of legal status – than with our flag-

waving American neighbor who has no regard for Jesus.

While this may sound odd to our ears, the Bible shows that God's people have historically been called immigrants who are themselves to show compassion to the stranger. We see as early as Genesis, God makes a covenant with Abraham, promising that His descendants will inherit a land of peace and prosperity (Genesis 12, 15). Until then, they will be strangers, journeying to the Promised Land.

Along the way, Abraham's descendants became slaves in Egypt – in other words, poorly treated immigrants (Exodus 1-14). After being delivered from bondage, the Israelites resumed their sojourn to the land. While in the wilderness, God gave His people the Law, which stipulates they are to treat foreigners with love and kindness, contrary to the way they were treated in Egypt (Exodus 22:21; Deuteronomy 23:7).

The Law extended to strangers the same social protections as native Israelites (Leviticus 19:34). They were entitled, for example, to fair treatment as laborers (Deuteronomy 24:14) and rest from work on Sabbath (Exodus 20:10).

Israel abused immigrants to a degree

that prophets raged against their treatment of the vulnerable (Ezekiel 22:7-9; Malachi 3:5). Israel's flagrant mistreatment of the foreigner was one of the primary reasons they were eventually sent into exile.

While Christians are not the nation of Israel, loving the immigrant is a principle that applies to all believers throughout

history, for both the Old and New Covenants exhort love of neighbor (Leviticus 19; Matthew 22). In case you were wondering, an undocumented person is your neighbor.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) even shows that we are to love and care for the needs of those of different ethnicities, even groups against whom we have strong enmity. Thus, the Christian should

show kindness to the immigrant, regardless if he or she is our adversary or of a different ethnic group.

Centuries after entering the land, God sent His people into exile (Kings-Chronicles). Once again, the Israelites became immigrants under the rule of foreign nations, such as Assyria and Babylon. While in exile, God's people maintained hope that they would inherit the land, now expecting to inherit a reconstituted earth (Psalm 2; Ezekiel 36-37; Isaiah 65-66).

The Old Testament ended with this very good expectation, anticipating the day when God's people would no longer be immigrants.

The New Testament authors had this story in mind as they wrote their documents – a story that reached its climax in Jesus the Christ, who will deliver a community of immigrants (like you, me, Paul, Moses and Abraham) from exile and into a new earth.

Peter, for example, calls his readers "elect immigrants" (1 Peter 1:1) and "immigrants and sojourners" (2:11), terms often used to refer to someone who is living in a foreign land, either by force or by their own volition.

Peter uses such language to underscore that Christians are living as foreigners in the present world, awaiting entrance into the place where their citizenship truly lies (1 Peter 1:4; 2 Peter 3).

Thinking of Peter's words in view of the biblical storyline, the hope of New Covenant believers is the same as that of faithful Jews under the Old Covenant. That is, we are strangers in the present cosmos awaiting the inheritance of a new creation (Isaiah 65-66; Romans 4, 8; Revelation 21-22). This is the story of God's multiethnic people who will be saved through Messiah Jesus.

Allowing the Bible to shape our view

**See Bible page 12**



**MIGUEL ECHEVARRÍA**  
Guest Column



# Sessions offer diverse options for disciple-making event

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

**P**astors and ministry leaders from churches of all sizes and locations should walk away from the upcoming 2018 N.C. Baptist Disciple-Making Conference with a host of biblical and practical resources to help them make disciples in the home, church and world within their context of ministry.

“Home. Church. World.” is the theme for this year’s conference, which is scheduled for Tues., Feb. 27 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Center Grove Baptist Church in Clemmons.

Through a combined total of approximately 40 breakout sessions planned throughout the day, this year’s event features a special emphasis on training and equipping in the three spheres of home, church and world reflected in the theme.

Registration for the event is \$10 per person and includes conference materials and lunch.

While the Disciple-Making Conference has traditionally been held on a Monday, this year’s event is on a Tuesday. Additional information and registration is available online at [disciplenc.org](http://disciplenc.org).

“This year’s conference has been designed with all North Carolina Baptists in mind,” said Brian Upshaw, who leads the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) Disciple-Making Team, which is coordinating the event.

A diverse group of pastors, ministry leaders, church practitioners, seminary professors, BSC staff and others



will lead the various equipping sessions held throughout the day, Upshaw said. “This year’s speakers represent churches of different sized memberships from both urban and rural contexts,” Upshaw said. “Each of the equipping session leaders brings both experience and expertise to the topics they will be addressing.”

Since disciple-making involves both helping others come to know Christ and then helping them grow in Christ, Upshaw said equipping sessions will focus on both evangelism and discipleship.

For example, a variety of sessions will focus on how to begin a gospel conversation or turn a conversation toward the gospel. A session on worldviews will equip attendees on how to listen for verbal clues about a person’s spiritual beliefs in the course of everyday conversations and then use those conversations to build bridges that connect with the gospel.

Other sessions will focus on issues such as race rela-

tions, culture and the arts, and how to wisely and carefully approach these topics from a biblical perspective in a way that can lead to disciple-making.

Several pastors and other church staff will lead sessions on creating a culture of disciple-making and developing a disciple-making pathway in one’s church. Other sessions will emphasize how to align specific ministries, such as children’s, youth, family ministry and missions, with a church’s overarching disciple-making strategy.

Equipping sessions designed for women and women’s ministry leaders will also be available.

A complete list of equipping session topics and leaders is available at [disciplenc.org](http://disciplenc.org).

Matt Carter, pastor of Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, will lead two plenary sessions.

“Austin Stone is a church that has cultivated a disciple-making culture that is impacting the home, the church and the world,” Upshaw said. “Matt is a gifted preacher whose church is aligned with what our strategy here in North Carolina is focused on.”

Preregistration is requested for this year’s conference, but Upshaw said walk-up attendees are welcome the day of the event. He encouraged all pastors and church leaders to bring a group from their church to the conference.

“There’s really something for everybody at this year’s conference,” Upshaw said. “The event is designed so that attendees should come away with practical ministry applications for making disciples in the home, the church and the world.” **BR**

## Men with N.C. roots bond in Vermont

Part of a series

By MIKE CRESWELL | BSC Communications

**W**illiston is a town of about 9,000 people in northeastern Vermont that functions mostly like suburbs for the larger city of Burlington, the most populous city in the state.

But with a population numbering only about 43,000, Burlington is the nation’s smallest city to be a state’s biggest city. This is near the shores of Lake Champlain which separates New York and Vermont. Montreal, just north of the Canadian border, is only a two-hour drive away.

Williston is one of Vermont’s fastest-growing areas, where one can find the newest shopping centers and restaurants.

But Canton, N.C., native Todd West, who now lives in Williston, points out that the restaurants don’t include a Chick-fil-A or Cracker Barrel, and it’s hard to find grits or corn meal in the grocery stores.

West is quick to say he is not com-

plaining, just listing cultural differences.

He moved here with his wife, Amy, their four kids and the family dog in June 2017 with the goal of starting a new church. After a month of crowded hotel room living, they located a house.

West grew up in Canton and still has family there and in surrounding Haywood County. He graduated from Fruitland Baptist Bible College in 1998, studied briefly at North Greenville University before graduating with two degrees from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

More recently, West has served as pastor of a church in Carnesville, Ga. But it has been reunion time with the other western North Carolina folks who are also serving in Vermont. He attended high school with Tim Owens, for example. Owens accepted Christ as Savior in West’s room. Now Mission City Church which Owens leads is helping West’s church plant through training and tech support.

The Wests are supported through the North American Mission Board. He and a growing number of team members are busy converting a vision and a website into a living church, Crosspoint Church.

Hayden Swanger, 19, will be Crosspoint’s worship leader. A native of Haywood County in western North Carolina, Swanger met West in Georgia. He is working on a Fruitland degree online,



Todd West, right, is lead planter on a new church plant in Williston, Vt., near Burlington. At left is Hayden Swanger, 19, who will be worship leader. Swanger is a native of Haywood County, N.C., currently studying in the online program of Fruitland Baptist Bible College. They stand in a rented building which will house the new church in Williston. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

and he has received further training from Mission City Church.

“After we got moved into our house, we just went out trying to meet people,” West said. He started making friends with the local police and fire departments, a chaplaincy ministry he pursued back in Georgia. He said local people do notice his accent but so far the reception has generally been friendly and receptive. They have been refurbishing a rented

set of rooms on Commerce Street, very near Williston’s major shopping area, which will house the new church.

Introductory meetings have already grown to 30 people attending. West hopes they will have many more people on board by the time the church officially launches, hopefully in March 2018.

“So far it has gone really well, and God has given us favor here,” West said.

**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.

See Vermont page 16



# Platt

Continued from page 1

church, then I need to serve in different ways for the cause of global missions.

