

Task Force focuses on erasing barriers

By Bob Allen
ABP News

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A task force studying ways to make the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) more effective recommended greater flexibility and cooperation among state and national entities in its initial progress report to the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 22.

Task force chairman Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., said the group will meet at least once more before releasing a final report May 3 to be presented at the SBC annual meeting June 15-16 in Orlando, Fla.

While any structural changes suggested in the report would fall under purview of boards of trustees of various SBC entities, the task force proposed six specific components of a vision for Southern Baptists to champion in the future.

The first calls for a “new and healthy culture” that provides local Southern Baptist churches with a “missional vision” to present the gospel and make disciples in North America and around the globe.

“Our present culture represents First Corinthians 3 much more than First Corinthians 13,” Floyd said. “Envy, strife and division need to become unacceptable. Instead, let this world know us by the depths of our love for Jesus, the gospel and one another.”

The second component calls for the convention’s North American Mission Board (NAMB) to be “reinvented and released” to prioritize church planting in America among under-served people groups.

To do that, Floyd said, Southern Baptists must address “one of the stark realities” of the way the Convention currently functions. Two thirds of Cooperative Program dollars are spent among one third of the population that lives in the Bible Belt, while one third of the unified budget goes to the two thirds of Americans living in states in the West and Northeast with a much smaller Southern Baptist presence.

The task force recommends phasing out over four years cooperative agreements with Baptist state conventions through which NAMB shares the cost of certain missions personnel who are on state convention staffs. Floyd said ending the agreements would give NAMB freedom to budget for a national strategy instead of committing the bulk of its funds to established Baptist state conventions in the South.



CONVERSING — Milton A. Hollifield Jr., left, executive director/treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and GCR Task Force member J.D. Greear, center, pastor of The Summit in Durham, visit with Midwestern Seminary President Phil Roberts following the GCR Task Force presentation Feb. 22.

At the same time, Floyd said, globalization has flattened the world so that people groups engaged by highly trained International Mission Board missionaries are also found on American soil. A third component would allow the IMB to reach “unreached and under-served people groups without regard to any geographic limitations.”

Task force members said the strategy would create “a new synergy” between the North American and International mission boards.

“I think in Southern Baptist life it’s time for all hands on deck,” task force member Robert White told reporters. “If we can’t work together we need to learn how to work together.”

The fourth component recommended by the task force is to move ministry assignments for promotion of the Cooperative Program and stewardship education from the SBC Executive Committee, which assumed them in a denominational restructuring in 1997, to the Baptist state conventions, which were understood to be primarily responsible for promoting and gathering funds for the unified budget when the plan was developed in the 1920s.

A fifth component reaffirms the Cooperative Program as the “central means” for supporting work of the convention, but also proposes a new nomenclature

of “Great Commission Giving” for gifts designated to the Southern Baptist Convention, a state convention or local association instead of through the unified budget.

The final component calls for increasing the International Mission Board’s Cooperative Program allocation in the 2010-2011 budget by one percentage point to 51 percent, a both “symbolic and substantial” change that for the first time in history would mean that more than one half of money collected through the CP goes to international missions.

Viewing distribution of the Cooperative Program as a pie chart, that would require reducing spending to other ministries by 1 percent. The task force said moving assignments for Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship education from the Executive Committee to state conventions should free up at least 1 percent of “facilitating ministries” that can then be reallocated to international missions.

Floyd acknowledged the realignment would blur boundaries delineated in program assignments for various SBC entities developed over the years.

“Either we can sit back and play it safe with lines so clearly drawn you get your hand spanked if you cross over, or we can say: ‘Hey, let’s roll up our sleeves for the gospel. There’s plenty of lost people. Let’s go, and let’s make a difference,’” Floyd said.

Christians have Holy Spirit help to improve health

By Norman Jameson
BR Editor

Because Christians enjoy the indwelling Spirit of God, they have a power to overcome addictions they should be utilizing for health.

Now two Christian doctors say that Christians’ failure to appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome addictions of gluttony and sloth are killing the church. Their concern reached such a level that for the past two years they have been devising a health plan that is now available without cost.

Baptist doctors Ted Chandler and Ray Morrow, and Morrow’s father, Phil Morrow, a retired Baptist pastor and administrator at Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina, have launched the web site www.christianhealthforums.com.

There churches can find tools and steps to improve the physical health of their members, which the founders say will also improve their spiritual health.

Four principles are at the base of improving health says the trio. Phil Morrow, a member of Victory Baptist Church in Thomasville, lost 40 pounds, avoided insulin for his diabetes and

(See Christians Page 7)

LIVE WITH URGENCY
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See story about a North Carolina ministry highlighted during the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Week of Prayer, pages 8-9.

NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS EMPHASIS

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Blend colors

Joyner encourages rethinking ministry for effectiveness

By Norman Jameson
BR Editor

People enamored by things they've built are unwilling to change until it hurts more to stay the same, according to Reggie Joyner, who has become a change agent for churches throughout the country.

Leading an "Orange" conference at Green Street Baptist Church in High Point Feb. 9 for church staffs, primarily youth and children's ministers, Joyner walked them through processes to rethink ministry that is either "red" or "yellow" and blend it into orange.

