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# BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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## Canadian pastor finds new flock *With* **The Gathering**

By **JIM BURTON** | North American Mission Board

**J**ohn D'Antonio's family knew that his four-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's Disease, would soon be over. Many of his Italian-Canadian family and friends had gathered in his Windsor hospital room to say goodbye to the 30-year-old father and husband.

Just before John's diagnosis four years earlier, his family had moved next door to Garth and Patty Leno. Leno was the pastor of one of Windsor's largest

churches, and John's mother, Italian immigrant Elena, was a faithful member. On this most difficult of days, the family called Leno. Leno arrived at the Windsor hospital around 11 p.m. and entered a packed hospital room.

The family had requested a reduction in morphine so that John could communicate with them.

John's wife, Mary Anne, gave permission for Leno to be alone with her husband.

"Could I just have the room with John for a few minutes, please," Leno had asked.

John couldn't talk and he was having trouble breathing.

"John, if you can hear me just squeeze my fingers," Leno said, then felt pressure from John's weakened hands. "John, I'm not going to waste any time because there is no time to waste. I just want to talk to you about heaven."

Leno then explained the gospel, God's grace toward us, the plan of salvation and that it's available to any man or woman at any stage of life. "Do you believe this?"

John squeezed Leno's hand. "Can I pray with you and for you to trust in Christ alone for your salvation?"

John again squeezed Leno's hand.

When Leno said "Amen," the room

was full again. One by one, family and friends had slipped quietly back into the room, standing behind him. They heard John's declaration of faith through the prayer.

As the senior pastor of a large church in the city, Leno could have dispatched any one of his 20 staff members to the hospital that night. Now the pastor of a Canadian National Baptist Convention church plant called The Gathering, he has only two additional staff.

"One of the most delightful things that has happened to me is that I've rediscovered what shepherding is all about," Leno said of The Gathering. "When you are planting a church and making disciples, you get to see life-change happen up close. I wouldn't change that for anything. Church planting has helped me

[See Gathering page 8](#)

**Photo caption:** Above, Garth Leno serves as senior pastor of The Gathering in Windsor, Ontario. Leno, his wife, Patty, and daughter, Jamie, are North American Mission Board 2017 Week of Prayer missionaries. (NAMB photo by Gary Gnidovic)

**ANNIE  
ARMSTRONG  
EASTER OFFERING**



## HB2: Here we go again

**F**ive years ago, North Carolinians were embroiled in a battle over an amendment to the state constitution that defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman. When all votes were counted from the May 8, 2012, referendum on the amendment, citizens voted overwhelmingly to support traditional marriage – 61 percent in favor, 31 percent against the amendment. North Carolina became the 31st state to approve a constitutional amendment in support of traditional marriage.

At the peak of the debate, I was engaged in an email discussion about the amendment with a man from the western part of the state who identified himself as a Baptist. He thought Christians were unnecessarily pressing the biblical definition of marriage into the state's laws. He favored gay marriage and was certain that his position would never infringe on the rights of business owners. He assured me that if that happened, he would strongly oppose any denial of religious rights.

Everything he denied is now reality.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2015, that same-sex marriage is a 14th amendment right, making it legal in all 50 states. The voices of the majority of North Carolina's citizens and those in other states were nullified by the judiciary.

President Barack Obama reversed his commitment to traditional marriage and "evolved" in favor of gay marriage. He became the first president of our country to reject traditional marriage as the national standard, and he used his influence to oppose state laws that excluded special rights for gay marriage.

Loaded with false information and emotional deception, LGBTQ organizations mobilized their forces with intense campaigns to promote special rights for some, while denying religious rights for all – rights that are guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

Throughout the radical left's campaign for same-sex marriage "rights," religious people were repeatedly told they were bigoted, hateful, stubborn and unnecessarily paranoid. LGBTQ activists and their misinformed supporters said nothing they proposed would infringe upon religious freedom.

Everything they said was wrong. Their campaign was a far left political movement under the guise of rights and personal freedom.

On Feb. 16, the state of Washington's Supreme Court ruled that a Christian florist who declined to provide flowers for

a same-sex wedding ceremony, violated the state's anti-discrimination law.

Barronelle Stutzman, the 72-year-old owner of Arlene's Flowers & Gifts, refused to violate her constitutionally protected religious beliefs. Now she must pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and ACLU legal fees. She could lose her business, her pension and her home. More important, the moral and civil erosion represented by this case means every American citizen is denied rights they had when they were born in this country.

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention said that although Stutzman, an active member of a Southern Baptist church, did not have any qualms about serving homosexual customers, she "didn't want to be involved in a same-sex marriage."

They explained that Stutzman had served her friend and customer Rob Ingersoll for nearly a decade, designing custom arrangements for Valentine's Day and other holidays. But, when Ingersoll asked Stutzman to arrange flowers for his wedding, she told him that while she valued him as a friend, her faith would not allow it. Ingersoll filed a lawsuit against her.

"The Washington Supreme Court's ruling shortchanges our nation's most fundamental freedom in favor of ideological conformity," said ERLC president Russell Moore.

"Barronelle Stutzman followed her genuinely held beliefs without hostility toward any, and yet finds herself the target of a government that wants to steamroll her constitutional rights. The Court held that the government can force citizens to use their creative gifts and expressive speech to participate and endorse acts they believe to be immoral. This decision is a loss not only for Barronelle Stutzman but for every American who values liberty and civility over coercion by the government. My prayer is that this ruling would be overturned and that the U.S. Supreme Court would recognize the crucial importance of religious liberty."

In an email to supporters of N.C. Values Coalition this week, Executive Director Tami Fitzgerald wrote, "Washington's harmful non-discrimination law has caused this 72-year old grandmother to lose her livelihood and possibly her home just for following her conscience, and this points to the virtue of having HB2 in place in NC, so that government can't coerce violations of conscience and take away freedom."



K. ALLAN BLUME  
Editor

If you think Fitzgerald's transition from the Stutzman case to the North Carolina law is artificial, think again. It is exactly what the Washington, D.C., based Human Rights Campaign designed when they targeted Charlotte and persuaded the City Council of the state's largest city to launch a bathroom ordinance that favored the LGBTQ agenda at the expense of the personal safety of the majority of citizens.

The actions of Charlotte's leaders forced the N.C. legislature to protect all citizens of the state. House Bill 2 (HB2) was drawn up and soon became the law.

According to N.C. Representative Paul "Skip" Stam, the state's non-discrimination law (HB2) is the same or very similar to that of 28 other states. He provides documented information to support his claims, demonstrating the unparalleled hypocrisy of businesses that are bullying the state through boycotts and campaigns of deceit.

These include the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) – organizations that practice discrimination that they allegedly oppose in the N.C. law. They demonstrate a complete absence of integrity.

If they really believe HB2 is errant, they must also boycott 28 other states and about 10,000 of the nation's cities and towns that have the same laws.

Are they under pressure from heavy-handed administrators in their member universities? If so, they will continue to cling to the progressive agenda that is clearly the dogma of these educators.

I encourage you to read Stam's insight-

ful article, "The Truth about HB2 and Discrimination," at [BRnow.org/HB2Facts](http://BRnow.org/HB2Facts).

Last week N.C. Governor Roy Cooper announced his proposed deal to repeal HB2 – again. It has the fingerprints of the Human Rights Campaign all over it – again.

The proposal fits the mainstream media's agenda, to which Cooper is beholden for his recent, narrow election to the governor's office. It bows to the pressures of the NCAA, ACC and businesses that want to control the political future of our state. But, it does not protect the average citizen.

N.C. Lieutenant Gov. Dan Forest commented on Cooper's latest proposal to repeal HB2 this week. In a press release he said, "If Governor Cooper's proposed bill for repealing HB2 becomes law, it will create a state-sanctioned 'Look But Don't Touch' policy in our bathrooms.

"Heterosexual men will be able to access women's showers and bathrooms by simply posing as a transgender individual. They will be able to watch women and children shower, or shower next to them. As long as the man doesn't touch them, assault them or film them, no legal protection would be afforded the offended woman or child.

"As a husband and father of four, the concept of 'Look But Don't Touch' as a meaningful response to HB2 is a sad commentary on how far the progressive movement and the elected officials beholden to it, will risk the safety of our people to achieve a radical social policy agenda."

For the sake of religious liberty, Christians should pay close attention. **BR**

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## Reach North America for Christ

**S**pring is fast approaching, and the beginnings of new life will soon be evident all around us in the plant and animal kingdoms. As trees that have been dormant during the winter months begin to bud then blossom, and as flowers start to burst forth with beautiful, radiant colors, I hope we will stop and ponder how God provides this to make the world around us a wonderful place to live.

He did not have to design the color in flowers or give the wild birds a song to sing, but He chose to make His creation beautiful so we might enjoy it and praise His name.

Can the magnificence of His creation also remind us of the ultimate life – the new life that became available to us when Christ died for our sins and arose from the grave on Resurrection Sunday?

As you celebrate the spiritual life we have in Christ this Easter, I hope you will also reflect on the present condition and the future plight of those individuals who do not realize that Jesus gave His life to pay the penalty for their sin and then conquered death, hell and the grave in order to provide eternal life for them.

With 269 million lost people, North America is one of the most spiritually dark places in the world, but we can affect lostness on this continent through the grace and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each year, our North American Mission Board (NAMB) promotes prayer and receives the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) that provides almost 50 percent of NAMB's income. This year, the AAEO's theme is "Together for His Kingdom."

As the Body of Christ in North America, we can make a great impact for the Lord through this offering.

The week of prayer for North America is March 5-12, and I hope that you will join me in praying for featured missionaries during this week. The AAEO makes possible the necessary training, resources and education for our missionaries, but don't forget that all 5,684 NAMB missionaries also depend upon your intercessory prayer support for their work.

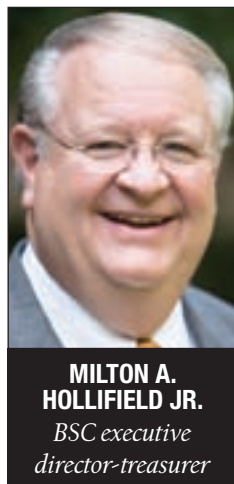
The goal for the AAEO this year is \$70 million.