"I love this IMB family, and I want to encourage you continually with God's Word, I want to mobilize limitless missionaries to join you, and I want to work with you overseas in any ways I can help you," Platt continued. "In short, I want to do anything I can to see missions succeed across and beyond IMB and the SBC for the glory of God."

The IMB was founded in 1845 as the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and grew into the largest denominational missionary-sending body among American evangelicals. There are more than 3,500 IMB missionaries serving around the world, according to the IMB's website.

In 2015 the IMB went through series of changes to counteract years of deficit spending that totaled more than \$210 million dollars. A downsizing plan included incentives for voluntary resignations and retirements that reduced U.S. and field personnel by more than 1,000,



David Platt told International Mission Board staff and missionaries Feb. 12 he will transition out of the Southern Baptist Convention entity's presidency. (BP file photo)

helping the IMB achieve financial stability in 2017, and continue sending new missionaries across the globe.

The organization also adopted a strategy to open "limitless pathways" for sending long term missionaries at various funding levels, from volunteer to full time, in an effort to start church plant-

ing movements among unreached people groups.

Platt and his wife, Heather, have four children: Caleb, Joshua, Mara Ruth and Isaiah.

Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), said on social media that he is "grieved and saddened" by Platt's announcement. Akin added, however, that he is "grateful our sovereign God is in control! Our trust ultimately is always in Him."

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, told Baptist Press, "I love David Platt and thank God for him. I wish the best for him and his precious family during this time of transition. I look forward to working alongside him in the future as well as the new president of the IMB."

IMB trustees from North Carolina told the *Biblical Recorder* they applaud Platt's leadership and asked Southern Baptists to pray for their international missions agency:

● Will Gatling, associate pastor at Bay Leaf Baptist Church in Raleigh, said, "David has been a real asset to Southern Baptists in his position as president of the IMB, and he has provided us with a renewed passion for reaching out to the lost people of this world.

"He has led us to use multiple pathways of engagement by the local church to reach out to the world, as well as using the skills and talents of the team members of the IMB. He has a wonderful team surrounding him that will continue to help lead in this transition."

● Rob Peters, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, said, "I am thankful for Dr. David Platt's leadership at the IMB. David is a man of integrity, vision and passion.

"As the trustees work with David to begin this transition process, I know [he] will continue to lead our IMB family to fulfill its mission. I ask Southern Baptists to pray for the IMB family, for the trustees as we begin this transition process and for David as he fulfills God's calling on his life. I know we can trust in God's sovereign plan as He leads."

● Bobbi Ashford, IMB trustee and mother of SEBTS Provost Bruce Ashford, said, "David Platt's wise and prayerful leadership has brought us safely through some challenging years, and I am grateful that he will remain in his role as IMB President at this time. May Southern Baptists to be devoted to prayer as a search committee is formed to begin the process of searching for David's future replacement." **BR**

## LESSONS LEARNED IN THE DARK

In the early morning hours of the first week of January, when winter storm Grayson was making its way up the East Coast, I was reading while huddled underneath the comfort and warmth of four thick blankets on my bed. Suddenly, everything in my home went dark.

Alarmed, I crawled out of bed and sprinted to the front door. I opened it to 12-degree temperatures and the realization that electricity was off in the entire apartment complex. Freezing, I ran back to the comfort and warmth of my bed and those four thick blankets.

In the next moments I thought, "I am sure someone else has already called the power company," but then it struck me, at 4:30 in the morning, what if I was the only one who knew the power was off? What if no one else had this knowledge, and what if no one ever called and we would have to remain in the darkness and the cold?

I was really cozy in my blanket cocoon even though I was well aware of the darkness and cold that not only affected me, but also my neighbors. Immediately, I called the power company to alert them

of the outage that had taken place five minutes earlier.

Through this phone call, I learned another neighbor had already called, and a crew was en route to help restore the power.

God can use physical darkness to teach us several spiritual lessons. Darkness is all around us. As believers, we might not consciously think of this daily, but a quick glance of news headlines helps us see the spiritual darkness around us.

There are many people living in spiritual darkness, yet they might not know they are in the dark. But we have this knowledge as believers. Will we do something about it, or will we choose to remain in the comfort and coziness of our Christian circles? Will we hope someone else will accept responsibility and do something about it?

How will you bring light to darkness today?



ASHLEY ALLEN

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Ashley Allen is consultant for Embrace Women's Ministry for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. For more information you can reach her at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5559. Read her blog at [worthyofthecalling.com](http://worthyofthecalling.com).)

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### Religious liberty upheld in N.C. magistrate case

Former North Carolina magistrate Sandra Myrick has reached a settlement agreement with the state after a federal court ruled in her favor on claims of civil rights violation when she was forced to stop issuing marriage licenses due to her religious beliefs about marriage. The administrative court's decision and resulting \$300,000 settlement was celebrated as a victory for religious liberty by Myrick's legal counsel, Becket law firm. The initial discrimination complaint was filed in April 2015 with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

### Southeastern launches Acts 29 partnership

(SEBTS) Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has announced a partnership with Crosslands, a theological training program under Acts 29 Europe, to train potential church planters and leaders. Beginning Feb. 13, students may enroll in the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry track from SEBTS. Crosslands offers flexible, modular courses at hubs in four cities across Europe. It currently has 56 students in a seminary program and 500 in lower level courses.

### Govt. to limit children's group homes funding

A bipartisan budget bill that ended an overnight government shutdown Feb. 9 includes spending provisions for child welfare that deter the use of group homes. The Family First Prevention Services Act prioritizes foster care prevention through mental health and substance abuse treatment, parent skill-based programs and kinship placements. The Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina and other group home networks opposed similar legislation in 2016, arguing that it limits child care choices, especially for large sibling groups. The \$400 billion bill was signed into law by the president hours after it passed in a pre-dawn vote.

### Cumberland schools replace sex ed program

The Cumberland County Board of Education voted Feb. 13 to stop using a controversial middle school sex education program developed by Planned Parenthood. A coalition of Christians and conservative groups had launched the "Cumberland Protect Our Students Initiative" to call for the curriculum's removal. Many parents and teachers, including some members of the board's curriculum committee, questioned the age appropriateness of some material, which included explanations of anal and oral sex in sixth grade lessons. The board decided to reinstate a locally developed sex education program first implemented in 2009.

### FEMA funds now for disaster-stricken churches

(Baptist Press) Churches and other houses of worship now have the assurance of federal law that they may receive disaster relief funds.

Congress approved Feb. 9 as part of the latest budget bill a measure making houses of worship eligible for public assistance money for the restoration of damaged buildings and other purposes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the aftermath of such disasters as hurricanes and tornadoes. President Donald Trump signed the legislation into law the same day.

The bill's enactment places into federal law and gives permanence to a new FEMA interpretation issued in early January. At that time, the agency announced it would no longer exclude houses of worship from its aid, which provides for debris removal, emergency protection and the rebuilding of facilities for some private non-profit organizations.

"Congress has delivered a big victory for houses of worship everywhere," said Diana Verm, legal counsel at Becket, the nonprofit religious liberty organization that represents the Texas churches and Florida synagogues that had sued the federal government.

### Gay marriage reversed in Bermuda

(Baptist Press) The Bermuda Legislature has outlawed same-sex marriage only months after the Bermuda Supreme Court approved such unions there, making the island the first nation to reverse its position on gay marriage.

The Bermuda Legislature approved the Domestic Partnership Act after a public referendum in favor of traditional marriage, effectively reversing the Bermuda Supreme Court ruling of May 2017. Bermuda Gov. John Rankin signed the act into law Feb. 7. The new law denies marriage to same-sex couples, but gives both gay and heterosexual couples the right to enter into partnerships with certain legal rights previously held only by heterosexual married couples.

Bermuda, a small nation of less than 70,000, is a self-governing territory of the United Kingdom. Gay marriage remains legal elsewhere in the UK, with the exception of Northern Ireland.

## NAMB introduces 'Send Puerto Rico'

North American Mission Board

**T**he North American Mission Board (NAMB) is adding Puerto Rico to its list of special areas that will receive increased attention and resources for church planting, Send Relief ministries and partnership opportunities with Southern Baptist churches that want to minister on the island. NAMB president Kevin Ezell shared the plans with NAMB trustees Feb. 6.

The emphasis comes as Puerto Rico continues to slowly recover from the staggering toll Hurricane Maria took on the island when it struck Sept. 20, 2017. Since the storm hit, NAMB, along with Southern Baptist volunteers from several state Baptist conventions, has been actively leading relief efforts.

"We are excited about bringing more resources to Puerto Rico to plant churches and to help Southern Baptists invest even more outside of the disaster that hit recently," Ezell said.

Ezell told trustees that Send Relief will be adding two ministry centers on the island that will have ongoing disaster assistance and minister to other needs as well.

Other trustee business included:

- NAMB controller Matthew Smith reported that year-to-date revenue is ahead

of budget and spending is below budget.