He said red and yellow represent church and family and each can do only part of a ministry to children and youth.

When you combine colors, you get a third color that opens completely new possibilities.

Instead of church staff implying that they can "fix the spiritual needs" of children and youth if families simply turned the children into the care of staff, ministers need to incorporate family members in ministry to multiply the positive effect.

He suggested carving 10-20 percent of time to work with families of youth and children and to help them address the questions their children will have during the 3,000 hours they're at home and awake each year.

People are proud of what they've built and believe it should "be current and valid a lot longer than it is," Joyner said, encouraging participants to be willing not just to make changes in the way they minister, but to upgrade frequently.

Joyner, one of the six original persons who founded the mega church North Pointe in Atlanta, pulled a 1984 version Macintosh computer off a table to demonstrate computing.

When the audience snickered, he admonished them not to laugh because that machine in its day "started a revolution."

But when Apple's founders saw that Mac computer roll off the assembly line, they didn't slap themselves on the back and say, "We did it. We're done."

He then pulled from a mailing envelope a Mac Book Air, a light, thin, powerful Macintosh that virtually everyone in the audience wished they had, and said there were about 40 computer models between the original Mac and this

one, each meeting the needs of its day, and none being the ultimate computer that would prompt designers to say, "We're done."

Too many churches are stuck in a time warp, Joyner said, because it is "so easy for us to build something and think it should last because we built it."

Church leaders are slow to upgrade their offerings "because change seems too costly," he said.

But churches are "afraid of the wrong thing."

He said churches fear the cost of change when they should fear the cost of not changing.

For example, he said church leadership hesitates to initiate changes for fear of those members who might leave, when they should rather fear for the souls of those they might never reach if they do not change approaches to move from their time warp.

"One hundred years from now the only thing that will matter is a person's relationship to God," Joyner told the 140 who filled a children's worship area at Green Street.

So he encouraged them not to cling too long and too desperately to programs that met a need earlier, and might not meet that need today.

Teamwork

It is essential that church leadership meet regularly together so that every area is on the same page.

Youth ministry should not have a different agenda than children's ministry or benevolent ministry.

If you are not around the same table, you cannot have a comprehensive plan, he said.

Each time staff evaluates what they are doing, it gives them a chance to distinguish between core values and cultural habits in the church.

While we expect international missionaries to study language and culture in the nation where they serve, "We've forgotten how to be missionaries in our own land," Joyner said.

You can't just add new ideas onto what you are already doing.

You might need an entire new system.

For example he said he could not possibly download a modern Photoshop

"One hundred years from now the only thing that will matter is a person's relationship to God."

— Reggie Joyner

BR photo by Norman Jameson



ANIMATED — Reggie Joyner, one of the founding pastors of North Pointe in Atlanta, helped 140 North Carolina Baptist youth and children's ministers figure out how to blend yellow and red to get to orange in ministry.

program onto his old Macintosh computer.

In the same way, "you can't just take off your tie and have a contemporary service," he said.

More teamwork is involved by connecting adults in the church to teens as mentors and disciplers. While churches will never effectively compete

with the entertainments of culture, "culture can never compete with the kinds of relationships you put together with kids," he said.

During a recent meeting with 15 prominent youth leaders, Joyner asked them what they would do if they could do just one thing with their youth.

They all said, "I would do ministry with them."

Leading by example, in relationship

and plugging them into discipleship and service will cement their faith far more than creating another class or activity, he said.

The Orange event was sponsored by the Congregational Health group at the Baptist State Convention.

Group leader Lynn Sasser said the target audience was those who attend the Catalyst event in Atlanta. He has 100 tickets already purchased for the event that typically draws 12,000 from around the country.

To secure preferred seating with one of those tickets contact Brian Upshaw at bupshaw@ncbaptist.org.



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Man killed in roof collapse at Clinton church

By Dianna L. Cagle
BR Assistant Managing Editor

It may be months before investigators determine the cause of roof trusses collapsing Feb. 18 at Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Clinton.

The incident killed one construction worker and put two others in the hospital.

“There’s just a lot of speculation as to what went wrong,” said Tony Rackley, chairman of the church’s board of deacons. “It’s too early to tell. Any time you’re doing a building project and there’s loss of life it’s sad.”

Rackley addressed the church Feb. 21 during the worship service. There was special prayer time for the

two injured men and the family who lost a loved one.

“They’ve given the contractors the green light to get in there and clear the trusses out,” Rackley said Feb. 22 in a phone interview.

The new structure will include a sanctuary, pastor’s study and several rooms that will be designated later. When it is complete it will be connected to the other buildings on the church’s campus. The area that collapsed is where the cathedral ceiling is, Rackley said. The trusses on the flat ceiling part were not damaged, but there was some minor exterior wall damage. The building and planning committee wants to do something permanent to recognize the loss of life at the facility. Rackley said it will most likely be a plaque.

“If I could choose a cause to this I would pick the

wind and move on,” Rackley said, indicating the incident has been tough for all involved. “Your heart goes out to all of them.”

Rackley praised Clifton Halso, the general contractor on the project, for his “50 years of impeccable service. It’s very unfortunate for his company.”