In 2016, 55 percent of funds received through the AAEO were allocated to the Send network (NAMB's church planting strategy) and Send relief missionary support. In addition, 30 percent of the funds went to missionary development and training, and 15 percent of the funds went to missionary health care.

Last year, in comparison to other states, North Carolina Baptist churches were the leading contributors to the AAEO, giving in excess of \$6 million for this special offering. Give all the praise and glory to our God for what He enabled us to do!

How much will you pray, and how much will you give to God in 2017 to help reach North America with the gospel, that we might all be "Together for His Kingdom?"

If you would like to learn more about the missionaries supported through the AAEO, please visit [anniemstrong.com](http://anniemstrong.com). Another great resource is a DVD entitled "52 Sundays" which the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina produced and mailed to each of our churches. It contains short video clips of NAMB missionaries. You can also download this material at <http://bit.ly/52SundaysResource>. **BR**



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

## Leading change through children's ministry

**T**he days when families attended church without question and every time the doors were opened is a pleasant memory.

Today's families are busier than ever. Practices and extracurricular lessons, two-income wage earners, family commitments and travel sports teams mean families often spend more time in the car than at home or church.

Church attendance, in general, is on the decline due to many reasons, including affluence that permits frequent vacation travel, online church, general exhaustion and parents' work schedules. A child who is considered a "regular attendee" today comes to church three times per month, on average.

If church attendance is no longer a priority for families, what is the church to do? Churches need to focus on equipping parents to disciple their children at home (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Sermons, training opportunities and teachings on the importance of discipleship for children need to be offered. Training can be offered to parents in using the supplemental materials provided by church curriculum, such as take-home sheets, social media information and apps for electronic devices.

Churches must acknowledge parents' expectation of safe, secure, clean and attractive teaching environments. This includes conducting background checks for all volunteers and having written safety and security policies and procedures that are clearly enforced.



**CHERYL MARKLAND**  
Guest Column

Using technology in children's ministry has its place, but churches need to balance the use of technology and "edutainment" with opportunities for building relationships between children and caring adults who desire to disciple children in small-group settings. The Bible should be taught as God's one grand narrative made of many stories, chapters and books.

Consider the importance of children's discipleship in the life of the child and the church. George Barna's research states that a child's moral standards are set by age nine. Their spiritual foundations are set by age 13.

We must make the most of this critical time both at home and at church. Excellence in facility and teaching staff is critical. Children need to know that they are part of the church family and should not always be segregated from the adult population. Children learn to be disciples as they interact with adult leaders and parents who model the life of a disciple. Churches that understand and see this truth as a guiding principle for their children's ministry will thrive.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Cheryl Markland serves as the senior consultant for childhood evangelism and discipleship with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. She will be leading a breakout session titled "Change and Kids Ministry" at the Leading Change in the Church event on March 7 at Calvary Baptist Church's West Campus in Advance. To learn more or register, visit [leadingchange.church](http://leadingchange.church).) **BR**

## Reformation story must be told

By **DON WRIGHT** | Guest Column

**T**he Historical Committee of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina encourages pastors and lay leaders in our churches to take advantage of the 500th anniversary celebration of the Reformation on Oct. 31, 2017.

For one of the few times in recent decades, the secular media plans to give broad coverage to a major Protestant event. For example, *Time* magazine just listed the Reformation anniversary as one of the upcoming major events of 2017. What does this mean to Southern Baptists? It is a time of reflection on the blood of the martyrs who were killed in the two centuries of the Reformation. Do we have the faith they had to die for their Christ? Are we acting as the executioner or martyr today? The indistinguishable red blood of both Catholics and Protestants was found on the hands of various churches in that period.

This is a time to reaffirm our belief in the Bible as the final authority on matters of life and faith. This concept held dear by the early Christians, but lost in the many centuries since, was first revived by John Wycliffe and blessed by the blood of John Huss until Martin Luther made it the center of his reform.

It is a time to celebrate the truth that we can have a personal relationship with God without the need for a human intercessor. The recognition of this significant historical event affirms that the reading of the scriptures (with the influence of the Holy Spirit) gives each Christian God's message and divine guidance. We are part of God's great priesthood of believers. We are all equal before our Father Creator.

It is a time to continue to reject the interrelationship of church and state that always brings corruption to God's Church. We must not forget the Anabaptists of the Radical Reformation that were hunted down and killed like animals by state sponsored Catholic, Lutheran and Reform churches for daring to assert their opposition to state churches.

It is a time to praise God for the way He used a few Christian men and women to change the world. God's power and desire does not need armies to effect change. The Reformation and the Radical Reformation came from God's renderings on the soul of a few Christians. Take heart that if God reformed in 1517, He can do the same in 2017. We do not doubt the power and plan of God.

What can you do as a Baptist leader? We urge you to educate both your church and community about the importance of the Reformation. Do not let your church members learn about it from the secular media.

A newly released Bible study on the Reformation is available from LifeWay Christian Resources. "Echoes of the Reformation" examines the five core truths that came from the Reformation, now referred to as the 'solas': *sola Scriptura* (by scripture alone), *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (through faith alone), *solus Christus* (through Christ alone) and *solus Deo gloria* (glory to God alone). We encourage you to use this opportunity to educate your church and community about the Reformation.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Don Wright, chairman of the BSC Historical Committee, submitted this to the Biblical Recorder on behalf of the committee.) **BR**



# Micah Fries wants N.C. leaders to rethink disciple-making

BSC Communications

**M**icah Fries serves as senior pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., and is a frequent church and conference speaker.

Fries will be speaking at the 2017 N.C. Baptist Disciple-Making Conference on Feb. 27 at Center Grove Baptist Church in Clemmons. He will also be participating in a disciple-making panel discussion at the event.

Fries recently took time to answer some questions that provide a preview of what he'll be sharing at the conference.

**Q:** As a pastor, how do you balance the demands of ministry while maintaining a commitment to personal disciple-making?

**A:** I assume that personal disciple-making is part of the demands of ministry. I think Ephesians 4 outlines for pastors an expectation that they be personally invested in developing others. I consider myself to be failing if I'm not personally helping to disciple others.

**Q:** What role do relationships and community play in the disciple-making process?

**A:** I think relationships and community are the primary ways we are discipled. I think a western

culture/mindset is the only place where we might assume that discipleship can happen outside of community. I think the church, in particular, is both the explicit and implicit model for making disciples across the New Testament.

**Q:** We sometimes hear people say things like, "I love Jesus, just not the church." Or, "I can worship God on my own." How would you respond to such statements, and how do those types of sentiments hinder disciple-making?

**A:** I would say that they are shaped more by western culture than they are by biblical Christianity. There is no concept in scripture of Christians who grow apart from the local church. It is completely outside the bounds of the biblical record.

**Q:** We're excited to have you at this year's Disciple-Making Conference. What do you hope attendees might take away from your presentation?

**A:** More than anything, I want pastors and church leaders to rethink their understanding of personal disciple-making. I want them to understand that doing ministry is not our vocational responsibility but is instead our familial responsibility, and that developing others is our vocational responsibility. **BR**



**When:** Feb. 27

**Where:** Center Grove Baptist Church in Clemmons

**Cost:** Free to attend, but registration is required

**Lunch:** \$7 lunch option is available

**Visit:** [disciplenc.org](http://disciplenc.org)



## Washington high court rules against Christian florist

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

**T**he Washington State Supreme Court decided against a Southern Baptist floral artist Feb. 16 when it ruled that she discriminated against a same-sex couple in 2013 by refusing to create flower arrangements for their wedding.

The unanimous decision upheld a lower court ruling that ordered Barronelle Stutzman, owner of Arlene's Flowers, to provide her artistic services for same-sex marriage ceremonies and pay penalties for violating the state's Consumer Protection Act and the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD).

For nearly a decade, Stutzman sold flowers to Rob Ingersoll on various occasions and considered him a friend. But when Ingersoll asked her to prepare

flowers for his same-sex wedding, she refused to do so because of "her relationship with Jesus Christ." Stutzman suggested other florists in the area.

The court said her action "constitutes sexual orientation discrimination," and that government enforcement of the WLAD against Stutzman "does not infringe any constitutional protection."

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a non-profit legal organization representing Stutzman, said in a press release that she will appeal the decision to the United States Supreme Court.

"The Washington Supreme Court's ruling shortchanges our nation's most fundamental freedom in favor of ideological conformity," said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Barronelle Stutzman followed her genuinely held beliefs

without hostility toward any, and yet finds herself the target of a government that wants to steamroll her constitutional rights.

"The Court held that the government can force citizens to use their creative gifts and expressive speech to participate and endorse acts they believe to be immoral. This decision is a loss not only for Barronelle Stutzman but for every American who values liberty and civility over coercion by the government. My prayer is that this ruling would be overturned and that the U.S. Supreme Court would recognize the crucial importance of religious liberty." **BR**



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# Pro-life ministry barred again from Raleigh facility

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

**H**and of Hope Pregnancy Resource Center faced another setback Feb. 13 when the Raleigh Board of Adjustment re-classified the organization as a medical facility, overturning the city attorney's designation of the pro-life ministry as a civic group, according to *The News & Observer*.

The board's designation effectively bars Hand of Hope from operating out of its Jones Franklin Road office, since the residential space must be rezoned for use as a medical facility and the Raleigh City Council denied Hand of Hope's rezoning request in 2016.

Hand of Hope's rezoning application became controversial last summer after a standard City Council meeting on the matter became bogged down in procedural minutiae following opposition from A Preferred Women's Health Center, a clinic specializing in abortion procedures located next to Hand of Hope's Raleigh office. The abortion clinic and its supporters, fearing so-called patient harassment, obtrusive picketing and "physical violence," voiced opposition to the pregnancy center – even objecting to the three-minute limit on discussion.

The council tabled the request after

discovering a typo in the meeting time indicated on the notice sent to nearby property owners, who were invited to attend the session.