- Financial Services Committee chairman David Parks, a member of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky., reported results from NAMB's annual external audit. "NAMB was issued an unqualified opinion. In layman's terms that means a clean report – the highest that it could be," Parks said.

- Trustees approved 13 NAMB trustees already serving on the Send Relief committee to also serve as trustees for Send Relief, Inc.

Ezell updated trustees on NAMB's efforts to assist First Baptist Sutherland Springs, Texas, as they recover and rebuild in the aftermath of the Nov. 5, 2017, shooting at the church that killed 26 members and injured 20 others.

"We have come alongside them and committed to replace the worship center and educational space," Ezell said. "We think roughly it will be \$1 million to \$1.5 million." No existing buildings will be torn down as part of the project.

Plans are to allow churches and individuals to donate toward the cost of the rebuild.

Ezell expressed gratitude to Southern Baptists for the record \$59.6 million that was given to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in 2017. **BR**

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# Meeting needs first in New York City

North American Mission Board

Once an abandoned storefront tagged with spray paint, the building that originally housed Graffiti Church has become a symbol of hope on New York's Lower East Side. Send Relief missionaries Taylor Field and his wife, Susan, strategically positioned the church plant in 1986 amid crack houses and a large homeless population, eventually making this neglected neighborhood their home.

"Jesus started with meeting needs first," says Field. "His compassion grew people's faith, and then He built the church on that faith."

The Fields' work was not without opposition. Confronting drug dealers and learning how to care for users and hundreds of homeless men, women and children were part of the weekly challenges.

"The first college mission group would paint our storefront, and then someone would tag it again with graffiti," says Field. The mission team then painted their own spiritual message on the wall along with the word, "Graffiti."

Inspiration struck.

The ministry workers decided to embrace the form of artistry so familiar to the neighborhood, and gave what was then East 7th Baptist Ministry a new moniker: Graffiti, which eventually became a church.

Embedded in the identity of the church is a simple idea: "From small things come great things." Field explains that it is all about an upside-down approach to ministry, doing tangible, practical things well.

This upside-down approach led to a series of books: *Upside-Down Leadership: Rethinking Influence and Success*, *Upside-Down Devotion: Extreme Action for a Remarkable God*, and *Upside-Down Freedom: Inverted Principles for Christian Living*, all by Taylor; and *Upside-Down Results: God Tags People for His Purposes* by Susan. Both are well-known in North Carolina Baptist circles because they are frequent guests at the annual Baptists on Mission Missions Conference.

But this year, the couple will be the featured speakers during the Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina's (WMU-NC) Missions Extravaganza April 27-28.



Taylor and Susan Field serve the North American Mission Board in New York.



The 127th annual meeting of the WMU-NC meeting is scheduled at Ardmore Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. The Fields are Send Relief missionaries and are among the 2018 Week of Prayer missionaries and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions. As North American Mission Board (NAMB) personnel, the Fields are assigned to New York.

Stories of life change testify to the effectiveness of their ministry through Graffiti and NAMB.

## The practical approach to ministry

Recently released from prison and living in a treatment facility for drug rehabilitation, Raul received a court mandate to take a GED class; Graffiti offered one.

Raul was skeptical about going to a church, even for a required education class, but he went anyway. One day after class, a member of the church extended an invitation to visit a service saying, "We would love to have you."

Something about the "we" stood out to Raul, and he came – six months in a row. He also brought his girlfriend, Siyyida.

Leaders in the church helped mentor Raul and Siyyida. They both became followers of Christ, and after more than two and a half years of dating, they decided to get married. Now they attend and serve at Graffiti campuses, which have grown to five meeting sites in the New York City metro area and two affiliates in other cities.

Melissa, too, has experienced the impact of personal and practical ministry. She went to Graffiti's Christmas Toy Drive in 2012. When she arrived that day, she was basically on empty spiritually and mentally.

"I had made some terrible choices in my marriage, my career and my health," she said, "and I felt like I was drowning."

The instructions she received at the door were simple: First, you talk briefly with a toy store counselor, and then you go shopping.

The counselor greeted Melissa warmly and told her that it was a joy to pray with her. During the prayer time, Melissa said, "I couldn't speak or respond. I just wept. Uncontrollably ... It wasn't a prayer I had in my Rolodex of memorized prayers. This woman was talking to God as though He was a King, a Father, her hero, something deeper than I had ever experienced. She shared her story with me, and I finally opened up to her about my avalanche of troubles."

Melissa accepted Christ that day, and now helps lead the same ministry that changed her life.

The small-things approach works. Change continues on the Lower East Side through daily connections in the diverse community.

The church shares Christ's compassion in practical ways – from after-school tutoring and ESL classes to hip-hop dancing and lunches in the park.

"When we serve a meal, it's not just about handing



Annie Armstrong Easter Offering 2018 Week of Prayer missionary, church addict in 1986 on New York City's Lower East Side through his church had no hope could find healing and have their basic needs met while he

over some food; we sit down together at the table and talk while we eat," said Field. "It's about connecting."

Many who call Graffiti their home church have been directly impacted by the church's ministry efforts: a free sandwich, a literacy lesson, legal assistance, a blanket in the New York winter.

Louis "Chess Monster" Taylor is part of that group.

"I was homeless for about 60 years," said the former history teacher who moved to New York about 15 years ago.

Every day, he played chess at Tompkins Square Park, and through that consistency, he became well known in the neighborhood. When one of the Field's young sons expressed interest in learning chess around the age of 9, a game with Chess Monster was a must.

That was the beginning of a relationship that continues to this day. The Field family invited Chess Monster to lunch at the park.

"I noticed when [Field] started feeding the people in the park – no strings attached," said the chess expert. "Other ministers came through the park, and you had to listen to the hour and a half sermon first. Then you might get a bag or a ticket for the pantry. Well, Taylor was the complete opposite. He fed everybody first. And if you wanted to stay, you could stay. If you didn't want to stay, you could go. So, that really impressed me."

Over the course of a few years, Chess Monster went from receiving free lunches to helping serve meals to others. He connected with people at Graffiti and experienced something new.

When one person is in need of food or shelter and someone reaches out to help, it makes a big impact, he said.

"There's this old saying: An empty stomach has no ears."

Graffiti's approach to meet needs first made it possible for Chess Monster and people in similar situations to hear about the love that motivated their efforts.





h planter and pastor, Taylor Field, began serving the homeless and drug plant, Graffiti Church. His mission was to be a place where those who aring the gospel. (NAMB photos)

Louis Taylor now has a personal relationship with Jesus. He works at the church in maintenance, helps lead Bible studies and continues to be part of the compassion ministries that changed his life.

### Playing the long game

Through consistency and authentic love, the hope of Christ has infiltrated the Lower East Side and surrounding communities. Graffiti continues to pioneer ways to serve the neighborhoods of their respective campuses and they keep in mind the larger goal: to share the Good News across the globe.

Field said, “Graffiti values a heart for God and hands for work. We have more than 20 ministries and have assisted in some way in helping start 31 new church plants which in turn have started 39 more.

“There’s a famous game in chess, as I understand from chess experts, where one player continues to give, and give, and give some of their most valuable pieces,” said Field.

“As it plays out, you may look like you’re losing, but it’s a strategy because it’s a strategy for the long game; in the end, you’re really winning. I think that’s part of the story of the gospel.”

That long-game vision and willingness to invest time and resources have helped transform this area over the past few decades. Change has not come quickly, but it has come.

“Changing one block can change a neighborhood, changing a neighborhood can change a city, changing a city can change a country, changing a country can impact the whole world,” said Field. “I think people can learn from what God has done here, that you don’t have to do great things for God, but just things with great love. And you don’t have to have great faith in God, but just faith in a great God.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Taylor Field’s newest book, *The Wayward Way*, publishes in this spring.) **BR**

# Conservative Resurgence archives to be housed at new Texas center

By JONI HANNIGAN | Southern Baptist TEXAN

It has been more than 40 years since the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) “Conservative Resurgence” took root, embracing biblical authority and distancing its entities and seminaries from what had been called a growing presence of liberal ideology.

The libraries and archives of Adrian Rogers, the first SBC president of that era, and James C. Hefley Jr., the primary journalist of that movement, will be preserved as part of the new Baptist Heritage Library at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, along with the collections of Jerry Vines and Paige Patterson.

The new library is slated for completion in fall 2018, but seminary leaders hope messengers attending the SBC annual meeting in Dallas will be able to view the sprawling two-story facility designed to house the collections along with living quarters for researchers and security staff.

Patterson, SWBTS president, also has gifted his own 35,000-book library to the center, which will serve as the repository for his personal papers, mission gifts and realia.

Rogers’ family donated the books, papers and personal artifacts of the three-time president of the SBC to the seminary following his death in 2005. His election as SBC president in 1979 was said by many to mark the beginning of the Conservative Resurgence.