Halso slipped into the church over the weekend and left an envelope at the church. Halso made a donation with a note thanking “the church for everybody being so nice and for understanding,” Rackley said.

Rackley said the goal is to finish building before the church’s 100th anniversary in October.

He’s thankful for all the support. “I know just as soon as it happened I began to get calls from area churches offering” to help, he said.

Raleigh church recovers stolen equipment

By Dianna L. Cagle
BR Assistant Managing Editor

It’s back to business as usual at Korean First Baptist Church on Ray Road in Raleigh.

The Raleigh Police Department arrested four people Feb. 8, about a week after a break-in at the end of January, during a snowstorm weekend. Two of the people arrested were juveniles.

“They were able to recover a lot of stolen property,” said Jerry Miller, the church’s English congregation pastor.

Thieves took two acoustic guitars, two electric guitars, a set of drums, a keyboard, an amplifier, instrument carrying cases and a soundboard. “Most of that was recovered,” he said.

A *Raleigh News & Observer* article said the items stolen were valued at \$11,000.

In an effort to conceal their crime, the suspects poured hand sanitizer on the carpet and set it on fire.

In the *N&O* story Miller said fire damage was “minimal.” Three pews had burn marks. Thieves entered the building by shattering two sliding glass doors at the rear of the sanctuary.

A church van was vandalized in the parking lot on Jan. 30.

Police are not sure if there was a connection.

Laura Hourigan, police spokeswoman, said the damage was contained in the sanctuary.

She said the police distributed flyers

in the community including local pawnshops to be on the lookout for the stolen equipment.

Hourigan said a concerned citizen shared some possible suspect information, and a video at one of the pawnshops clearly showed the suspects selling the items.

Miller praised the community, churches, Raleigh Baptist Association and the Raleigh Police Department for their support after the robbery.

A portable soundboard was used at the following week’s service, and Miller said they were happy to have the equipment back for the next service.

A week after the arrests Miller said the church was asked to pray for the people arrested.

“Long-term we’re concerned about people’s lives,” Miller said. “We’ve seen God’s hand at work in this situation. We’re praying for a powerful change and impact in these teens lives ... a powerful wakeup call to come to know Jesus.”

This is not the first incident at the church. Miller said last summer someone stole freon out of the church’s air conditioning unit.

(EDITOR’S NOTE — *The Biblical Recorder* is working on an upcoming package about church security. What are some ways your church secures its people and possessions? What works? What doesn’t? Contact Dianna Cagle at dianna@biblicalrecorder.org or 919-847-2127.)

Fire marshal offers advice to churches to prevent fires

By Dianna L. Cagle
BR Assistant Managing Editor

A Greensboro fire official called a fire at Lindley Park Baptist Church Jan. 25 accidental after early police and media reports said it was possibly arson.

“It never was considered arson, said David Douglas, assistant chief with the Greensboro Fire Department.

“We never considered the fire — any part of it — to be intentionally set.”

Douglas said an outlet did not have a cover plate.

The department believes there was an electrical arc from the outlet to items in a storage room in the basement where the fire started.

Douglas said original reports of \$15,000 in damage were “a conservative estimate.”

He said there was “considerable smoke damage throughout the building.”

Instead, damage proved closer to \$100,000 in property loss and \$500,000 loss on contents.

Tips for churches

Douglas, who is fire marshal for Greensboro, said there are some simple things churches can do to cut down on the risk of fire, or at least on the amount of damage done if a fire occurs.

Each year churches are inspected by a local fire official to determine any code violations and make recommendations.

“Church fires are so infrequent,” he said.

“Generally there are many causes, but really three main causes — Men, women and children.”

A problem with churches is the periodic occupation.

Many churches have services Sunday and Wednesday but have sporadic events during the rest of the week.

Usually only the church leaders, mostly the pastor, know what the fire report said, and recommendations don’t usually get passed along.

Someone might think it’s harmless to leave a door open.

- Churches should close doors.

“Throw away door stops and keep the door closed,” Douglas said.

“The problem with churches is that there seems to be a tremendous amount of complacency about doors.

“They feel free to prop those open. They are put there for a reason.

“We call them containment areas.”

With doors closed, the fire damage stays “in as confined an area as possible.”

In the case of Lindley Park, Douglas said all the doors in the basement were open, including the storage room where the fire started.

He said closing the doors wouldn’t have prevented the fire in this instance, but it would have limited the damage.

- Keep receptacles covered.

Douglas said people don’t think leaving receptacles uncovered is a problem, but there is electricity in those wires. Covering the receptacle cuts down on the arcing problem he believes happened at Lindley Park.

- Be vigilant in housekeeping.

“Churches are like packrats,” he said.

“They don’t want to throw anything away because they don’t know when they’ll need it.

“Keep what you need; throw the rest away.”

Another option is donating to other churches or the local association.

If your church did the most recent Vacation Bible School last year, why are you still hanging on to all the decorations and materials?

Another church, that might not have much money, could recycle the materials in their community.

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Obituaries

JOHN HARVEY CLARK, 85, of North Wilkesboro died Jan. 29 at the Kate B. Reynolds Hospice Home in Winston-Salem.