When the issue was reintroduced a week later, the council voted unanimously to deny the rezoning request, citing the city's potential to draw higher tax revenue if the street was collectively rezoned to allow for "larger, more coordinated office development."

In August, Hand of Hope filed a federal lawsuit against the council's decision, claiming a violation of constitutional First and Fourteenth Amendment rights, as well as a breach of federal law protecting religious land use.

The city attorney rendered the rezoning case moot when he decided Hand of Hope should be designated as a civic group, allowing the organization to operate out of the residential office.

The abortion clinic appealed the attorney's designation, prompting the Board of Adjustment to make the city's final decision. According to its website, the Raleigh Board of Adjustment is an eight-member panel that hears appeals, considers exceptions and interprets zoning regulations.

*The News & Observer* reported the board's decision came as a 3-2 vote. Four

of the board's members, who are appointed by the City Council, took office after the council denied Hand of Hope's rezoning request.

Tonya Baker Nelson, Hand of Hope's CEO, said she is committed to fighting what she considers to be unfair treatment by the City of Raleigh. "Hand of Hope has made every effort to resolve our rezoning issue through city procedures, and we have given the City of Raleigh every opportunity to do the right thing and allow us to occupy our space next door to the abortion clinic," said Nelson.

"Since they have chosen not to do the right thing, we will seek relief at the federal level through the court system."

"We look forward to our day in court in the fight for the rights of the preborn."

Nelson said the situation with Raleigh is important because pregnancy resource centers across North Carolina believe a necessary component of their ministry is physical proximity to abortion clinics, places where men and women are making "a pregnancy decision."

"What the City of Raleigh has done to Hand of Hope, other left leaning, politically motivated municipalities are sure to follow," Nelson said.

"What's at stake here are our collective civil and religious liberties. The battle to truly give a voice to the voiceless just got a little bit louder in Raleigh." **BR**

## World Relief announces layoffs, office closings

By **LIZ TABLAZON** | BR Staff Writer

**W**orld Relief is closing five offices across the United States and laying off more than 140 staff members as a result of President Donald Trump's executive order to decrease the potential number of refugees admitted to the U.S. in 2017, the organization said in a Feb. 15 press release.

Refugee resettlement offices in Boise, Idaho; Columbus, Ohio; Miami, Fla.; Nashville, Tenn.; and Glen Burnie, Md., will cease operations.

One of North Carolina's two offices, World Relief High Point, laid off five members of its refugee resettlement team Feb. 17, *High Point Enterprise* reported.

Federal judges blocked the White House from enforcing parts of the controversial executive order, including a 120-day suspension of the refugee resettlements and a 90-day halt on immigration from seven predominantly Muslim countries. However, the courts have not addressed the cap on refugee admissions, Matthew Soerens, World Relief's director of church mobilization, told *The Tennessean*.

According to the U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing Center, the U.S. has already accepted more than 34,000 refugees for fiscal year 2017. Under Trump's order, fewer than 16,000 refugees can enter the country in the remaining time period.

Because World Relief receives federal funding based on the number of refugees they serve, layoffs and closings became necessary, although the stopgap measures only partially relieve the budget deficit.

Records show the number of refugees coming into the United States has been

dropping in the months before Trump became president. In October 2016, the number of refugees was just under 10,000. That number dropped below 7,000 in January.

World Relief Durham does not anticipate closing but may be forced to downsize if the office does not receive additional funding from churches and donors.

Adam Clark, office director for World Relief Durham, said his branch of the agency faces a unique challenge.

"The Triangle [Raleigh-Durham area] has the highest number of volunteers that want to work with refugees in all of the World Relief network," Clark told the *Biblical Recorder*. "Right in the midst of that, we now have fewer refugees to serve than ever and fewer resources to be a bridge organization."

In the last fiscal year, 618 new volunteers began serving with World Relief Durham. More than 250 churches have partnered with the branch since it opened in 2008.

Now, the lack of administrative funds will make it difficult to facilitate connections between churches and refugees.

The Summit Church in Durham is one of those churches. Todd Unzicker, pastor of missions at The Summit Church, said a volunteer training scheduled for Feb. 18 is at capacity, with 300 expected to attend.

World Relief Durham's primary concern, Clark said, continues to be the individuals and refugee families they serve.

The cap on refugee admissions not only affects people waiting to enter the U.S., but also those who are already in the country.

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# Pastors' Conference speakers meet to unify sermons

By **KEITH COLLIER** | Southern Baptist *TEXAN*

**T**his year's Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference has already promised several firsts, including the first time all preachers will come from small and medium-sized churches and all sermons will progress through a book of the Bible expositionally.

This year's event added another first – the first time the speakers met in advance to discuss their passages to ensure cohesion among their sermons.

Eleven of the 12 pastors, whose churches range in attendance from 60 to 500, met with Pastors' Conference officers as well as preaching faculty from Southwestern and New Orleans Baptist Theological seminaries on Southwestern's campus Feb. 6-7 for what was called the Pastors' Conference Colloquium.

David Allen, dean of Southwestern's School of Preaching told the Southern Baptist *TEXAN* that, in addition to featuring preachers from average-sized churches, “the lineup is amazingly diverse ethnically.”

The Pastors' Conference is slated for June 11-12, prior to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting June 13-14 in the Phoenix Convention Center.

Allen led the colloquium's main sessions, speaking on key foundations for effective sermons and preaching “text-driven” sermons reflecting the substance, structure and style of the biblical text. Recognizing it would be the largest audience most of the pastors have addressed, Allen also gave advice for adjusting to a larger preaching venue, including addressing distractions, eye contact and voice projection. Southwestern and New Orleans seminary preaching faculty led various breakout sessions, pairing the preachers with a professor to discuss their specific passages and approaches to preaching the texts. “The goal of the colloquium was informational and inspirational,” Allen said, “seeking to provide the preachers with information that would assist them in writing text-driven sermons on the paragraph units of Philippians” and wanting them “to be inspired and encouraged as they approach the Pastors' Conference to preach.”

Allen admitted to the group that he was initially skeptical of sequentially preaching through a book of the Bible in a conference format, concerned for maintaining continuity, but he changed his mind after helping in a similar approach at the 2016 Southern Baptists of Texas

Convention annual meeting, where the six convention sermons focused on Romans 8.

Pastors' Conference President Dave Miller, a small-church pastor from Sioux City, Iowa, proposed the idea for changing the conference lineup and preaching expositionally through a book of the Bible in a blog post in April 2016. Miller said he was surprised two months later when he was nominated and elected president of the conference. Miller called for recommendations of smaller church pastors who practice expository preaching, and after a thorough process of prayer and listening to sermons, 12 men were selected, most of whom Miller had never met. His team also selected the book of Philippians. “One of the reasons we chose Philippians was because it had good preaching passages but did not have a lot of the theological minefields,” Miller told the *TEXAN*. “We wanted to stay away from some of the things that had been controversial in the convention.”

Contemporary hymn writers Keith & Kristyn Getty will lead worship at the Pastors' Conference, which is themed “Above Every Name.” For a complete list of speakers and more information, visit [sbpc.net](http://sbpc.net).

Read the full story online at [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org). **BR**

## Christians, feminists unite to fight transgender restroom access

By **KILEY GROSSLAND** | WORLD News Service

**T**he debate about transgender restroom access has forged unlikely allies. In January, the conservative Family Policy Alliance (FPA) and the self-described “radical feminist” Women's Liberation Front (WoLF), co-filed a brief with the Supreme Court opposing efforts to allow transgender students to use the restroom of their perceived gender identity.

The case, *Gloucester County School Board v. G.G.*, is scheduled for oral arguments March 28. It will be the first time the Supreme Court hears a case involving gender and restrooms.

The joint FPA and WoLF amicus brief argues in support of the Virginia school board policy requiring students to use restrooms corresponding to their biological sex. Last year, a federal District Court and the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the school district in favor of high school student Gavin Grimm, a biological female who identifies as male and asked for access to the boy's restroom.

The lower courts based their decisions on a 2015 Obama administration directive threatening to withhold federal funds from school districts that do not allow transgender students to use the restroom of their choice. The order equates denying transgender students bathroom use to a violation of Title IX, a federal law banning sex discrimination in education.

Both FPA and WoLF believe manipulating Title IX to support gender identity ideology is bad for women, threatening their physical safety, educational equality,

and very legal existence.

“By rendering men legally indistinguishable from women, Title IX now threatens to extinguish the very meaning (and independent legal existence) of women,” WoLF argues on its website.

Kara Dansky, WoLF's board chair, acknowledges the two organizations differ on abortion, gay rights and homosexual marriage, but says her organization decided to align with FPA because the left has “sold out” women when it comes to gender identity.

“The notion that humans are sexually dimorphic mammals is not a conservative argument, it's not a liberal argument, it's not even a political argument at all, it's basic biology,” Dansky said in an FPA video. “And it matters in terms of defining women and girls as a legal category worthy of civil rights protections.”

Autumn Leva, FPA's policy director, agrees: “From our point of view, God made male and female, both in his image, and that's why ... we will always oppose any efforts to erase either sex from the law.”

The Supreme Court issued a stay on the appeals court ruling in Gloucester until it hears and decides the case.

Enforcement of the Barack Obama administration's mandate also remains on hold while suits filed by 23 states against it make their way through the court system. Some states are pushing ahead with state-level protections, following in the steps of North Carolina's controversial House Bill 2. So far in the 2017 session, lawmakers in 14 states have proposed legislation requiring residents use the sex-segregated facility that matches

their biological sex. Bills failed to pass in South Dakota and Virginia but are pending in the other 12 states. It's not clear how President Donald Trump's administration will come down on this issue.

On Feb. 10 the Justice Department said it would no longer challenge the temporary injunction blocking enforcement of the Obama-era policy.

The move does not practically change the current situation – the injunction

remains in place regardless – but could signal a shift in approach on transgender students and bathrooms.

Groups like FPA and WoLF are pushing the administration to go one step further and withdraw the entire mandate.