Hefley’s archives were transferred in 2016 from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. to SWBTS.

Hefley, author of the first history of the Conservative Resurgence with his “Truth in Crisis” series, died in 2004.

Craig Kubic, dean of libraries at SWBTS, said the center will be the largest of its type covering the Conserva-

tive Resurgence, and among a few special research places in the world that focuses specifically on Baptists.

“The Baptist Heritage Center will be an exceptional opportunity for students, scholars and Baptists with an interest in history,” Kubic said. “This information represents the seminal knowledge of these outstanding communicators and theologians.”

Charles Patrick, SWBTS vice-president for strategic initiatives and communications, said trustees approved construction of the \$2.5 million center a year ago and that the entire building, as well as an endowment for maintenance and operations, is “entirely funded” by gifts from 10 individuals or foundations.

Chairman of the board of trustees at SWBTS, Kevin Uekert, pastor of First Baptist Church in Georgetown, said the library is being built to house and preserve libraries significant to Baptist heritage.

“We are grateful for the donors who have supported the preservation of Baptist heritage as well as providing a way for many to access to these libraries,” Uekert said.

The Baptist Heritage Center houses offices and workrooms designed to archive, maintain and use the collections for research – apart from about a dozen other libraries maintained by Southwestern Seminary, according to its website.

Patterson said that he would live in one of the one-bedroom apartments in the center, along with his wife after his retirement and until they could no longer take care of themselves.

In that way it “would give me access to my own library to write,” Patterson said, explaining the trustees “kindly said, ‘Yes.’”

In September 2017, the SWBTS trustee executive committee extended an official invitation for the Pattersons to reside in the Baptist Heritage Center as its first theologians-in-residence. Patterson has said he has no plans to retire as of yet. **BR**



Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) hosted its annual GO Conference Feb. 16-17 in Wake Forest, N.C., to mobilize high school and college students for evangelism and missions. Speakers included D.A. Horton, pastor of Reach Fellowship in Long Beach, Calif.; Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Tony Merida, pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh; and SEBTS President Danny Akin, above. The event also featured nearly 20 breakout sessions and music led by Josh Via, worship pastor of Journey Church in Raleigh. Visit [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org) for more coverage. (SEBTS photos by Ryan Hutchinson)



# Movie Continued from page 1

the Internet. “If you combined our other movies, they would add up to about a fourth of that,” Erwin said.

The Erwin Brothers produced “October Baby” (2011), “Mom’s Night Out” (2014) and “Woodlawn” (2015). All are Christian films with strong box office ratings.

“I think people connect with something deeply personal in the song, ‘I Can Only Imagine,’” Erwin said. “When we did the movie, we asked Bart [Millard], ‘What does the song deliver?’ He said, ‘It’s a rush of hope – people wanting to imagine what heaven is like.’”

Erwin said the story behind the song, is “powerful,” as is the story surrounding the production of the movie.

“We had just finished the movie, Mom’s Night Out,” he explained. “I asked Bart Millard, singer for MercyMe, to come to a screening for the film. Afterwards he pulled me aside and said, ‘I don’t know if you know this Andy, but for the past five years someone has been developing the story behind my writing the song, I Can Only Imagine.’ I said, ‘I don’t know if you know this Bart, but they sent us the script this morning.’”

The company that developed the script decided not to use it and offered it to the Erwin Brothers.

Woodlawn was already in production, but Erwin read the script for I Can Only Imagine, talked to Millard about the full story and immediately decided, “After we finished Woodlawn, this is our next movie.”

As they discovered the full story of Millard’s troubled background, the Erwin Brothers knew a movie would require a level of transparency that could be painful. “We said, Bart, if we do this, we need to tell who you really are. We feel like the hope is in the true story behind what you went through.”

Millard lived with an abusive father who rejected the boy and his dream of being a musician. His mother had walked away from the family. Later the father faced certain death from cancer and reached out to the young Millard who was successfully following his love of music.

Erwin said, “Jesus redeemed his father as he was passing away with cancer, and Bart saw his father falling in love with Jesus. At the funeral, someone said to Bart, ‘I can only imagine what your dad’s doing in heaven right now.’ That became a way for Bart to reflect on his dad’s life and he wrote a song that is deeply personal and has connected with tens of millions of people. The song is the number one most downloaded Christian single of all time. It has crossed over to secular, country, gospel – so it’s really had life elsewhere.”

## Choosing the cast

The Erwins prayed that God would put the right people in the movie. A nationwide casting call was conducted for Millard’s role. “We wanted someone to do their own singing. We wanted somebody who looked like Bart – a southern, blue collar kid that has an amazing voice,” said Erwin.

They found a young man who was working in the Broadway play, “Les Miserables” in New York. J. Michael Finley “has an amazing voice,” Erwin said. “When we talked to him, [Finley] said, ‘My dad is an associate pastor at a Baptist church in Missouri. I grew up going to hear MercyMe at camps. This is deeply familiar to me.’”

Finley gladly joined the cast. Erwin said it was a “special experience” to watch Finley and Millard working together, learning how to sing the songs.

Another big challenge was finding the right man to



play the role of Arthur, the abusive father. The Erwins had a short list of actors they believed would fit the part.

“I was losing sleep wondering who God would have for us to play the dad,” Erwin explained. “I talked to movie producer Stephen Kendrick, and he really encouraged me. He said, ‘Andy, you want God to make it obvious who His choice is, so embrace closed doors and He won’t let you miss the right one.’”

“A week before we were scheduled to start filming the dad’s role, Dennis Quaid called and said, ‘I love this role and I want to do it.’ I think it’s the best role he has ever had. It’s an amazing, transformative role. He plays this rough guy who comes to Christ at the end of his life. It’s a beautiful, beautiful picture of grace.”

The Erwins don’t require actors in their films to share their Christian beliefs but, the cast has to “agree on the role they play and the story we’re trying to tell,” he said. “We’re called to tell true stories that are a tool for the church to reach their communities for Christ – to be an introduction to Christianity. Our niche is evangelism.”

Another goal of Erwin’s films is to “influence the influencers.” He hopes to expose actors to real Christians and real Christianity. When a rough edit of the movie was ready, Erwin went to Quaid’s home to preview it with the actor and his twin nine-year-olds.

When the film ended, “I turned around and said, ‘What did you think Dennis?’ He was crying – couldn’t even speak. He hugged me two or three times and said, ‘Thank you. That was powerful.’”

“He called Bart [Millard] that night and talked to him for hours. [Quaid] said his daughters were asking questions about God and about heaven. He said, ‘this is a film about how God does His miracles the hard way sometimes. I’m totally in.’”

Trace Adkins was invited to play the role of Scott Brickell, MercyMe’s manager. At first, he turned down the idea. According to Adkin’s manager, “He feels like he’s too rough around the edges and doesn’t want to be a hypocrite.”

Erwin responded, “That’s not a good enough reason. So, I went to Mississippi and played 18 holes of golf with him. I said, ‘Trace, this movie is about redemption, and redemption accepts you where you are. Redemption is

Above, J. Michael Finley, left, and Dennis Quaid act in a father-son scene for “I Can Only Imagine” due in theaters March 16. The film, produced by Erwin brothers, Andy and Jon, has gotten some attention on its theme of forgiveness. At left, Andy Erwin, right, and Jon, in white, talk to Trace Adkins, far left, in “Mom’s Night Out,” a film that released in 2014. Adkins also appears in this latest release.

found in Christ who loves you where you are.”

Adkins later told a reporter, “I could use a little redemption in my life.” He accepted the movie role.

Erwin added, “Everybody loves Trace. He’s a big, gruff, lovable teddy bear. He’s great in the movie.”

Madeline Carroll, who plays Bart’s love interest, is “a strong believer – she really loves Jesus,” according to Erwin. “She does not compromise her values, and has landed some really big roles. We are very happy to have her in this film.”

Priscilla Shirer who starred in the Christian movie, “War Room,” plays the teacher who influenced Millard to develop his music interests. “She’s royalty in any circles,” said Erwin. “She was a popular speaker before God just blew the doors wide open with War Room. She is such a dignified lady. Having her on set was such a blessing.”

The Erwin Brothers’ fourth film is proving to be very different from the others.

“I’ve never experienced anything like this,” he said. “Woodlawn was a special film. It was deeply personal for us. But there’s this extra, rare ‘magic’ factor about this one – it’s supernatural. There’s something very simple to Bart’s story and to the song he wrote, but it is really deeply relatable, also. It’s an entry to the gospel, specifically the redemption of Arthur, Bart’s dad.

“Jon and I passionately believe in the local church. Our goal is not to get people from the church into the movie theater. Our goal is to allow the church to get a new vision to reach out to their community, to evangelize the lost in the movie theater, and get them back into the church.”