Called to ministry at age 14, he attended Moody Bible Institute. He led churches in the Piedmont and Western North Carolina: Baptist Home Baptist Church, Mountain Valley; and Union Baptist Church. After his retirement in 1988, he served five Wilkes County churches as supply pastor.

He was pastor emeritus at Diamond Hill Baptist Church, Statesville. During his ministry, Clark preached 240 revivals including 47 in Wilkes County. He served as chairman of area wide evangelistic crusades in High Point, Statesville and Wilkes County. He was on the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and on the Board of Ministers at Campbell University. He also was chairman of evangelism in five N.C. Baptist associations.

He is survived by one daughter, Mary Ruth Sebastian of North Wilkesboro; two sons, David Clark of Greensboro and Phillip Clark of Charlotte; one sister, Geraldine Beshears of Purlear; two brothers, Albert Clark of St. Albans, W. Va., and Ralph Clark of Hickory; and four grandchildren.

Memorials to Baptist Home Baptist Church, 2367 Sparta Road, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659 or to the Kate B. Reynolds Hospice Home, 101 Hospice Lane, Winston-Salem, NC 27103.

JOHN WILLIAM EDDINS JR., 84, of Spring Arbor in Kill Devil Hills died Feb. 6.

He was part of the U.S. Naval Air Corps during World War II and in the Army Reserves afterwards. A graduate of Auburn and Samford universities as well as Southern Seminary, Eddins was a retired professor of theology, Southeastern Seminary (1957-93). He was also a visiting professor of theology at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond. He was a visiting scholar at Duke University, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Eddins served as a student pastor and interim pastor in 35 churches on 46 occasions.

He is survived by daughters: Carolyn L. Eddins, of Maui, Hawaii; Elizabeth Eddins Tillett of Kitty Hawk; and Laura Eddins Kerber of Indio, Calif.; sons: John W. Eddins III of Maui, Hawaii; David A. Eddins of Rochester, N.Y.; and Bryan W. Eddins of Arlington, Va.; sisters: Annie Laurie Thrash, Barbara Maude Wenner, Faye Hope Glover of Pensacola, Fla., Jeanie Ruth Morris of Helena, Ala.; and eight grandchildren.

Memorials to "The John William Eddins Jr. Faculty Endowment Fund," Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, and to The Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe (Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, 3400 Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23227).

GEORGE V. MCCOTTER, 92, died Feb. 14 in Lillington.

A member of Lillington Baptist Church and former member of New Bern Baptist Church, he was the chairman of board of trustees for Meredith College, served on a number of committees for the Southern Baptist Convention, and was director of development for Campbell University.

Around the state

He is survived by daughters Victoria Godwin of New Mexico, Ginger Salmon, and Fay Lewis of Lillington, and 10 grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Former BSC executive director Roy Smith said McCotter cast a long shadow in North Carolina Baptist life. He co-chaired with Henderson Belk a fund-raising effort to update Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute and supported Meredith College.

"George served his church, denomination and community with unusual vigor throughout his life," Smith said.

Memorials to The McCotter First Family Scholarship Fund at Meredith College, Raleigh; Lillington Baptist Church Building Fund, Lillington; E. Carlton Powell Hospice of Lillington.

EARL W. HOWARD died Feb. 15.

A veteran of World War II, he led several churches in North Carolina: Layton's Chapel Baptist Church, Bunnlevel; Baptist Center, Clayton; First Baptist, Havelock; Mount Zion Baptist, Oxford; Swift Creek Baptist, Raleigh; and Kennebec Baptist, Angier, where he retired.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years Juanita Callihan Howard; children Susan Bettini of Gibsonville; Cindy Slaughter of Mount Olive; Bill Howard of Columbia, S.C.; Tim Howard and Amy Hovermale, both of Angier; nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Memorials to Alzheimer's research, Hospice organizations, or another charity.



Staff changes

MICHAEL BRYAN HALL has been called as pastor of First Baptist Church, Thomasville. He was pastor of Juniper Springs Baptist Church, Sanford.

Pineview Baptist Church, Goldsboro, has called **JIM TURBYFILL** as pastor.

KEITH THIELKE has been called as senior pastor of Cherryfield Baptist Church, Brevard. This is his first pastorate. He was missions minister at First Baptist Church, Hendersonville.

Honey Hill Baptist Church, Hallsboro, has called **TONY WARD** as pastor. He was pastor at Evergreen Baptist Church, Evergreen.

CHRIS HARDEE has been called as pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, Whiteville.

Calvary Baptist Church, McLeansville, has called **JEREMY COOPER** as pastor. He was associate pastor at Lee Park Baptist Church, Monroe.

DOUG CLARK has been called as pastor of Reedy Fork Baptist Church, Browns Summit.

Elizabethtown Baptist Church, Elizabethtown, has called **CHRIS CARROLL** as senior pastor. He was pastor of Castalia Baptist Church, Castalia.

JENNY ALYN SCOTT has been called as youth director for First Baptist Church, Dobson.

Holly Springs Baptist Church, Mount Airy, has called **WAYBURN MOSLEY** as pastor. This is his first pastorate.

MATTHEW THOMAS has been called as pastor at Ranlo Baptist Church, Gastonia. He was minister of youth at Mountain Creek Baptist Church, Rutherfordton.