“How wrong does something need to be for a Christian family group and a radical feminist group to take their argument together to the Supreme Court?” Leva asked. **BR**

## Layoffs

Continued from page 5

“As we scale back, the refugees who are already here will have fewer resources that they can access,” Clark said.

“There are less resources we can provide to them, and they're also being separated from their families. It's really heavy.”

Zac Lyons, consultant for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's Office of Great Commission Partnerships, said in a statement to the *Recorder*, “Whether our borders are open or closed, God is still sovereign, the task great, and our responsibility the same –

that is the Great Commission and love of neighbor. God has already brought many unreached peoples within arm's reach of our churches.

“Will we, as the people of God, obey Christ and share our lives and the gospel with the nations who are our neighbors? No matter what our government does regarding refugees and other immigrants, we as Kingdom citizens must be obedient to the biblical mandate to love the foreigner in our communities.”

To learn more or give to World Relief, visit [worldrelief.org/welcome](http://worldrelief.org/welcome). **BR**

## Norma McCorvey, aka Jane Roe, dies at 69

BR staff

**N**orma McCorvey, better known as Jane Roe from *Roe v. Wade*, a 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide, died Feb. 18 at an assisted living facility in Katy, Texas. McCorvey was 69.

She filed a lawsuit in 1970 for the

right to obtain an abortion in the state of Texas. The legal case became a household name as it rose through the judicial system, sparking decades of cultural and political debate over whether or not abortion practices constitute the murder of an unborn child. McCorvey died of a heart ailment, according to *The Washington Post*. **BR**



# Prestonwood escrows CP funds, cites ERLC actions

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

**A** Dallas-area megachurch has decided to escrow Cooperative Program funds temporarily in order to evaluate future support of Southern Baptist Convention causes.

At issue are what the congregation calls “various significant positions taken by the leadership of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission [ERLC] that do not reflect the beliefs and values of many in the Southern Baptist Convention,” according to a statement the church released to Louisiana’s *Baptist Message* newsjournal.

Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, will escrow what would amount to \$1 million annually, the *Message* reported Feb. 16.

In a text to Baptist Press (BP), *Message* Editor Will Hall noted he had queried Prestonwood about its giving to SBC causes after pastor Jack Graham was interviewed in December by *The Wall Street Journal*. Graham told *The Journal* the church was “considering making major changes in our support of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

At issue, Graham said in the interview, was alleged “disrespectfulness” by ERLC President Russell Moore toward evangelical supporters of Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Moore, who publicly opposed Trump during the primary and general election cycles, said in a December blog post he never intended to criticize all evangelicals who supported Trump.

Graham is a member of Trump’s Evangelical Executive Advisory Board.

Some Southern Baptists also have criticized the ERLC for joining a friend of the court brief last May in support of a New Jersey Islamic society’s right to build a mosque. The International Mission Board (IMB) joined the brief as well, and IMB President David Platt apologized Feb. 15 for the divisive nature of the action.



Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, spoke to the 2016 Pastors’ Conference in St. Louis on the urgency of evangelism and offered 10 principles of excellence and effectiveness. (Photo by Bill Bangham)

Graham, a former SBC president, told BP via text message Prestonwood is engaging in “an internal evaluation” of its giving, “and our desire is not to seek publicity so we can make the right decision for our church and Southern Baptists.”

Asked whether Prestonwood also will escrow funds for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) – the state convention with which it cooperates – Graham responded, “We’re evaluating everything.”

Graham told the *Message* he is “not angry at the SBC, and neither are our people, and I’m not working to start a movement to fire anyone.”

He wants Prestonwood to remain “a cooperating partner [with the SBC] as we have been for many years” but cited “uneasiness” among church leaders about the “disconnect between some of our denominational leaders and our churches.”

SBTC executive director Jim Richards told BP in a statement, “In our fellowship of churches, Prestonwood Baptist Church has been a faithful ministry partner for many years. We love Jack Graham and his people. It is our hope that these concerns can be resolved in a way that strengthens the kingdom work of Southern Baptists and honors the autonomy of the local church. We stand ready to assist as we have opportunity.”

ERLC President Russell Moore told Baptist Press in a statement, “I love and respect Jack Graham and Prestonwood Baptist Church. This is a faithful church with gifted leaders and a long history of vibrant ministry working and witnessing for Christ.”

Bart Barber, a Texas pastor who serves on the ERLC’s Leadership Council tweeted following Prestonwood’s announcement, “I love and appreciate” Jack Graham “but am an ardent advocate for #ReligiousLiberty and for” CP. “I’m just heartbroken & conflicted.”

In related news, First Baptist Church in Morristown, Tenn., announced last month it would escrow funds traditionally given through CP over concerns related to ERLC and IMB participation in the New Jersey mosque brief. First Baptist

pastor Dean Haun resigned as an IMB trustee in November over the brief.

The *Biblical Recorder* asked Haun why the church chose to withhold funds rather than voice opposition through more traditional methods, such as messenger-proposed resolutions or motions at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

“Our people were absolutely bewildered and outraged by the action of the IMB. We believe that what constitutes us as a Southern Baptist church is our decision to cooperate in joint missions efforts through our giving. This act was so egregious in the eyes of myself and our members that they no longer wanted money to go to support the administration of the IMB or the ERLC,” said Haun. “We did go ahead and take up our annual [Lottie Moon Christmas Offering] however, due to the fact that our missionaries were not involved with this action.

“We believed that resolutions ‘talk’ but it is our giving that ‘walks’ so to speak.”

Morristown decided to hold the money on the recommendation of a church committee appointed to study the matter. “They recommended that we escrow the funds so that we could make a non-emotional and prayerful decision and see what would happen in the future,” Haun said. “This would allow us to still have the funds available and not spend them on other items. They presented this plan to the church at a called business meeting on the Sunday night of Nov. 5 and it was passed unanimously.”

When asked similar questions about the nature and process of their decision, Prestonwood did not comment by the time of publication.

Louisiana Baptist Convention executive director David Hankins and former SBC Executive Committee chairman Bill Harrell both told *The Wall Street Journal* they know of churches considering a diversion of funds away from the ERLC.

Threats to escrow CP funds have occurred periodically in SBC history. In the mid-1980s, some Southern Baptist conservatives threatened to escrow CP funds if moderates regained control of the convention presidency, BP reported.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Biblical Recorder Editor K. Allan Blume contributed to this report.) **BR**

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# Gathering

Continued from page 1

rediscover what it means to be a shepherd and really take care of the flock.”

## A shepherd without a flock

Garth and his wife, Patty, spent more than 30 years serving churches in a denomination that began to alter important doctrinal positions and has seen no net gains in Canadian churches in many years. Then, during a three-month sabbatical, struggles within the church erupted that eventually led to Leno’s departure.

He could have turned in any number of directions. The child of an alcoholic mother and a “weekend drunk” father, he grew up feeling rejected and lonely. Despite his genetic predisposition for alcoholism, he joined other teenagers as a high school student and began getting drunk on weekends.

“The shadows grew very long and I lost my way,” Leno said.

After high school, he met a girl from a Christian home. As he spent time with the family, he saw parents who were “rock-solid believers in Jesus,” and he knew they had something he wanted. After 13 months, the girl’s mother explained the plan of salvation.

“That afternoon I trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior,” Leno said of his 1976 decision.

More than 35 years later, he found himself in yet another lonely place. He never expected that church planting would be so difficult and isolating. With his wife, Garth started a Saturday night Bible study mostly with people who were “disillusioned with church.” What started in their home in September 2013 soon moved to a local golf clubhouse, and before long they had outgrown the

place.

“Maybe we should start a church,” Leno joked one evening. He did not expect the overwhelming response. Everyone agreed they should. Someone said, “Whenever you are ready, we are ready.”

When their close friends made that offer, Patty began sobbing as wounds from their last church were still fresh.

“Seriously – planting a church was the last thing we wanted to do,” Garth said. “But it was obviously the first thing that God had in mind for us.”

Leno had no job leads – secular or ministerial – when he met Wayne Parker, pastor of Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City, Michigan, just across the Detroit River from Windsor, the southernmost city in Canada.

Parker is the North American Mission Board (NAMB) Send Detroit City Missionary, and he was collaborating with a Plant Midwest seminar. Parker knew about Leno’s Bible study and had one question, “How can we help you?”

Leno wasn’t sure what help Parker could offer, but he was quite sure he didn’t want to associate with another denomination.

Yet Leno also connected with Andrew Lamme, the Canadian National Baptist Convention’s lead church planting catalyst for Southern Ontario. Multiple telephone calls of encouragement to the Leno’s soon followed, along with emails and offers of help, something they rarely received in more than 30 years with the other denomination. He also began to receive valuable resources, training and mentoring through the NAMB’s Send North America initiative and other Southern Baptist church planters.

With counsel from Parker, Lamme and others, and an affiliate with Canadian convention, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® (AAEO) funds soon helped Leno and his following of “disengaged and disenfranchised” people secure and renovate a warehouse for The Gathering.

The Gathering is also part of Send Detroit, NAMB’s church planting strategy for the metro area surrounding the city.

## An atypical church plant

Leno now knows that The Gathering was an atypical church plant as the core group had already gathered. Though he has a lifetime of pastoral experience, he’s now an enthusiastic student of church planting, even working toward a master’s degree in church planting at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

“I’m learning as much as I can about church planting,” Leno said. “I’m like a sponge.”



The Gathering senior pastor Garth Leno, right, and associate pastor Phil Siebenmorgen, left, baptize Nathan Langlois during a July 10, 2016, church service, which included more baptisms and a baby dedication. Leno and his wife, Patty, are North American Mission Board 2017 Week of Prayer missionaries. (NAMB photos by Gary Gnidovic)

He’s learning about creating an invitational culture, sparking evangelism, transformational discipleship, hosting summer camps and mobilizing mission teams to help The Gathering conduct the camps. “We’re talking about intentionally engaging this city with the gospel,” Leno said.

God is doing something so special among his weekly 220 attendees that one senior pastor from a large sending church in Tennessee said, “I’d like to take some of The Gathering back home.”