Erwin believes a whole generation is walking away from the church. Since the age demographic of many that are leaving the church is frequent movie-goers, he sees Christian films as an open opportunity to help the church with evangelism.

“We’re excited about the church being able to use this movie as an evangelistic event to engage their communities and hopefully funnel large numbers of people that make decisions for Christ into their churches,” he said. “Jesus pricked the hearts of people with His parables, then people asked, ‘What was that all about?’ We believe this movie will prick the hearts of your friends so they will say, ‘tell us more.’ Then, you can share the gospel with them.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Other movies with Christian themes releasing in February and March include “Samson,” “Tortured for Christ,” “Paul, an apostle of Christ,” and “God’s Not Dead: A Light in Darkness.”) **BR**



# Ban

Continued from page 1

and does not require approval by the annual CBF General Assembly.

The policy change was recommended by a seven-member Illumination Project Committee appointed in 2016 to chart a unified path forward for the CBF amid diverse views on human sexuality.

The CBF was founded in 1991 as a

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### 11 Reasons to Not Drink Alcohol

1. God said to be sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; 1 Peter 5:8 NKJV). The Greek word *nepho* means wineless, free from intoxicants.
2. We are to love God with all our minds (Mark 12:30). Alcohol impairs that mind.
3. It is expensive (Proverbs 23:21).
4. It makes you do foolish things you would never do in your right mind (Proverbs 23:29-35).
5. It is dangerous and addictive (Proverbs 20:1).
6. It hurts your testimony; you influence others to drink; you often harm others (Romans 14:21).
7. Drugs should not be used for recreation and pleasure.
8. Never take that first drink, and you will never become a problem drinker.
9. Drinking supports an industry that has destroyed untold thousands.
10. Not drinking is prudent and wise (Proverbs 20:1; 22:3).
11. You should rely on God, not drugs (Psalm 11:1).

-David R. Brumbelow, author of **Ancient Wine and the Bible: The Case for Abstinence.**  
gulfcoastpastor.blogspot.com  
(Permission granted to reprint.)

Questions about the Bible and Alcohol? Find answers in **Ancient Wine and the Bible.**

**March 18** Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday  
See also: Wit & Wisdom of Pastor Joe Brumbelow

fellowship of churches that objected to the ideology and methods of the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgence.

CBF Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter underscored CBF leaders' intent to unify the Fellowship.

"CBF is moving from a hiring policy focused exclusively on sexuality to a policy that focuses on Jesus and His work to transform the world," Paynter said according to a CBF news release.

"We are a Fellowship, a big tent of faithful believers and autonomous, innovative churches in partnership. While we do not agree on everything, we have shown Baptists and others that we can come together in a relatively short amount of time, focus on what unites us and come out of it poised for a bright future."

According to the Illumination Project Committee's 43-page report, the new hiring policy – which does not mention

human sexuality – and the implementation policy are intended to reflect the faith and practice of CBF churches.

"The overwhelming majority of our congregations do not have policy statements or proclamations focused on matters of human sexuality, either in a congregationally adopted hiring policy or in other places," the committee stated. "In proposing a hiring policy that does not include treatment of matters of human sexuality, we believe we are reflecting and respecting not only what we have heard from our autonomous local congregations, but also what we see in their lives."

The report adds, however, "at this time in CBF life, less than a handful of our congregations have called pastors who identify as LGBT. Likewise, in the implementation of the hiring policy, the CBF office in Decatur will reflect the actual practice of most of our congregations."

CBF "global partners" in ministry, the report states, "have decisively rejected movement toward hiring or supporting LGBT field personnel or the inclusion of LGBT persons in ordained leadership." The implementation procedure for missionary hiring "reflects and respects" that reality.

The new hiring policy, states in part, "Because of our compelling mission and vision, CBF will employ only individuals who profess Jesus Christ as Lord, are committed to living out the Great Commandment and Great Commission, and who affirm the principles that have shaped our unique Baptist perspective."

It adds, "CBF employees are expected to have the highest moral character, displaying professionalism and the commitment to the highest ethical standards."

The full Illumination Project Committee report is available on the CBF website. **BR**

## Pastors encouraged to participate in biennial church compensation survey

GuideStone Financial Resources

**G**uideStone Financial Resources®, LifeWay Research and Baptist state conventions have teamed up again in 2018 for the biennial SBC Church Compensation Survey.

Pastors and church employees are invited to participate in the survey, a resource used by churches of all sizes to determine fair wages and benefits. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete; it is available at [GuideStone.org/](http://GuideStone.org/)

*CompensationSurvey*. Survey respondents can enter to win an iPad.

The survey's results will be made available in the early fall, in time for many churches considering their 2019 budgets. The survey is the largest, free, church compensation study available in the United States.

These surveys are a valuable tool for churches to benchmark their own salary and benefits against churches of similar size within Southern Baptist life. Through GuideStone's compensation planning materials, GuideStone offers materials to help churches structure their compensation to make proper use of tax laws.

Individual survey results can be contributed anonymously: Survey results

are not reported individually. Once the survey closes May 31, LifeWay Research will work on compiling results. Survey respondents will receive advance notice of the survey's availability.

Respondents should have available the church's average weekly attendance, church membership and 2018 annual budget, along with their annual salary, annual contributions to a retirement plan and annual church-paid insurance premiums. They should also have their annual housing allowance, Social Security offset and the rental value and utilities for church-provided housing.

Southern Baptist church ministers and staff have until May 31 to complete the online survey. The winner of the iPad will be notified via email. **BR**

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## Chowan University announces 23rd president

By **AMANDA BRADSHAW SHARPE** |  
Chowan University Relations

**A**t a press conference Feb. 15, the Board of Trustees of Chowan University announced the selection of Kirk E. Peterson as the 23rd president of Chowan University. He will take office June 1.

“My family and I are thrilled to return to Murfreesboro and Chowan University,” stated Peterson.

“We are eager to become reacquainted with members of the Chowan community, faculty, and staff and to become acquainted with those members we have yet to meet. Our family is blessed beyond measure to serve a remarkable university, its talented faculty, its dedicated staff, and its most important constituents: the students.”

“Dr. Peterson’s academic credentials are impeccable,” stated Frank Rose, chair of the Board of Trustees. “Dr. Peterson is no stranger to Chowan University, for he served as a faculty and staff member from 2004-2010. During these years, he served as the chair of the department of health and physical education, as the founding dean of the graduate school, and as associate provost.”

Peterson earned the doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Tennessee in 2000, along with a master of science degree in education with a major in mental health counseling, and holds a second master of science degree in education with a major in sports psychology

earned in 1996. In 1994, he received the bachelor of science degree in psychology from University of Wisconsin La-Crosse.

Peterson also has experience as senior vice president and interim president followed by president at Urbana University in Ohio. After facilitating a successful merger of Urbana, saving the university from absolute closure, Peterson became superintendent of two private schools in Ohio.

M. Christopher White, the current Chowan University president, announced last fall he would transition to the role of chancellor after 32 years as a university president.

This transition will coordinate with Peterson’s arrival in June. This cooperative succession will allow White to assist Peterson, raise funds for important projects, and help raise the profile of the university.

“I am eager to begin work with a devoted staff, expert faculty, talented senior team and remarkable Board of Trustees,” Peterson said. “As Luke

12:48 states, ‘To whom much is given, much will be required.’ As a university community, we will always be reminded that we have been given a tremendous opportunity in educating and mentoring our students. Also, we are expected to assist in the intellectual, physical, mental, social, and, most importantly, spiritual development and maturation of our students. So, as you can see, we have been given much and much is expected of us.”

Peterson is married to Rachel, and they have three sons. **BR**



**KIRK PETERSON**

## GuideStone® offers single-staff churches solutions in the health care marketplace

GuideStone Financial Resources

**C**ontinued uncertainty in the health care marketplace with the repeal of the individual mandate coming in 2019 and reductions in the number of individuals served by the health care exchanges has some pastors and ministry workers wondering about health care options this year.

Further, the Affordable Care Act continues to drive up costs for consumers nationwide. GuideStone recognizes that affordability is the issue for most people, and while, like others, the organization is not immune from the financial pressures caused by the 2010 law, GuideStone is working diligently every day to develop options that reflect the values of its participants and keep costs extremely competitive in the marketplace.

GuideStone’s Personal Plans health plans may be options for churches with a single staff member, usually the pastor.

For GuideStone to serve a pastor or other single staff member, he must be a paid employee of an eligible church or ministry that is affiliated with or shares common religious bonds with the Southern Baptist Convention and works 20 or more hours per week.

GuideStone’s personal health care coverage options include traditional PPO plans, an economy PPO plan and a federally-qualified High Deductible Health Plan designed to be paired with a Health Savings Account.