Tuckasee Baptist Church, Mount Holly, has called **JASON MARLOWE** as pastor. He was youth pastor there.

ROBERT MCGRAW has been called as pastor of Barlow Vista Baptist Church, Hampstead. He was senior pastor of Vansant Baptist Church, Vansant Va.

Church News



Contributed photo

➤ **First Baptist Church, Clinton**, has sent a medical mission team to Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. Above, women roll bandages for the volunteer team members to use. FBC worked with members of New Bethel Baptist Church, Clinton, and First United Methodist Church. The group was scheduled to be in Haiti Feb. 20-27. FBC also collected sundresses (made by women of the church), boys and girls underwear and other items.

➤ **Randolph Baptist Association** celebrated its 75th anniversary Jan. 24 at Oakhurst Baptist Church, Asheboro. A joint choir of 50 people sang, and Judson Rotan, retired director of missions, spoke.



Opportunity Corner

Caraway seeks volunteers

Caraway Conference Center and Camp wants volunteer for its Caraway-Corp.

There are two ways to join: long term or day timers.

• **Long term** — Caraway is looking for volunteers for up to three months (March-May, June-August, and September-November). Longer stays can be accommodated. Volunteers must provide their own housing; Caraway has four full RV hook-ups with water, septic and power. There is also a bathhouse and laundry service on site.

Some meals will be provided. Volunteers would help in maintenance and food service primarily and other opportunities as they arise.

• **Day Timers** — A group or an individual could commit to volunteering one day a week for a three-month time period. Lunch will be provided each workday. Volunteers would help in maintenance and food service primarily and other opportunities as they arise.

Volunteers get a T-shirt. Contact Jimmy Huffman (336) 629-2374 or jhuffman@caraway.org.

BSC one-day event focuses on church health

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina plans several one-day events in 2010 to help churches be healthy.

The Church Health Institutes are designed to promote healthy and fruitful churches.

Cost is \$20 per person, which includes program, resources, refreshments and lunch.

• **March 16** — Scotts Hill Baptist Church, Wilmington

• **April 27** — Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Boone

• **May 4** — Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Cary

• **June 1** — Pitts Baptist Church, Concord

• **September 9** — Pleasant Garden Baptist Church, Greensboro

• **October 19** — Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute, Hendersonville

Contact Sheryl Shankles at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5651.

Baptist Men missions conference offers training

"Living Stones," the North Carolina Baptist Missions Conference, is slated for April 9-10 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte.

Speakers include: Terry Rae, founder and director of Africa for Christ; Mark Lowry, comedian and singer; Pastor Jonas, Gypsy church in Ukraine; and Biju Thomas, from India. Shane & Shane are musical guests. Breakout sessions provide information on current mission efforts around the globe as well as training on current ministry needs. Cost is \$10 per person (includes lunch on Saturday).

Contact Lynn Tharrington at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5599, or ltharrington@ncbaptist.org.

WMU-NC calls on women

Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) plans its Missions Extravaganza April 16-18 at Ridgecrest Conference Center.

(See Opportunity Corner Page 6)

What really is a Great Commission church?

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

A well-known North Carolina Baptist pastor chokes up when he talks about his “hard heart” toward missions in his seminary days.

It wasn’t until he worked with the International Mission Board (IMB) that God began to soften Al Gilbert’s heart. The pastor now leads Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, a church that gives generously to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, and is one of three North Carolina members of the Great Commission Task Force, which presented its proposal to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Feb. 22.

In a blog post at pray4gcr.com dated August 2009, Gilbert writes this about his seminary days: “Knowing I was called to pastor, I avoided ‘Missions Chapel.’ My call was to the church not ‘missions.’”

A rather strange statement coming from the pastor of a church that supports missionaries serving locally and overseas, and year after year sends church members on mission trips across the globe.

Gilbert goes on to say in the post that “after years of serving as a pastor, God began to deal with my heart.” He spent five years as special assistant to IMB’s president, visiting and encouraging missionaries, and challenging churches to take missions seriously. Gilbert traveled to unreached areas of the world, meeting missionaries and beginning to see people as they saw people — lost without the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During a recent interview Gilbert gets choked up at times as he talks about these experiences. But the emo-



BSC photo

SOFTENING — Al Gilbert says “The Great Commission really is the mission of God, to bring worshippers to Himself.”

tion is not for show. Gilbert seems acutely aware of the importance of what he is talking about. Gilbert came to Calvary Baptist Church in 2002. Ever since the Task Force was appointed last summer that phrase — the Great Commission — has been used. A lot. So much so that the temptation may become to start unintentionally using it as some type of passing jargon that is said without really understanding its meaning, or perhaps forgetting the weight of what is being said.

What does it mean to be a Great Commission church? What does it mean to be a church devoted to the Great Commission? Gilbert described a Great Commission church this way: “The

Great Commission really is the mission of God, to bring worshippers to Himself. We see that pattern from the very beginning when He blessed Abraham and said through him all people will be blessed.” Gilbert said a Great Commission church understands the mission of God and its global implications.

Churches seeking to be obedient to the Great Commission must make discipleship a priority, and look for strategies to make disciples in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth, as taught in Acts 1:8.