Garth and Patty modeled hospitality with the Bible studies that started in their home, and that value shows at The Gathering.

With Elena Sorrentino taking the lead, The Gathering Place is the church’s coffee and snack area at the back of the warehouse-turned-worship center where people hang out after services and talk, which delights Leno’s shepherding heart.

Starting a Baptist church may have been foreign to Leno several years ago, but his church is on board now, particularly with missions giving.

In its first year, The Gathering collected \$9,350 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® (AAEO) for North American missions.

The second year

resulted in more than \$13,000 given to North American Missions through AAEO.

The Gathering is now assisting other church plants and plans to sponsor one soon in a nearby town. The shepherd loves his flock and wants his church to be a church planting church.

Meanwhile, he enjoys the changes God has allowed him to experience through church planting. “I have become much more kingdom-focused,” Leno said.

“I’ve become much more gospel centered. Discipleship is key. Prayer has become more valuable to me. It’s a more important tool in the toolkit than it has ever been before.”

Garth and Patty Leno are AAEO Week of Prayer Missionaries for NAMB. Half of the funding NAMB receives to support, train and resource North American missionaries comes through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. Learn more at [AnnieArmstrong.com](http://AnnieArmstrong.com).

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Jim Burton is a photojournalist and writer based in Atlanta. He formerly served Southern Baptists as the director of Volunteer Mobilization and Mission Education with the North American Mission Board.) **BR**



Reaching children with volunteer mission teams is just one strategy for community transformation at the Gathering in Windsor, Ontario.





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# Sex trafficking: One click led NYC church to action

By GRACE THORNTON | Baptist Press

It all started in a Facebook community group. It could've ended there but something happened that changed everything.

He recognized her face.

"The Facebook group was a place where people in our part of town share things," Nathan Creitz, pastor of City Life Church in Ridgewood, Queens, New York, recounted, "and somebody on there shared a link and said something like, 'I can't believe this is happening in our neighborhood.'"

Creitz clicked on it – and immediately wished he hadn't.

"It was a picture of scantily clad Asian girls from a website that often advertises places that are fronts for human trafficking, places like massage parlors," he said. "I was about to click away – except for the fact that I realized I recognized one of the girls."

And he recognized the place – it was a massage parlor right next to the church.

"When we were giving out coats in front of the church a month or two before, as the employees of the massage parlor came, this girl was there, and it was basically was her first day on the job," Creitz said. "She came over and got a hat and coat, and some of the people there serving with our church befriended her."

They had no idea what was really going on, he said – but that picture told him that there were some girls in need of help, about as close as they could get to the church.

"Based on our interactions with them, there's no doubt in my mind that these girls were not doing this stuff willingly," he said.

Creitz had been working with Raleigh Sadler, who runs the New York City-based nonprofit Let My People Go aimed at stopping human trafficking, so he knew how to recognize the signs. And he decided it was time to go to the police department – a place he'd already begun to build relationships.

"The Lord had just really opened some doors to have great access to the local precinct. I had become friends with the captain," Creitz said. "And when I shared my concerns with him, he didn't just dismiss it – he really took it very seriously."

They began to investigate the five parlors Creitz had expressed alarm about, including the one next to the church. Three parlors were shut down; two were cleared. And when a new commander, Mark Wachter, took over the precinct, he inherited the concern and kept right on working.

"He [Wachter] gets a lot of credit for taking this seriously. We see the hand of God in this," Creitz said, noting that his church had been praying for God to put an end to human trafficking in Queens, which is a known hotbed for exploitation.

And Wachter said he felt the prayers of the church.

"I knew the church was praying," the precinct commander said. "Together we aggressively tackled these businesses that were hurting the community, and thank God we were able to close them all down in this area where Nathan's church is. Slowly we let those people know that those types of businesses are not welcome here."

And it wasn't long before Creitz attended a community council meeting and learned a piece of information that took his breath away.



Nathan Creitz, center, pastor of City Life Church in Ridgewood, Queens, N.Y., worked with local police to pray for and seek out businesses involved in sex trafficking. He learned that in a two-mile radius, 24 illicit parlors had been shut down. (Contributed photo)

In a two-mile radius, 24 illicit parlors had been shut down.

"That form of trafficking has been virtually eliminated in the precinct," Creitz said.

"Any other massage parlors that are open have been investigated and cleared at this point. As long as they are shutting this down, as long as there is pressure on that community, if there are fewer and fewer outlets for that to be abused and exploited, then that's just going to dry up."

Sadler said that's exactly what he prays will happen.

"Our mission is to help the local church fight human trafficking by reaching those who are most vulnerable," Sadler said of Let My People Go, which held its official kickoff at the end of January.

"We want to help the church identify those people, empower them, protect them and include them in the church."

## Slavery a global problem

Nearly 46 million people are exploited globally through modern-day slavery, Sadler said, adding up to a \$150-billion business.

His goal? To help churches figure out how to stop it from the corner of the world where they sit.

"There are ways to inject justice and mercy into everything you are already doing ... to come up with applications for your church and small groups," Sadler said. "We've seen it take on different forms in different kinds of churches and communities."

And just like he came alongside City Life Church, he said his goal is to come alongside churches across the country, offer resources and help them strategize how to best stop trafficking together alongside police and social services in their community.

"We want to create a congregational approach that mobilizes the entire congregation to believe this is what you naturally do," Sadler said. "It's vital to have a gospel approach to the topic of trafficking – that way you're

actually creating a culture that says, 'This is what we do, this is how we do it, this is what it means to be a believer – you're loved by God and so you love others.'"

That's what City Life Church was doing the day they gave the girl from the parlor the coat and hat – and that's what led to Creitz' being able to sound the alarm that led to her safety.

"It really all began as a matter of prayer – prayer and having a church that was engaged in knowing our community," Creitz said. "If we hadn't seen that girl, there wouldn't have been any reason to look any further into this issue. If you're not out there recognizing the vulnerabilities that exist, then nothing happens."

Wachter agreed.

"If the community is concerned, we're going to be able to work together to solve these problems," the precinct commander said.

"Nathan is a great example of that, how he's kind of joined with the police department to try to help as many as we can as best we can. We want to make a difference.

See Church page 16

**"There are ways to inject justice and mercy into everything you are already doing ..."**  
– Raleigh Sadler



# Leadworship Workshop coming to N.C. this spring

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

**T**he ministry of acclaimed worship artist Paul Baloché has impacted millions of people around the world, including Kenny Lamm, senior consultant for worship and music with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

“When God began transforming my heart for worship and gave me a passion for leading His people in worship, Paul Baloché’s training videos were a huge inspiration to me,” said Lamm, who has served with the state convention for more than six years after more than 20 years as a worship leader in the local church.



PAUL BALOCHE

“Much of my ministry has been greatly influenced by Paul Baloché.”

Now others in North Carolina can receive hands-on music and ministry training from Baloché and his team of talented musicians thanks to an upcoming workshop this spring.

Lamm has worked to bring Baloché – who has written well known worship songs such as “Open the Eyes of My Heart,” “Your Name,” “Hosanna” and “Above All” – to the state for one of his Leadworship workshops, which is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, March 31-April 1 at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

The event kicks off with a worship night on Friday evening followed by a full day of training and

breakout sessions on Saturday. The workshop is geared toward pastors, worship leaders, musicians and audio technicians. Registration for the event is \$69 per person, or \$59 per person for groups of four or more. More information and registration are available at [LeadworshipNC.org](http://LeadworshipNC.org).

Baloché and his team of musicians have led similar workshops around the world for the past 20 years. The Leadworship Workshop is designed so every member of a church’s worship and music ministry can benefit and go deeper into biblical and practical application.

Lamm said the conference would be a great supplement to those who have participated in one of the worship training events he conducts.

“Thousands of North Carolina Baptists have gone through our Worship Leader Boot Camp events, which help set the biblical and missional foundations of worship,” Lamm said. “We cover so much during those weekends that we are not able to go into the practical band specifics,” like focus on particular instruments, “that this conference will cover. This will be a great next step for many of our people.”

Attendees at the Leadworship Workshop will receive training and equipping through general sessions and a host of breakout sessions designed to address every aspect of the worship service and preparation.

Through the breakout sessions, attendees will receive personal interaction

**“Much of my ministry has been greatly influenced by Paul Baloché.”**  
– Kenny Lamm

with each presenter in a small-group environment. Sessions will cover topics related to specific musical instruments, vocals, songwriting, worship leadership, audio mixing and more.

Lamm said he is grateful that Baloché is bringing this workshop to North Carolina and hopes that many pastors and church leaders will take advantage of this opportunity to learn from an award-winning musician whose worship songs have resonated with so many people.

“There is no one that I would rather have come to speak into the worship lives of our people than Paul Baloché,” Lamm said. “I am thankful for the passion that Paul and his team of world-class musicians have to encourage and equip the local church through workshops such as this one.

“The inspiration and renewal that we will gain through this time of worship and training will be unmatched and powerful for all who attend.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – The Leadworship Workshop is scheduled for March 31-April 1 at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. A complete schedule and registration information are available online at [LeadworshipNC.org](http://LeadworshipNC.org).) **BR**

## Have you planted a tamarisk tree?

“Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Eternal God” – Genesis 21:33 (NIV).

**A**braham lived an extraordinary life. Oftentimes, the simple words of Genesis 21:33 get lost between the captivating narrative of Abraham’s oath with Philistine leaders in Genesis 21 and the greatest test any father could endure in Genesis 22.

What seems out of place – Abraham planting a tamarisk tree in the harsh, dry conditions of the Negev desert – is actually an exclamation point in the text. This act is Abraham’s declaration to future generations that he is making an investment in their lives.

Despite severe desert conditions, the tamarisk tree survives with minimal water. It grows slowly, taking decades to mature. Over time, the tree is able to produce shade, the most precious commodity in any hot, sun-drenched land.

So why did this 100-year old man plant a tree that takes so long to become

useful? Simple. He was not planting it for himself. Abraham planted the tamarisk tree for generations to come.