Churches and pastors interested in seeing if GuideStone can serve them in the individual marketplace should call 1-844-INS-GUIDE (1-844-467-4843) or visit [GuideStoneInsurance.org](http://GuideStoneInsurance.org). **BR**

## AROUND THE STATE

### Obituary

**MARVIN A. HONEYCUTT**, 88, of Concord died Jan. 17.

A Cabarrus County native, Honeycutt was one of 14 children. He was working in construction building houses when he was called into ministry. He served as pastor of 11 churches – including Antioch Baptist Church, Badin; Bethlehem Baptist Church, Concord; Plyler Baptist Church, Albemarle; and Paul’s Crossing Baptist Church, Richfield – interim pastor of seven churches in Wilkes, Iredell and Stanly counties; and provided supply ministry to numerous churches after his retirement. He was a member of Miami Baptist Church, Concord.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Jewell Barbee Honeycutt; son, Gary Honeycutt of Concord; three grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and two brothers, A.P. Honeycutt and R.H. Honeycutt.

Memorials to: Hospice and Palliative Care of Cabarrus County, 5003 Hospice Lane, Kannapolis, NC 28081; Miami Baptist Church, 6701 Miami Church Road, Concord, NC 28025; or Red Cross Baptist Church, 112 W. Red Cross Road, Oakboro, NC 28129.

### Staff changes

**GREG BARMER** has been called as pastor at First Baptist Church (FBC), Washington, N.C. He previously served as the minister of music at FBC Washington for more than 22 years. Barmer earned a master of church music from Southern Seminary and a doctor of worship studies from The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies. He and his wife, Lisa, have two children.

Meat Camp Baptist Church, Boone, has called **MICHAEL TOWNSEND** as full-time pastor. He has been the church’s bivocational pastor since 2009.

**LARRY TRIVETTE** has been called as associate pastor of worship and family ministries at Maplewood Baptist Church, Yadkinville. He previously served as minister of music at Cranberry Baptist Church, Roaring River, for more than six years. He holds an associate degree in biblical studies from Vintage Bible College, Winston-Salem, and is working towards a bachelor degree from the school. He and his wife, Kay, have one daughter.

Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, Pembroke, has called **STEVE STRICKLAND** as director of missions. He previously served as pastor of Mount Airy Baptist Church, Pembroke, for 20 years. Strickland holds a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Janice, have been married for more than 27 years and have two daughters. Janice will be assuming the role of association secretary.

**SANDY MARKS** has been hired as senior consultant with church health and revitalization at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. He pastored Alexis Baptist Church for more than 14 years. He received his doctor of ministry degree from Midwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Cynthia, have two adult children.

## Bible Continued from page 3

of immigration should lead to the following conclusion:

We must accept our status as immigrants and love those who are yearning for a better home, regardless of their country of origin.

Our primary identity is not tied to our citizenship in America or membership in a political party; it is bound to our allegiance to a multiethnic Kingdom that has yet to be fully revealed, where an olive-skinned Jew, who was formerly an immigrant in Egypt (Matthew 2), will reign as king.

In His Kingdom, we will live with those who came to America as undocumented immigrants, seeking refuge from wars or searching for a better life, finally finding rest in the arms of Jesus.

Should we not, then, embrace the stranger, knowing that he may be a fellow

Christian sojourning to the same eternal destination? Should we not be kind to the immigrant, knowing that he may need to hear the words of eternal life?

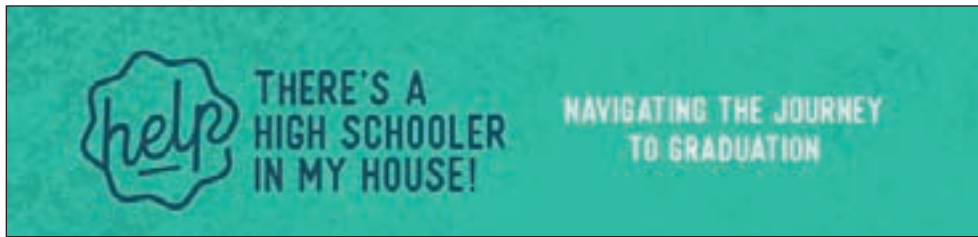
Would not such actions speak prophetically amid a political climate that is more concerned with demonization than salvation, more concerned with building a wall than extending the right hand of fellowship, more concerned with winning an election than gaining an unfading crown of glory?

I heartily believe so.

(*EDITOR’S NOTE – Miguel Echevarria is assistant professor of New Testament and director of Hispanic Leadership Development at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. This article is adapted from a chapter in the forthcoming book, Islam in America, edited by Keith Whitfield and Micah Fries. Used by permission.*) **BR**



## OPPORTUNITY CORNER



BeDoTell is sponsoring “Help! There’s a High Schooler in my House” on March 3 at Catawba Heights Baptist Church in Belmont. This event is for parents and their high school teenagers. Students will complete an assessment as a resource to assist in the discovery of their strengths. The assessment will be a tool for students in confirming interests that may be a guide to possible career-paths. Teens

will also receive training in apologetics and how to integrate faith in decision making.

Parents will receive assistance in understanding their teen and adolescent brain development, including their spiritual journey through high school to graduation. Cost is \$50 per person or \$100 per family and includes lunch. Visit [leaders.bedotell.com/index.php?id=103](http://leaders.bedotell.com/index.php?id=103).



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring Upside Down Small Groups on March 3 at Durham Memorial Baptist Church in Durham. Upside Down training is designed to equip church and ministry leaders on how to develop and cultivate a vibrant small

groups ministry in their church. These sessions will help encourage attendees in a variety of practical ministry areas, focused on how to use small groups to effectively make disciples. There is no cost for the event. Visit [ncbaptist.org/upside-down](http://ncbaptist.org/upside-down).

### EASTERN BIVOCATIONAL AND SMALL CHURCH

The Eastern Bivocational and Small Church Leader Retreat will be March 9-10 at Fort Caswell, Oak Island. The majority of all Southern Baptist churches have fewer than 125 people in Sunday School and 200 in average worship attendance.

Many of these pastors are not financially able to attend many conferences.

This event is a way to offer a quality experience for these pastors and their spouses that will leave them refreshed and renewed in their ministry, while providing them with new ministry tools and connections with other pastors. Registration is \$40 per person or \$20 for commuters. Visit [ncbaptist.org/index.php?id=1740](http://ncbaptist.org/index.php?id=1740).

Sandy Run Baptist Association is sponsoring the White Flag Global Missions Conference, March 16-17 at Liberty Baptist Church, Ellenboro. The conference will be held Friday from 7-8:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Nik and Ruth Ripken will lead the

event, speaking about the persecuted church. Several local, state and national mission organizations will also be represented. Tickets are \$10 and includes the conference and two meals on Saturday. Visit the Sandy Run Baptist Association in Bostic or call (828) 245-2613.



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring Side-by-Side training March 20 at Apex Baptist Church. Most churches have Sunday School classes or small groups, but few have both.

No matter what they’re called, the goal

is the same: to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Side-by-side training will provide equipping on how to maintain healthy Sunday School classes and small groups simultaneously. Cost is \$7 and includes lunch. Visit [ncbaptist.org/sidebyside](http://ncbaptist.org/sidebyside).



Fort Caswell is hosting “Our Purpose,” Spring Coastal Adult Retreats. The retreats are three-day, two-night programs designed to bring groups of retired and semi-retired adults together for fun, worship, personal growth and a relaxing change of scenery. There are three dates

to choose from: April 16-18, April 30-May 2 or May 7-9. Cost ranges from \$151-157 per person, depending on lodging options. Meals, Monday night entertainment and program fees are also included. Call (910) 278-9501 or visit [fortcaswell.com/project/spring-coastal-adult-retreats-2018/](http://fortcaswell.com/project/spring-coastal-adult-retreats-2018/).

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring the Associational Missions Conference April 16-18 at Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro with the theme “Renew and Redirect: Redeeming the Time, Reclaiming the Glory.” Participants will prepare to experience renewal in the areas of personal and spiritual health as well as develop and implement a strategy to revitalize churches and church leaders related to the call to fulfill the Great Commission. There will be a training track for potential and new associational missionaries on Monday. The main conference begins Monday evening and concludes



on Wednesday. Church and community ministers and associational missionaries’ spouses will have separate tracks during the conference. Cost of a single room is \$95 or \$85 per person for a double occupancy. Commuter rates are also available. Registration deadline is April 6. Visit [ncbaptist.org/renew](http://ncbaptist.org/renew).

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring Maintenance to Multiplication conferences. Every living thing God creates – including the church – is meant to multiply. But the reality of day-to-day life is that oftentimes ministry feels more like maintenance. Participants will discover and catch a vision for personal and corporate multiplication.

The speaker will be Robby Christmas, national church planting catalyst with the North American Mission Board.