Fulfilling the Great Commission requires churches to maintain a “multiplying mindset.”

“It’s not how many our church can seat but how many we can send,” Gilbert said. From the outset of the interview Gilbert made it clear that Calvary is on the road to becoming a Great Commission church; in no way does the church have it all figured out, right now. Yet, Gilbert is encouraged as the church continues to grow in its understanding of the mission of God and its desire to be part of that mission.

When he began as a pastor years ago Gilbert had a lot to learn about what it means to be a Great Commission church and what it means to be a church that cares about missions, which he described as essentially the mission of the church, or bringing worshippers to God.

“Missions has to take on an intentionality of stretching, moving, crossing a barrier and taking the gospel where it is not,” he said.

Gilbert had to get over a “false dichotomy” of being a local pastor and being on a global mission — the two can in fact co-exist.

As a trustee of the Foreign Mission Board for eight years, his wife told him story after story of God at work around the world.

“I think she was praying that God would soften my heart and make me open to that,” Gilbert said. “Going on a mission trip did a lot for me in this regard. When I was confronted with poverty like I had never been before I was faced with the reality that God loved those little boys and girls as much as He loved my own. It broke my heart and showed my arrogance.”

Locally, Calvary takes the waffle approach in determining where and how to minister. The waffle/pancake

analogy, one Gilbert picked up from the IMB, goes like this: pour syrup on a pancake and it moves freely and runs over the entire surface. Pour syrup on a waffle and some of the pockets won’t get it.

“As leaders trying to reach the neighborhoods in our town we need to do a waffle analysis. Try to figure out where those pockets of lostness are,” Gilbert said. Churches must consider where in their community the gospel is present and where it is not, what hinders the gospel in that area and what the church can do to help.

Calvary often partners with other local churches in their effort to take the gospel throughout Winston-Salem and surrounding areas.

They are intentional about reaching out to internationals and helping meet practical needs. Calvary includes language congregations, such as Hispanic and Vietnamese. Calvary does not try to meet all the needs in Winston-Salem, as that would be impossible and would most likely duplicate ministry efforts of other local churches. They focus much of their outreach on two communities and seek to pour into the lives of those people.

Pastors must think like missionaries and in turn must help the church think like a missionary.

“A missionary thinks with a waffle model in mind. We should be trying to work ourselves out of a job. We want to plant reproducing churches that become missionaries themselves,” Gilbert said. “In the local church we do this by finding where the gospel is not. We pastors tend to fall into the trap of thinking we are measured by how many people we gather in our particular location, rather than how many people actually know and are being transformed by the gospel. So I tell pastors they may actually have to get smaller to be more successful because we are working toward giving people away for the sake of the gospel.”

Calvary keeps missionaries from their church in front of the church. They pray for them, help meet needs when they can and allow them to share about their ministry with the church as often as possible. Churches must stay connected with the missionaries being called and sent out of the church.

“When a pastor feels that the church has transferred the job of witnessing to him, he knows that there is a sickness in his church. He knows he is not to be the only one sharing his faith; he knows his job is to equip them so that they can share their faith,” Gilbert said. “We have made the same mistake by placing the responsibility to reach the world on the missionary and then failed to link our lives with theirs. We are losing the component of tasting and feeling the responsibility. We have to own the task along with them.”

Great Commission churches are churches with a passion to see people come to faith in Jesus Christ at home and around the world. They are churches not content to maintain the status quo because that’s what is most comfortable. Gilbert urged pastors not to get bogged down with church member expectations and measuring themselves by the expectation of others.

“Get on your face before God,” he said. “Ask Him to help you balance the needs your church has with the direction that the church needs to begin to move in, in order to become a Great Commission church.”

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Most detainees home from Haiti; two still in jail waiting for trial

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP) — As enthusiastic friends and family in the United States welcomed home eight missions volunteers jailed in Haiti since Jan. 29, two other members of their team appeared Feb. 18 before a judge in Haiti.

Laura Silsby and Charisa Coulter had to remain behind because Judge Bernard Saint-Vil wanted to question them about a trip the pair made to a Haitian orphanage in December.

He also wants to know whether they knew Jorge Puella, a fugitive from justice in El Salvador, before he presented himself to the jailed Americans as a lawyer willing to help them for free.

Their appearance before the judge was shortened, however, because a court-appointed translator was out due to illness, CNN reported.

Silsby said she told the judge it was not true she had misled the other missionaries in her group and said the December visit to the orphanage was to bring food, clothes and toys to the children.

As she left the proceedings, Silsby told reporters, "We're trusting God for all truth to be revealed and believing that God will reveal the truth through the Haitian justice system. They are seeking the truth."

In Boise, Idaho, Corinna Lankford, Nicole Lankford and Carla Thompson were welcomed by a crowd that greeted them with hymns and cheers, according to news reports.

"Our God is an awesome God, and He stood with us every second we were there," Thompson said, according to the *Idaho Statesman*. "I want you to continue to pray for Laura and Charisa's release. He's going to bring them home, too."

The plane carrying the team members to Boise was delayed an hour, until after midnight.

While they waited, the crowd sang "Amazing Grace" and "How Great Thou Art" in the airport lobby, the *Statesman* said.