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has a new ministry called Faith at Home, designed to help churches lead families to plant tamarisk trees. Faith at Home works alongside pastors, staff and church leaders to assist in developing a family disciple-making strategy based on Deuteronomy 6:7.

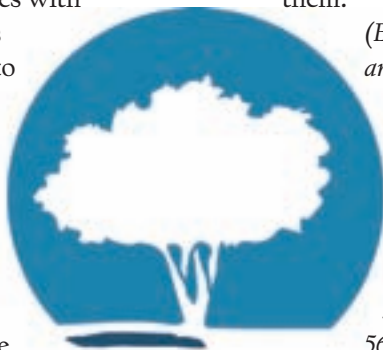
When churches refocus their ministries from this perspective, parents and grandparents discover new ways to be disciple-makers of their children and grandchildren in the natural rhythm of their daily lives.

Lives can be changed in extraordinary ways when families apply this approach to the children God has entrusted to them.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – If you are interested in learning more about how this new ministry can help your congregation, contact Mark Smith, senior consultant for Family Evangelism and Discipleship, at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5647, or [msmith@ncbaptist.org](mailto:msmith@ncbaptist.org).)



MARK SMITH



# FAITH AT HOME

## CHURCH NEWS



### Beulah Baptist Association, Roxboro

Lona Lockhart retired after 21 years as administrative assistant with the Beulah Baptist Association, Roxboro. The association hosted a reception Dec. 8, 2016, in her honor. (Contributed photo)



At right, board members from the newly formed Tillery Christian Academy (TCA) gather with Memorial Baptist Church staff and members and Norwood town officials to break ground on facilities for TCA. Modular units will be used until a permanent facility is built. Classes start in August. Memorial Pastor Josh Phillips said the school is one way his church can support developing a biblical worldview in their community and beyond. (Contributed photo)

## Memorial Church launches Christian school

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

**M**emorial Baptist Church in Norwood broke ground Feb. 1 for its newly formed Christian school. Norwood town officials joined church members and Tillery Christian Academy's (TCA) board of directors for the event that board chairman Tom Gray called a "milestone."

Addressing the gathering, Gray talked about the school's vision and the obstacles they had to overcome in the past 18 months. One obstacle was the failure of the church's current facilities to meet codes for educational instruction. Adjacent to the church's facilities, modular units are under construction to provide temporary classrooms and offices until a permanent facility is built.

Gray thanked the area residents and church members for continued support for the school that will open its doors debt free in August.

He said the school's purpose is to "glorify God through providing education with a biblical worldview to children for ages to come."

Josh Phillips, Memorial's pastor, read from Ezra 3:10-11 where God's people celebrated the laying of the temple's foundation. Nathan Fox, the first pastor of Memorial, concluded with a prayer of thanksgiving and led the gathering in singing "God Bless America."

Phillips told the *Biblical Recorder* the vision for the school began 18 months ago. Gray was concerned that children in the community and across the country were not developing a Christian worldview through the public school system. They discussed some alternatives for Christian education and gathered information from other churches that had successful Christian schools.

"The more we prayed independently, it was unique how God was putting our spirits together in the need," Phillips said. At the same time, it was announced that the local elementary school may close.

"We were blessed that the elementary school did not close, but that did not change our vision for Christian education. Unfortunately, our teachers and administrators, within the public schools are handcuffed. When it comes to a biblical worldview, they just can't do much. They can't teach the Bible in public

classrooms, but we believe we should do that," said Phillips.

Gray and Phillips observed that churches have about two to three hours each week to teach children, while public schools have 30 to 35 hours to teach them.

"It doesn't take long to see that [education] is stacked against us," Phillips said. "So, what can we do to invest in these students so that when they graduate from high school ... they can have a biblical worldview? Whether they become attorneys, doctors, teachers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, – no matter what they are – they need to come out of their education with a biblical worldview."

There are two small Christian schools in the area according to Phillips. "We're in southern tip of Stanley County, close to Anson and Montgomery counties. There are very few Christian schools in these counties."

TCA's board hired Beverly McIntire as the head mistress of TCA. She has a doctorate in curriculum and instruction with a specialty in literacy from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and 35 years of teaching experience from preschool children to college students.

"We're not against our public schools," Phillips added. "That's not our ambition, our goal or our motive. What we want to do as a church is to ask, 'How can we better equip boys and girls to develop that biblical worldview?' Unfortunately, our local schools can't do it anymore because of the restrictions that are placed upon them."

"I'm very excited about this opportunity for our church," said Phillips. "First, we believe the Bible, and we believe in a biblical worldview. Now we have the opportunity to be an extension of that with a ministry in the community where we live. ... My most exciting part about this is seeing the potential this has for our future – five, 10 or 15 years down the road as these students graduate and get plugged into society and function in their everyday life based on the biblical education they received at Tillery Christian Academy."

TCA plans to open in the fall with kindergarten through third grade, adding additional grades each year. For more information, visit the school's website [tillerychristianacademy.wordpress.com](http://tillerychristianacademy.wordpress.com). **BR**



## AROUND THE STATE

### Obituary

**GREGORY "GREG" THOMAS SPURLING**, 41, of Newton, died Feb. 5 at his home.

A Catawba County native, Spurling was a 2006 graduate of Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute (now college).

A former car painter, Spurling was pastor of Freedom Biker Church in Hickory.

He is survived by his wife of 22-and-a-half-years, Dakota Nantz Spurling; son, Luke Spurling; daughter, Cheyenne Spurling; parents, Thomas and Marsha Gutyar Spurling of Belwood; brother, Scott Spurling of Belwood; sisters, Leslie Webb of Belwood, Myra Juban of Seoul, S. Korea; and grandmothers, Marjorie Spurling of Shelby, and Eunice Gutyar of Newton.

Memorials to: Freedom Biker Church of Hickory-Mission Fund, P.O. Box 2543, Hickory, NC 28603.

### Staff changes

**STEVEN FULLER** has been called as senior pastor to First Baptist Church, Gastonia. Fuller previously served as associate pastor at Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., for six years.

First Baptist Church, North Wilkesboro, has called **BRUCE ALBERT YOUNG** as senior pastor. Young previously served as senior pastor at First Baptist Church, Bladenboro, for 13 years.

**J.D. WEED** has been called as senior pastor to First Baptist Church, Gibsonville. Weed previously served as senior pastor for seven years at Union Baptist Church, Pamplico, S.C.

Metrolina Baptist Association has called **TODD JONES** as ministry coordinator for its Great Commission Center. He previously served Midwood Baptist Church, Charlotte, as community pastor for outreach to families and children.

**TYLER CAMPBELL** has been called as pastor of Raleigh Road Baptist Church, Wilson. He previously served First Baptist Church, Perry, Ga., as pastor.

Northside Baptist Church, Greensboro, has called **JEFF KARNES** as senior pastor. Karnes previously served as pastor at Brown's Chapel Christian Church, Robbins, for three years.

### Retirement

**BILLY BLAKELY** retired Jan. 31 from Surry Baptist Association, Mount Airy, after more than 11 years of serving as director of missions. Blakely started in ministry as pastor of Poston Baptist Deaf Mission, Wallace. He then became senior pastor at Poston Baptist Church. He was called to Brushy Creek Baptist Church, Taylors, S.C., as minister of



**BILLY BLAKELY**

education and outreach and then Clear Spring Baptist Church, Simpsonville, S.C., as pastor before coming to Surry Baptist Association. He and his wife Patricia will retire to Williamston, S.C.

### Anniversary

**EDENTON BAPTIST CHURCH** will celebrate its 200th anniversary March 26 with a service at 10:30 a.m., followed by a catered luncheon. Kenneth Word, pastor emeritus, will be the guest speaker. Edenton also commemorated its bicentennial year with the debut of a bicentennial anthem, as well as a hymn festival Feb. 12 featuring Charlotte organist Adam Ward. The church honored current and former members who have served in ordained or church-related ministries during a Called to Serve Sunday Jan. 22, and celebrated the recent publication of *Entertaining a Hope: A Bicentennial history of Edenton Baptist Church*, written by member Jesse Croom.



OPPORTUNITY CORNER



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is hosting Leadership Development Equipping Track 2: “3 in 1 Profile of a Leader” on April 20-21. This training will provide a tool that will help leaders discover how God has uniquely created them to accomplish His purpose in His

Kingdom. Participants will discover their calling, spiritual gifts, personality traits and how they all come together. Cost is \$25 for leadership training on April 20 or \$95 for facilitators training on both days. Visit [ncbaptist.org/leadership\\_event2](http://ncbaptist.org/leadership_event2).



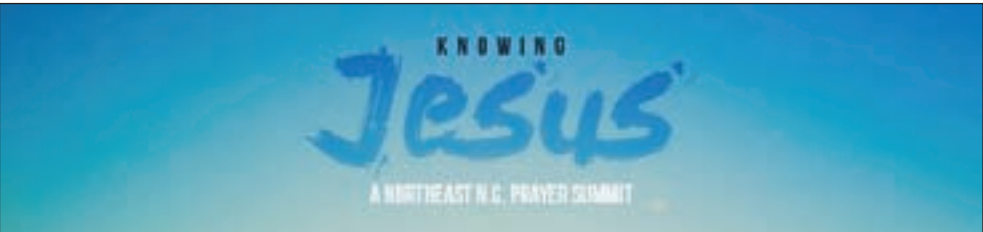
The Deaf Youth Retreat will be held May 5-7 at Camp Caraway in Sophia. This is an annual weekend camp for deaf middle school and high school aged students. Deaf youth will experience all the fun

of Christian camp in an ASL language-rich environment. Cost for North Carolina campers is \$105 each, with partial scholarships available. The deadline for reservations is April 24. Visit [ncbaptist.org/deafyouthretreat](http://ncbaptist.org/deafyouthretreat).



Interpreter Training Program will be held May 12-13 at Caraway Conference Center in Sophia. The theme is “Stories: Techniques for Visual Interpretation.”

The instructor is Tammy Cantrell; she has been an RID certified interpreter and involved in deaf ministry for 35 years. Visit [ncbaptist.org/interpretertraining](http://ncbaptist.org/interpretertraining).