Conferences will be held April 18 at Providence Baptist Church, Raleigh,



and April 19 at Christ Community Church, Huntersville. Cost is \$15 and includes coffee, pastries and conference fees.

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



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) is hosting Leadership Development Equipping Track 2: Capacity, “The Prescription for Life” on April 19-20 at the BSC building in Cary. This training will emphasize three steps you can take to make the most of your years in service to the Lord and enjoy life to the fullest.

This session will also include discussion on how pastors and church leaders

can serve God longer and be more active in serving Him by taking care of their health. Speakers include Richard Furman, vascular surgeon and co-author of *The Prescription for Life* as well as Dale Fisher, the other co-author. Cost is \$25 for Leadership training on April 19 or \$95 for Facilitators Training on both days. Visit [ncbaptist.org/leadership](http://ncbaptist.org/leadership); click on “events” in left-hand menu and pick your event.

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.



March 4

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

March 11

Our Provider

Our Healer

**Focal Passage: Genesis 22:1-14**

Felt needs are important. We work in order to earn money to provide shelter, food and clothing. Day to day we are hungry, thirsty, tired, frustrated, disappointed, discouraged, and we act to meet those needs. But sometimes, our felt needs can overwhelm us.

In our text, Isaac said, “*We have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?*” Abraham and Isaac had a need – a need they felt. Abraham responded, “*God will provide.*” Do you have Abraham’s kind of faith in God’s provision?

Søren Kierkegaard, a Dutch philosopher/theologian of the 19th century, famously interpreted Abraham’s faith in this text as a “blind leap.” In Kierkegaard’s estimation, Abraham closed his eyes, stepped out and happily landed in a place of God’s provision.

I believe Kierkegaard’s claim is glaringly wrong. Abraham’s faith in God’s provision was anything but blind. God led Abraham, forgave Abraham, cared for Abraham and gave he and Sarah a child far after their days of childbearing were past. Abraham’s faith in God’s provision was based on years of God demonstrating His faithfulness. In that desperately poignant moment when Isaac was tied down on the altar, Abraham trusted God to the point of obedience. Then God stopped him and showed him a ram caught in a thicket.

This story teaches us two things about God’s provision. First, there is nothing we can sacrifice, give or do to earn God’s provision. It is important that we see that Abraham and Isaac still sacrificed, still worshiped.

Second, we access God’s provision through faith. It was Abraham’s faith in God that led him to obey. If we want to experience God’s provision, we must have faith. God has already provided on the grandest of scales. He gave us just what we needed when He sent Christ to the cross. We access His provision by faith. And when we believe in the provision of God through Christ, we have a basis for trusting God to provide our felt needs as well (Romans 8:32).

**Focal Passage: Exodus 14:29-31; 15:22-27**

Have you ever wondered what it would be like if you were in the Bible? Maybe you put yourself in the place of a disciple walking with Jesus? Or maybe an Old Testament hero like Moses or David or Daniel?

At times I’ve wondered what it would be like to have existed in one of the Bible stories. There is actually a place for us in the Bible, although it’s not very flattering.

Truth be told, we are much like the people of Israel. Israel had just witnessed God sending plagues upon Egypt – 10 of them. Israel had walked across the Red Sea on dry land. Israel had watched as God destroyed the Egyptian army with walls of Red Sea water. Even after those miraculous acts, Israel grumbled and complained faithlessly when they found a pool of bitter water in the wilderness.

At Marah, Israel tested the Lord. Aren’t we much the same? We have been



redeemed, protected and provided for by God only to faithlessly grumble when something doesn’t go our way.

If we find ourselves in the Bible, we are not the heroes, but the sinners. That is the point.

Years later Jesus would face a similar situation to the people of Israel. He was also in the wilderness. Satan tempted Jesus to jump off the temple and show off God’s protection.

Jesus replied, “*Do not test the Lord, your God.*”

Jesus referenced the very text where Israel tested the Lord. They failed to trust God. We’ve done what they did. And that is why Jesus came, faced temptation, succeeded and ultimately went to the cross.

We cannot obey our way into wholeness. We will never deserve the healing we need. But the healing and provision we need is available. It is available because Jesus refused to test the Lord, because Jesus obeyed perfectly when we disobeyed, because Jesus substituted His wholeness for our lack.

Will you trust the perfect, risen Lord for your healing?

March 4

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

March 11

United in Christ

Glorifying God

**Focal passage: 1 Corinthians 1:10-25**

When you think about someone joining a country club, there are several things that could entice them to membership. Many join for the golf course. Others, though, might join because they like the clubhouse and look forward to the lunches, dinners or parties they will enjoy. For others it might be the teaching professional or the swimming pool.

Because these members have come together for very different reasons, it is easy for them to experience discord. The swimming pool crowd thinks money should be spent on the pool. The golf crowd wants to spend money to replace the grass on the greens. After all, if the golf course wasn’t there, there would be no country club.

It is easy, then, when the discord builds for some to leave and go find another country club to join – one with a better pool, or golf course or clubhouse, or whatever fits their desires.

This kind of discord is expected in a country club, but it is grievous when demonstrated in a church.

For the church in Corinth, the division came not because of the swimming pool or the clubhouse, but because of various personalities there to whom different members gravitated.

Paul writes clear and challenging words to correct this church, telling the members that they are there neither because of those men nor for them.

The reason they are part of the church is because they all have one, unifying thing in common: they have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

In these verses, and the three chapters that follow, Paul repeatedly reminds them they have been made one in Christ, unified by the Spirit of God. They are acting like “*fleshly*” people and spiritual babies (3:1), rather than “*Spirit-filled*” people.

These believers were “*God’s building*” (3:9), built on the foundation of salvation through Jesus Christ.

God’s desire was for them to walk in unity in Christ.

God’s desire for us, His people today, is that we do the same.

**Focal passage: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

“That is not what that was made for!”

I don’t know how many times I have heard that said to me through the years. Since I was young, I have been bad about doing things with whatever “tool” was available to me, whether that was the objects intended purpose or not.

I might use a fishing pole to get something off of a tall shelf. Sometimes I might use an otherwise good tool for a destructive purpose – like taking a hammer and chipping the tiny front edges off of my mom’s piano keys. (Yep, I really did that!)

As Paul was writing to the Corinthian believers, seeing some of the ongoing sinful actions of their lives – gluttony and sexual immorality – he was saying to them, “That is not what you were (re) made for!”

Could their stomachs be used for gluttony? Sure. Could their bodies be used for sexual pleasure, even immorality?



Definitely. Paul tells them, however, that is not the reason God made them – to satisfy their physical, temporal desires. God made them, in fact, re-made them, for His glory.

Because these Corinthian believers had surrendered their lives to Christ, God had forgiven their sin, given them new life and set up residence in them by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Far from being instruments for sin, their bodies were now temples of the Holy Spirit (6:19) – the place where God’s presence dwells. They could never justify opening up the doors of those temples for the pleasure and service of their spiritual enemy.

Our lives no longer belong to us. We have been bought with a price – the blood of Jesus (6:20). We should, therefore, use our bodies for what they were (re)made for – the glory of God.

Paul would similarly tell the Roman believers – “*For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification*” (Romans 6:19).

God has made us new for His glory! May our lives glorify Him in all things!



## North Greenville's new dean, provost has Union, SEBTS ties

North Greenville University

**N**orth Greenville University (NGU) President Gene C. Fant Jr. announced Feb. 12 that Nathan A. Finn will become NGU's chief academic officer June 1, with the title of provost and dean of the university faculty. Finn currently serves as dean of the School of Theology and Missions and professor of theological studies, Union University, Jackson, Tenn., and previously served at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, where he taught church history. "I love NGU's longstanding commitment to Christ-centered education, and I resonate with the way a heart for evangelism and missions permeates the whole campus. I've also long appreciated President Fant's vision for convictionally Baptist higher education," said Finn.

NGU is a special place for Finn. It was on the campus in 1997 during a Centrifuge camp that he committed his life to Jesus. Finn and his wife, Leah, have four children.

Randall J. Pannell, NGU's current vice president for academic affairs, will return to a faculty role. **BR**

## Sand Continued from page 2

many CBF congregations, the key issue of outrage at the SBC.

The same negotiation and "reinterpretation" of the biblical text that allows for the service of women pastors will logically lead to the acceptance of the LGBT revolution. How can it not?

Individuals and congregations may refuse to take this next step, but they have surrendered the only binding argument that would offer an objective truth claim. Eventually, the revolutionaries will win, and they know it. Clearly, some appear unwilling to wait.

Finally, this is what happens when autonomy trumps biblical authority. The moral revolution was only possible because of a great and unsustainable shift to personal autonomy in the culture. The CBF was birthed in a rejection of stricter doctrinal requirements within the SBC, and one of their cherished principles was congregational autonomy at the expense of confessional unity.