Four other team members were greeted with similar enthusiasm Feb. 18 when they arrived at the airport in Kansas City, Mo.

One of the team members, Drew Culberth, hoisted his youngest child onto his shoulders while his wife, Marta, and their three other children crowded close, The Associated Press (AP) reported.

The eighth team member, Jim Allen, was cheered as he entered the civic center in Amarillo, Texas, where he was surrounded by about 20 relatives and his wife.

"I want to thank the tremendous

amount of people who were involved" in getting him released, Allen told reporters, his voice cracking with emotion.

The crowd erupted in applause when he added, "I want to thank my God for protecting me."

Allen said, "The reason I went was for the relief effort — to help these people — and they still need your help."

In a statement posted on his church's web site, Allen said he hoped the release of the eight team members "will allow everyone to focus again on the dire conditions that remain in Haiti. People are still suffering and lack basic necessities. Please find it in your hearts, as I did in mine, to find ways to give to those in need. For those whose cases have not been resolved, we will continue to pray for their safe return."

Despite Allen's ordeal, members of his congregation, Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo, plan ongoing efforts to help. Before the quake, a team was scheduled to work on an orphanage and in an AIDS hospital.

That work will go on, Paramount associate pastor Lance Herrington said.

Thompson, Nicole and Corinna Lankford, Silsby and Coulter are members of Central Valley Baptist Church in Meridian, Idaho.

Three freed detainees are from East-side Baptist Church in Twin Falls, Idaho: pastor Paul Thompson, his son Silas and church member Steve McMullen. Allen is a member of Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas. Culberth is an assistant youth pastor at Bethel Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan. Bethel Baptist is the only church not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

An AP report Feb. 22 said none of 33 children being rescued were orphans.

Parents in Callabas, a mountain town outside Port-au-Prince, said desperation and blind faith led them to hand over 20 children to the Americans.

The 13 children in Citron were also confirmed to have living relatives.

The AP report said parents relinquished their children to the missionaries because they were promised that they would be kept safe across the border in a newly established orphanage in the Dominican Republic.

These statements contradict Silsby's earlier announcement that all of the children were either orphans or were relinquished to the Americans by distant relatives.

Silsby and Coulter were scheduled to be in court Feb. 23, after press deadline.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Check www.biblicalrecorder.org for the latest from Haiti.)

Goodwill gives \$100,000 for Haiti

Goodwill Industries of North Carolina presented a check for \$100,000 to North Carolina Baptist Men recently to assist with relief work surrounding the disaster in Haiti.

Dennis McLain, president of the Goodwill Community Foundation and Goodwill Industries of Eastern North Carolina says their Board voted to give the contribution to N.C. Baptists because of the way the money will be used.

"You have a presence there and that's critical," he said.

Richard Brunson, executive director

of North Carolina Baptist Men (NCBM) expressed gratitude for the sizable donation and said it would make a "huge difference."

"We're spending money now on medical teams and supplies. When we get to this next phase it will go toward things like building materials. We're going to send a lot of construction teams. We're purchasing block-making machines so we can make blocks to build homes and churches that were destroyed by the earthquake."

Contact www.ncmissions.org or visit www.biblicalrecorder.org for updates.



Opportunity Corner

(Continued from Page 4)

Sharon Decker will be the main speaker, and Kyle Matthews will serve as worship leader. There will be a Friday evening meeting for professional women. Sessions include meetings with missionaries and training for various ministries. Cost varies.

Contact WMU-NC at (866) 210-8602 or info@wmunc.org.

Church librarians 'Take Charge, Take Heart'

The Church Library Ministries 2010 Workshop "Take Charge, Take Heart" is set April 23-25 at Fort Caswell on Oak Island.

The event will feature speaker and worship leader Gwen Smith.

Several sessions will be offered including care and repair, classification and cataloging, promotion ideas, processing books and other media, blogging, space and design, and library software Concourse and PC card catalog. Cost varies. Visit www.churchlibraryministries.org.

Contact Patti Cardwell at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5635, or pcardwell@ncbaptist.org.



Send news about your church

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to print significant news from the churches.

Accuracy and timeliness are enhanced if you send the information to the *Biblical Recorder* as soon as it is available. Please make sure to either e-mail digital photos or send prints (photos printed on paper will not be accepted). Church staff changes, obituaries of pastors and state Baptist leaders, announcements of upcoming events (with statewide interest) all will be considered. Send photos of your mission projects or trips, note burnings, etc., as well.

For e-mail submissions, send announcements and digital pictures as an attachment to dianna@biblicalrecorder.org. Or, send paper copy to *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 18808, Raleigh, NC 27619.



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Christians have Holy Spirit help to improve health

(Continued from Page 1)

came off other medicines based on the plan. He is both testimony and advocate.

Those who would “dare to be a healthy Christian” will not smoke; will maintain a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or less; will exercise 150 minutes per week and will eat five servings of fruits or vegetables daily.

“If the Apostle Paul was preaching today his message would not be about America’s sexual sin as much as our obesity,” said Ray Morrow, a member of First Baptist Church, Hildebran.

The obesity epidemic in children parallels that in adults, with the percentage of children who are obese rising from 4 percent in 1974 to 30 percent today.