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the West Chowan Baptist Association is sponsoring Knowing Jesus, a northeast N.C. prayer summit May 13 at Cashie Baptist Church in Windsor.

Speakers include Mel Blackaby, Chris Schofield, Terry Stockman and Bobby Strother. The conference is free but a love offering will be collected. Visit [ncbaptist.org/knowingjesus](http://ncbaptist.org/knowingjesus).

Submissions

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

Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

Please send no more than 300 words, along with contact information, to [editor@BRnow.org](mailto:editor@BRnow.org) or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512-1185. Only one letter from the same writer will be published in a 90-day period. All submissions will be edited by *Recorder* style guidelines. Have questions? Call (919) 847-2127.



Woman’s Missionary Union of North Carolina is hosting MissionsCAROLINA at Camp Mundo Vista in Sophia. MissionsCAROLINA is a mission trip offering mission opportunities for men, women, individuals, families, youth groups and children (must have completed 5th grade or older). There will be light construction, cleaning, painting, yard work and other projects to help improve the facilities of Camp Mundo Vista. The Family Workcamp and Worship Weekend will

be held May 26-May 28 and is \$75 per person, which includes meals, lodging, t-shirt, insurance and program fee/entertainment. The MissionsCAROLINA Week is May 26-June 2 and \$220 per person, which includes meals, registration, lodging, T-shirt, insurance and special entertainment. Participants may also come for one day only, which is \$25 per person and includes two meals, registration and insurance. Visit [wmunc.org/missionscarolina](http://wmunc.org/missionscarolina).



The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is sponsoring Embracing Boston, a mission trip Sept. 14-17 to Boston. The evangelical population of this important New England urban center remains at less than three percent. More than 1,000 towns in New England are without

an evangelical witness. The trip is open to ladies college-aged and older. Cost is \$675 and includes airfare, missionary insurance, lodging, ministry expenses and ground transportation. Application deadline is May 5. Visit [embracenc.org/boston](http://embracenc.org/boston).

CHURCH NEWS



Mt. Ruhama Baptist Church, Maiden

Mt. Ruhama Baptist Church, Maiden, held a second celebration of its 200th anniversary and dedicated a new Family Life Center on Jan. 28. The 9,926-square-foot facility includes new administration offices. Mt. Ruhama initially held an outdoor celebration last August, when the anniversary is usually recognized, but planned a larger event once the new center was completed. The January celebration featured bluegrass worship music performed by the Cockman Family, above. Building funds were raised through a “Growing with Jesus” campaign, which pastors Marion Powell and Michael Staton led and started in 2013. (Contributed photo)



March 5 BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE March 12

Jesus, Our Victor Victorious Hope

Focal Passage: Revelation 1:12-20

Seeing is \_\_\_\_\_. A picture is worth a \_\_\_\_\_. I imagine you had little difficulty finishing those sentences with “believing” and “thousand words,” respectively. Pictures and visions reveal glorious truths. The book of Revelation is a book of visions. John witnessed vision after glorious vision intended to encourage and challenge. He received the book of Revelation during a time of intense persecution as he was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos. His fellow believers, many of those in the churches to whom he wrote, were experiencing persecution and suffering in turmoil. Enter Jesus. Now John knew Jesus as well as anyone. He was one of Jesus’ closest followers, if not His most intimate. But if you notice in this text, when John saw Jesus in all of His unfettered glory, he fell at His feet as though dead. John’s vision of Jesus in Revelation 1:12-20 is not the carpenter’s son dressed in the humble vestiges of a traveling preacher. Rather, John’s vision of Jesus is victorious and full of glory.

Jesus is in the midst of the lampstands – His churches. Jesus’ clothing reveals His role as High Priest – the One who intercedes for His churches. His flaming eyes and feet of bronze display His holy judgment. His voice like the roar of many waters reminds us of His revelation. He holds the stars in His hands indicating His control of His churches. Out of His mouth comes a sharp, two-edged sword. This same picture returns later in Revelation when Jesus returns victorious on the white horse defeating His enemies. Jesus protects His churches as He shines gloriously through them. Astonishing as the vision of the unveiled Christ is, His word to John may be even more marvelous: “*Fear not. I am the living One. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore. I have the keys of Death and Hell.*” Jesus is saying, “John, I am victorious and My resurrection gives you the right to join Me in My victory.” So, in your situations and concerns, take courage, don’t be afraid, have hope, Jesus is our Victor.



CHRIS HEFNER  
Pastor,  
Wilkesboro Baptist Church

Focal Passage: Matthew 8:5-13

Do you hope for more? I hope for many more years to spend with my wife and children. I’m sure you’ve used the word hope in this same way. In the sense we so often use the word hope, we mean something akin to wishful thinking. We would like something to be true. But the biblical use of the word hope is something far more certain. When the Bible speaks of hope it means something assured that we simply wait for. The biblical key to unlocking hope in this sense is faith. In this story we find a glorious example of faith. A Roman centurion sought out Jesus to heal his servant. Instead of asking Jesus to come to his house, the centurion observed, “*Lord, I’m not worthy to have you come under my roof. Speak the word and my servant will be healed. I too am a man with authority. When I tell my*

*servant to do something, he does it.*” The centurion modeled great faith – so great that Jesus observed he had not found such faith in Israel. Here we see biblical hope unlocked. The centurion knew Jesus could heal. He displayed his hope with humble faith. He acknowledged his unworthiness – a picture of a sinner humbling himself before the only One who can save. He expressed his faith, “*Only speak the word, and I know my servant will be healed.*” Then the centurion experienced victorious hope. Jesus healed His servant. Did you know you were in this story? After Jesus’ complimented the man’s faith he said, “*Many will come from east and west to recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*” Jesus asserted that if you’ve humbled yourself and trusted in Jesus, “*You will be in the kingdom.*” It doesn’t get more certain than Jesus’ declaration. So have hope. Look forward to the certain victory you will experience with Jesus in His Kingdom.

March 5 EXPLORE THE BIBLE March 12

Who Is Jesus? Is Jesus Fully God?

Focal passage: Matthew 16: 13-28

Recently, my bank called and asked if I had made any purchases in Pennsylvania with my credit card. I told them no, so they immediately canceled the card and reissued a new one. For the next several days, I continued to check my accounts for suspicious behavior. I could only imagine the hardships and problems that would follow if someone had not only taken my credit card but also stolen my identity. As important as my identity is to me, there is another person’s identity that is far more significant. His name is Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, we live in a world where many people have mistaken Jesus for someone else. Some say he was an important historical figure, but not the Messiah. Others claim he was a great teacher, but not a Savior. Some think he was a great prophet, but not God. Of course, this is not new to our day. When Jesus walked the earth, many people mistook His identity. The Pharisees thought he was demonic. Others thought

he might be John the Baptist or Elijah. But, as we note in our focal passage, when Peter was asked who Jesus was he rightly responded, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Peter’s answer is a proclamation of the most important truth in all of scripture. Namely, that Jesus is God sent from the Father to be our Savior. When people misunderstand or reject that truth the consequences are not like my temporary issues when someone stole my credit card. They are eternal in scope. Getting it wrong about the person and nature of Christ means the difference between heaven and hell. Thus, helping others rightly identify Jesus is one of the greatest responsibilities a believer will undertake. Of course, we must realize that only God can change the heart (Matthew 16:17), but nevertheless, we still have the privilege to point people in the right direction. What will you do to point people to the true Christ?



BARTLEY WOOTEN  
Pastor, Beulaville Baptist Church

Focal passage: Matthew 17:1-13

I love watching my children during Christmas time, especially as they open presents. It is very clear which gifts they enjoy over the others. For example, every year they always get candy in their stockings. Consequently, when they unload the stocking they spend little time admiring the candy because it is not as valuable to them. However, one year I snuck a brand new iPhone in my daughter’s stocking. As she was pulling out the candy, I called her phone with my cell phone, and it started ringing in the stocking. If you could have only seen her face – her eyes got huge, her mouth dropped, and she started screaming with great joy! She was so excited about her new phone. Her reaction describes what it means to value something really important. In our focal passage, Jesus reveals His glory as He was transfigured on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-13). Peter, James

and John were privileged to experience this event, and their reaction describes what it means to value something really important. Peter was so impressed with the divine presentation he was unsure what to do. He first asked if he and the other two disciples should leave, and then he quickly proposed to build a tent for a longer stay. A few moments later, scripture records that God the Father spoke to them and, fearing for their lives, the disciples fell on their faces. Jesus comforted the disciples, and as they raised their heads, the whole experience was over. What was the purpose of this event? Certainly it involved the prophecies of Elijah being the forerunner of the Messiah and being fulfilled in John the Baptist. But I also believe it was about Jesus allowing the disciples to get a greater glimpse of his glory and greatness. Through their experience the disciple would come to understand that Jesus shares fully in God’s glory. What a great gift that was for the disciples and it is an even more important gift for you and me today.



## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### Pastor

Immanuel Baptist Church, Greenville, NC, is seeking a **Senior Pastor** to lead us as we begin our second 100 years. We are a diversified church that supports both CBF and SBC ministries, and we have a rich history of mission outreach to the Greenville community. Our church is located within walking distance of a growing East Carolina University, with approximately 28,000 students, where we have a strong outreach ministry, including international students. Our worship services include a blend of both contemporary and traditional music. We affirm both men and women in ministry and leadership roles. The successful candidate will possess a strong calling to the pastoral ministry and hold a degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Send resume to Pastor Search Committee, Immanuel Baptist Church, 1101 S. Elm Street, Greenville, NC 27858, or electronically to [pastorsearch@ibcg.org](mailto:pastorsearch@ibcg.org). We will begin reviewing resumes on April 1, 2017, and will continue until position is filled.

Sharpe Road Baptist Church, Greensboro, NC, is seeking **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative SBC affiliated, mission-minded church. Must be strong in the following: personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Bible teaching, administrative skills, outreach, can shepherd our entire congregation, have good communication skills, must be self motivated. Send resumes to: [srbcsopastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:srbcsopastorsearch@gmail.com).