Well, in response to the "Illumination Project" report, the married lesbian pastors of Calvary Baptist

Church in Washington, D.C., expressed their moral outrage that more conservative CBF churches and international partners were holding back the full acceptance of LGBT personnel.

In a pastoral letter they released, the pastors stated: "Autonomy of the local church is not some mucky individualism that means every church can think and oppress however it wants."

Interestingly, the limits of autonomy as a central doctrine are becoming clear even to some in the CBF, and revealingly so.

The CBF assembly in Dallas this coming June will be an historic meeting, one way or the other.

For Southern Baptists and other evangelical Christians, the "Illumination Project" should serve as yet another reminder of what becomes inevitable once the full authority and truthfulness of the Bible are abandoned.

There is nothing to celebrate here . . . only sadness. This is an "Illumination Project" that truly illuminates, but in ways its authors surely never intended.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Albert Mohler is president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. This article was originally published at AlbertMohler.com. Used by permission.) **BR**

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### Pastor

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

Salem Baptist Church, Lincolnton, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **Pastor** to serve at our church. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church with a blended music style worship service and a heart for home and international missions. The pastor will lead three services each week, minister to the needs of our congregation and assist our church in community outreach. Please send résumés, which should include details of your personal salvation experience and calling by God as a pastor, your statement of faith, education and experience, to: Salem Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 1982 Salem Church Rd., Lincolnton, NC 28092, or email to: [sbcpastorsearch@salemchurch.org](mailto:sbcpastorsearch@salemchurch.org).

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).

First Baptist Church, Gaffney SC, is searching for a **Minister of Worship**. Résumés are being accepted until May 1, 2018. Candidate should have experience leading both traditional and contemporary worship services. Job description can be found on the church website, [www.fbcgaffney.org](http://www.fbcgaffney.org). Résumés can be mailed to Worship Search Committee, c/o First Baptist Church, 200 N. Limestone St., Gaffney, SC 29340, or email to [office@fbcgaffney.org](mailto:office@fbcgaffney.org) with subject line Worship Search Committee.

**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.

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@concordbaptist.com](mailto:jjames@concordbaptist.com). Please also visit [concordbaptist.com](http://concordbaptist.com) for more information about our congregation.

### Miscellaneous

**NCBAM needs teams to build wheelchair ramps for aging adults** in need during Rampin' Up! April 28 and May 5, 2018. Call North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry at 877.506.2226.

**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).

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**Sermon Outlines/Commentaries** *For the Savior's Servants* by Dr. Andy Royals. Book contains 67 sermon outlines with practical application, a valuable tool for pastors, preachers and teachers! Helpful to all who love expositional structure and seek to boldly declare the truth of God's Word. Available on Amazon for \$9.99.

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# Battling darkness in southeastern Vermont

Part of a series

By MIKE CRESWELL | BSC Communications

**B**rattleboro sits among the hills and mountains of southeastern Vermont, and it's a pretty town, popular with tourists.

But look at the city, population around 13,000, with missions eyes, and you'll see the darkness, says Corey Eikes, who is in the process of starting a new church there.

He was missions pastor of Hales Chapel Baptist Church in Zebulon, N.C., while attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Corey's father, Andy, was pastor of Hales Chapel in earlier times. Corey and his wife, Ashley, came to Vermont in 2014.

"A handful" of earlier efforts to plant churches here have failed, Eikes said. "This is one of the darkest places in North America."

When Eikes first talked to Lyandon Warren about planting a new church in Brattleboro, Warren did not answer his question quickly. "It will only be taken through prayer and fasting," Warren finally replied.

While at Southeastern, Corey and Ashley had been intent on serving overseas. "We had been banking everything on going overseas. All our eggs were in the international basket," Corey recalled. But when they finally journeyed halfway around the world to a major Asian country, they both sensed God calling them to Vermont.



Corey Eikes has started Rivertown Church in Brattleboro, Vt. He was formerly mission pastor of Hales Chapel Baptist Church, Zebulon, N.C. The Baptist congregation shares the building of an Assemblies of God church. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

However, Eikes feels the contextual training on understanding foreign cultures is great training for Vermont. For example, in Brattleboro the traditional rural and conservative values of lifelong Vermonters have been joined by many newcomers who have brought in a worldview strongly colored by Eastern religious ideals. These two patterns of thought divide the town, he said.

Drugs are also a plague here as in much of Vermont. "There was a drug bust three doors down from my

house the other day," Eikes said.

"It's a very eclectic place," Eikes said. "The hippy movement landed here and never left this area. Some church members grew up on communes in this area."

Eikes has made friends with some of the local non-Baptist but Bible-believing churches, praising for their survival against opposition like having witches gather on their front lawns to cast spells against their churches.

Rivertown Church, which Eikes leads, now averages about 50 on Sunday. It was started after Corey and Ashley were joined by several others who moved to Brattleboro. They share the church building of an Assemblies of God congregation on Birge Street so both groups can cut expenses. Finding meeting places — especially affordable ones — is a challenge for churches across Vermont.

Like so many others in Vermont, Rivertown is banking on financial and volunteer help from North Carolina for continued growth.

"Southeastern has sent professors up to encourage the work and ministry," Eikes said. "You couldn't ask for better equipping or better ongoing support."

Eikes is a bivocational pastor by choice. He supports himself through his work as a manager with Vermont's state program of mental health, the same way he worked his way through college.

He figures Rivertown is going to need all the light they can generate to push back Brattleboro's spiritual darkness. **BR**

## Vermont Continued from page 4

The challenge for a new church here is huge. Surrounding Chittenden County has an estimated 95,000 unchurched people. "The Burlington area is the most irreligious place in the country," West said.

People have told West that reaching people for Christ here will be very difficult, but West isn't so sure of that.

He suspects it may be harder in the South to convince a religious person they

need Jesus than a person here who knows nothing about Jesus.

"In the South everybody knows Jesus, or at least they will tell you they do, even if they haven't been inside a church for years," West said. "Up here they don't know Jesus, and they will tell you they don't. We have people here who don't know what a church looks like at all.

That's good in a sense, but it's also a huge responsibility. We have to define what

that church DNA looks like in a sense. Doctrinally, we're making footprints for them to follow."

West is looking beyond this start-up phase to future growth. He would like to have a 400-member church going before they begin starting other churches around the county.

"I don't want Crosspoint to be just another church that's hot for a while and then fizzles," West said. "I want it to be

something that outlasts me, that outlasts Hayden, our worship leader, and outlives my kids."

He anticipates having volunteer teams to come join in the church-planting venture.

One team has already come from Mississippi, and one from Maryland is scheduled. It's early days for Crosspoint Church, but to Todd West the future looks good. **BR**

## Churches weep, minister after Florida school shooting

By NICOLE KALIL | Florida Baptist Convention

**F**lorida Baptists are reeling along with all of Florida and the nation after a gunman opened fire at a Parkland high school Feb. 14, leaving 17 dead and 14 injured.

While law enforcement and state officials issue calls to prayer at press conferences, Florida Baptist churches in the area of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School are mourning their own losses while offering words of hope and help to those hurting in their community. The main campus of Church by the Glades is located less than 10 minutes from the school; lead pastor David Hughes said many of the students in the church attend Douglas High.

Hughes held back sobs as he explained that a few families in his church had suffered a fatality and one family has a son who is "gravely injured." They are still in the process of accounting for all their members connected to the school. At times like this, Hughes said,

people often wrestle with the reasons for the tragedy but that's not the most important question to be answering. "What now?" he said is the better question. And "Who wins?"

"Do we let fear and cruelty, violence and hatred win," Hughes asked, "or do we continue to fight against the darkness and continue to bring the message of hope and light that comes through Jesus Christ?"

Eddie Bevill is pastor of Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, just blocks from where the suspected 19-year-old gunman was taken into custody. He said many Douglas High School employees and students are members of his church family and are still grappling with yesterday's tragedy. As far as he knew at press time, Bevill said all the members of his church have been accounted for. "From within our church there is great sadness and a sense of loss," he said.

Bevill recounted a conversation with a leader in his church who was friends with Aaron Feis, the assistant football coach who is said to have lost his life while

shielding students from the bullets with his body and was the first victim to be publicly identified. The man said when they were students themselves, he and Feis had watched together as the events at Columbine High School unfolded on TV in 1999, both of them weeping over the senselessness of it.

Parkridge Church met at Douglas High School for the first seven years of its existence and Bevill said the church has enjoyed a good relationship with the school ever since. They stand ready to help the school and the community through the grieving process, the pastor said. Part of that was a prayer vigil the church hosted on its property organized by Church United, a cross-denominational evangelical group. Thousands, including Florida Gov. Rick Scott, turned out to pray for healing and protection and to seek solace and support with grieving neighbors.

"What we're trying to say to our county is that Christians care because Christ cares," Bevill said. "We want to be a present help in times of trouble." **BR**