Rocky Face Baptist Church, Taylorsville, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor** with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. A man of God with a passion to work with our multi-generational congregation and our community. Must be vision minded and driven to preach God's Word and to reach the lost. We are a mission-minded SBC affiliated rural congregation. We have traditional Sunday School and worship services. Send resume with testimony and statement of faith to: [rockyfacebaptistchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:rockyfacebaptistchurch@yahoo.com), or P.O. Box 397, Taylorsville, NC 28681.

**SENIOR PASTOR.** Big Stevens Creek Baptist Church in North Augusta, SC, seeks a full-time pastor prepared to lead a mission-minded and disciple-oriented congregation. We prefer a candidate with a minimum of 10 years experience as a senior pastor and a master of divinity or equivalent from an SBC accredited school. Please send resume c/o Pastor Search Committee to [debbie358@comcast.net](mailto:debbie358@comcast.net) or mail to 1850 West Martintown Road, North Augusta, SC 29860.

### Church Staff

First Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, NC, is prayerfully seeking a candidate to serve as **full-time minister of music and education**. This person must be a born again child of God, demonstrate Christian character, be called to head music ministry and provide testimony of faith. A bachelor's degree in music and education from a Baptist seminary is preferred. Responsibilities included teaching and directing a full music program. Worship services are a blend of traditional and contemporary music. Please submit resume to First Baptist Church, Attn: Search Committee, 125 Tappan St., Spruce Pine, NC 28777, or email to [doctorrock1@yahoo.com](mailto:doctorrock1@yahoo.com).

Florence Baptist Church, Forest City, NC, is prayerfully seeking a candidate to serve as **full-time Minister of Youth and Instructional Technology**. This person should be committed to Christ, have a deep love for youth, be creative, energetic and organized. A bachelor's degree and seminary degree with experience in Youth and Technology are preferred. To view a full resume and requirements: visit [www.florencechurch.net](http://www.florencechurch.net). Email resumes to [crystal@florencechurch.net](mailto:crystal@florencechurch.net).

Rosemary Baptist Church is seeking a **Director of Children's and Youth Ministries** to expand its children's and youth programs. The Director of Children's and Youth Ministries will partner with an existing core of volunteers, and focus primarily on Children's Ministry. Part-time. Rosemary Baptist Church, 936 Jackson Street, Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870.

Florence Baptist Church, Forest City, NC, is prayerfully seeking a candidate to serve as **full-time Minister of Children and Education**. This person should be committed to Christ, have a deep love for children, be creative, energetic and organized. This person must also have a current knowledge of curriculum while enlisting, training and supporting all teaching staff. A bachelor's degree and seminary degree with experience working with children and Christian education are preferred. To view a job description and requirements: visit [www.florencechurch.net](http://www.florencechurch.net). Email resumes to [crystal@florencechurch.net](mailto:crystal@florencechurch.net).

Southside Baptist Church, Elm City, NC, is seeking 2 part-time positions: 1st position – **Worship Leader/Choir Director** who can teach and direct choir, Praise Team and our Children's Choir. Worship service is a blend of traditional and contemporary music; 2nd position – **Pianist**; Email resume to: [sbc@sbsbc.org](mailto:sbc@sbsbc.org).

The First Baptist Church of Matthews, NC, is seeking to fill the position of **Minister of Education**. Located in the fast-growing Southern Piedmont region of North Carolina, Matthews is a suburban community which offers an exceptional quality of life and intentional small-town atmosphere. Sharing a border with Charlotte, one of the nation's financial centers, Matthews attracts many young families relocating to the area and seeking a variety of quality educational opportunities for their children, as well as older families who want the conveniences of a major metro area without many of the issues often associated with city living. The region offers a myriad of opportunities for sports fans, including local NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball (AAA) franchises, as well as NASCAR racing and Hall of Fame. Beaches and mountains are only a three-hour drive away, while the NC Zoological Park, one of the best in the world is 1.5 hours away. Charlotte Douglas International Airport is a major hub for air travel, while local universities and seminaries offer opportunities for continuing adult education. FBC Matthews, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, is a Great Commission church with a focus on evangelism, missions and discipleship. The church has nearly 1,400 active members and averages about 800 in attendance at the two Sunday morning worship services. The 9:00 AM service follows a traditional style, with choir, while the 10:30 service is contemporary in nature and uses a praise band. The church's budget of approximately \$2.5 million includes more than 17 percent designated for missions activities, including the Cooperative Program. FBC Matthews believes we exist to reach the world for Jesus Christ by making disciples who reach UP to God; IN to the Church and OUT to the world. Ministries and programs are developed with the intent of equipping the church family to Reach UP through a personal consistent walk with God; Reach IN to the Church by developing godly, abiding friendships and Reach OUT through sharing the gospel and making other disciples. The successful candidate will have a seminary or Bible college degree and have significant experience leading church-wide education ministries in a mid-size or larger church. They should have the ability to develop, communicate and implement a vision to support the mission of the church through the various education and family ministries. They will be responsible for planning and implementation of Christian Education and Faith Development for the entire congregation from preschool to senior adults. Other responsibilities include recruiting, training and motivating the education staff and volunteers. They will plan and implement special events including men's, women's and multigenerational fellowships and ministries. Also included will be the responsibility for planning conferences and retreats, regular meetings with education staff and volunteers, establishing goals and managing the use of facilities and budgets. Your cover letter and resume should be sent by email only to our executive pastor, Frank Norwood ([fnorwood@fbcmatthews.org](mailto:fnorwood@fbcmatthews.org)). Please see our website, [fbcmatthews.org](http://fbcmatthews.org).

Zoar Baptist Church of Shelby, NC, is seeking **PT Worship Leader/Minister of Music**. Blended worship; avg attendance 100-125. Choir, organ/piano, congregational worship tracks. For full job description/details, contact Alex Carroll. Send resume to Zoar Baptist Church, Attn. Alex Carroll, 1740 S. Lafayette Street, Shelby, NC 28152, or [arcarroll92@gmail.com](mailto:arcarroll92@gmail.com).

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

Florence Baptist Church, Forest City, NC, is prayerfully seeking a candidate to serve as **Associate Pastor**. This is a part-time 20-hour per week position. This candidate will assist the pastor in preaching, pastoral care and church administration. This person should be committed to Christ, have a deep love for the church, be creative, energetic and organized. A bachelor's degree and seminary degree are preferred. To view a full resume and requirements: visit [www.florencechurch.net](http://www.florencechurch.net). Email resumes to [crystal@florencechurch.net](mailto:crystal@florencechurch.net).

### Miscellaneous

**3BR2Bth home for rent Masters Weekend or for practice rounds.** Located West Columbia 1 hour from Augusta. Contact Dell Price at (803) 233-8212 for more information.

**For Sale: Chancel furniture and 43 pews of various lengths.** Light finish solid oak with light blue padding. Available for immediate pickup. \$7,000 (negotiable) for entire lot. Contact Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Olin, NC, office between 9 am-1 pm Monday-Thursday 704-876-4025 or email [pastordavid.mtvernon@gmail.com](mailto:pastordavid.mtvernon@gmail.com).

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

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

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

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

### Placing a classified ad in the *Biblical Recorder*

#### Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: [alison@BRnow.org](mailto:alison@BRnow.org).
- Submit the information via the *Recorder's* website at [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org).
- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

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

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



# Church

Continued from page 10

That's what we're supposed to do."

Creitz said there is another story that needs to be told about the girl who received a coat and a woman from North Carolina who spoke to the Chinese girl in her native language.

City Life Church partners with the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association and North Carolina Baptists in the annual Coats for the City ministry. Dudley Shoals Baptist Church in Granite Falls and Sandy Ridge Baptist Church in Hickory are two churches that have engaged in the partnership.

"We were on the sidewalk giving out hats that the ladies at Dudley Shoals made and coats that North Carolina churches gave," Creitz recalled.

The massage parlor's staff arrived later that morning. One of their girls, who is Chinese, "struck up a conversation in Chinese with Debbie Smith," he said. Smith, a member of Dudley Shoals, lived in China for two years and spoke the language. It was the girl's first day on the job, and she didn't know how to do a massage. Creitz said that sounded suspicious, but the volunteers stayed focused on helping her. Smith was invited into the parlor where she showed the girl how to do a massage.



"We offered to help her with English and things like that, but then we never saw her again," Creitz said.

"We would not have known this girl if we did not have the volunteers from North Carolina and the coats. That ministry is what helped us have that first interaction with someone at the massage parlor."

Dudley Shoals and Sandy Ridge helped the Queens church with coat distribution, prayer walking, picking up trash in the neighborhood and serving through the subway outreach: giving away water bottles, fruit snacks, granola bars and gospel materials. "We've had quite a few people visit our church as a

Nathan Creitz and the church he pastors partners with Metropolitan New York Baptist Association and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina for the annual Coats for the City ministry. It was because of that ministry that Creitz discovered sex trafficking going on in the neighborhood around his church. (Contributed photo)

result of that outreach, and some have joined our church from the subway outreach," Creitz added.

"We try to use our partnerships to go as wide as we can in the community. We tell our mission teams, 'You're helping us to meet a lot of people so you help us go 'wide' in the neighborhood. Those of us in the church are able to go 'deep' with the connections that you find. We need both aspects – going wide and deep.'"

Creitz recognizes the value of partnerships with other churches. "I'm grateful for the role North Carolina Baptists have

played because it really takes all of us," he said.

"If it hadn't been for prayer and mission teams and networks, this would not happen. God gets all the glory because not any one of us can."

For more information about Let My People Go, visit [www.lmpgnetwork.org](http://www.lmpgnetwork.org). Coats for the City is hosted in a partnership between the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's Office of Great Commission Partnerships and the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. For information on Coats for the City, contact Zac Lyons at [zlyons@ncbaptist.org](mailto:zlyons@ncbaptist.org) or (919) 459-5536.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Grace Thornton is a freelance writer in Birmingham, Ala., and author of *I Don't Wait Anymore*, a 2016 release from Zondervan. Biblical Recorder staff contributed to this article.) **BR**

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