“As Christians we are called to serve,” Ray Morrow said.

“We can’t serve if our knees give out, we can’t drive to preach, etc. How do you serve in this world?”

“We serve not through mental telepathy but with our physical bodies. When we’re called, are we going to be physically able to go?”

Spiritual strength

While the visible manifestation of discipline is physical, the Morrows and Chandler emphasize the spiritual nature of the battle.

The Holy Spirit helps people overcome all kinds of addictions, they say, and the addiction to food and laziness should be no different.

It is not uncommon for Christians to be urged to appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit to break addictions such as alcohol or drugs, but the same power is not considered for strength to put down the donuts or refuse the fries.

As doctors, Chandler and Ray Morrow were constantly approached by people for help in changing habits they ultimately were unwilling to change. Chandler, a member of Rich Fork Baptist Church in Thomasville, introduced The Reduce Diet, as an initial step and it worked well with Christians.

When Morrow introduced it in his clinic, it “failed miserably,” he said because the spiritual element was missing.

About the time the doctors were wrestling with persistent health problems of patients, studies came out showing Americans’ poor health habits and that churchmen — particularly Baptists — were the worst offenders.

“This really touched us,” Ray Morrow said, “that this is something going on that is killing America and the church is leading the way.”

Over the past two years, a dozen studies have confirmed the beneficial effects of following the four principles for health. In the same time, it seems the church has become a marketing haven for alternative medicines, magic diets and supplements that have no value.

It is a spiritual problem, they say, a problem of lust for food.

It’s a prob-



BR photos by Norman Jameson

HELPING — Ray Morrow, an internist at Baptist Medical Center, along with his father, Phil Morrow, inset left, and Ted Chandler, inset right, have created an online trove of information, recipes, processes and surveys that can help church members move to healthy living and longer ministries.

“We cannot eat and live lives that are destructive to ourselves and others around us and really take in the power of the resurrected Jesus.”
— Ray Morrow

Stock.xchng photo by Jos van Galen

lem too great to overcome “without the power of Christ.”

“Of all people in America the Church has the power to overcome the self-destructive nature of our nation,” said Ray Morrow, 42.

The web site includes positive and encouraging sermons by Phil Morrow, age 73, access to books and eating plans by Chandler.

It also includes a form that churches can use to survey their health habits. Chandler said those surveys will be evaluated to help a church see where its members stand and to make specific recommendations.

Diabetes often is twice as high in church members as in the general public, a finding Chandler said is “shocking.”

Also scary is that people under age 50 are generally in worse shape than those over 50.

Chandler, who practiced in Hickory for 20 years before joining the faculty at Bowman Gray Baptist Medical Center, said younger people believe a pill will fix any health problem they encounter.

Chandler and the Morrows have presented this issue in person to 10-12 churches and would be glad to address more.

But they designed the web site to multiply their effect because the need is so great and immediate.

Chandler, who was one of Ray Morrow’s medical school professors, calls it a “modern plague.”

But the cure, he said, is free and simple: it is the rules of healthy living.

Ray Morrow is not advocating that churches become health clubs. He said the work of the church is to do the work of Jesus.

But he was finding that “people spent

Cookbook promotes health, family time

Growing up at Mills Home in Thomasville 1934-45, the original Baptist Children’s Homes campus, Ted Chandler remembers hours in the kitchen as wonderful times.

To encourage both healthy eating and family communications Chandler wrote a family cook book called *Resurrection Kitchen*. While the 66 recipes have a weight loss component, a significant feature is that they can all be prepared in 30 minutes, and the book is designed to involve both a child and an adult in the preparation.

“A child can call out to mom what the next step is,” Chandler said.

He wants *Resurrection Kitchen* to open the dialog about food within a family, and to create togetherness in the kitchen.

“It was at the table, breaking bread, that the disciples recognized the resurrected Christ,” (Luke 24:30-31) said Chandler, emphasizing the central role of food and community meals.

Chandler wrote about his years in “the orphanage” in *Tough Mercy*, available through BCH.

more time in the doctor’s office than on the mission field; and spent more money on medicine than on missions.”

“If you are doing things that are killing you, what does that say about your perspective of the resurrected Jesus?” Ray Morrow asked.

“We cannot eat and live lives that are destructive to ourselves and others around us and really take in the power of the resurrected Jesus.”

According to surveys, only four percent of church members observe the four health principles. If that number could be raised to 50 percent Ray Morrow said, “The improvement in health by the entire nation would be so dramatic — the benefits would be overwhelming — there would no longer be a health care crisis in our nation. And through that the church would become the health leader in the nation, leading the nation down this path as it has led in so many other areas.”

Stock.xchng photo illustration by ninja dave



Four simple principles to dramatically improve health

Baptist doctors Ted Chandler and Ray Morrow, and Morrow’s father, Phil Morrow, a retired Baptist pastor and administrator at Baptist Children’s Homes have put together a site (www.christianhealthforums.com) that gives four principles to improving health and processes to engage church members:

- Do not smoke.
- Maintain a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or less.
- Exercise 150 minutes per week.
- Eat five servings of fruits or vegetables daily.

Stock.xchng photo by gabriel77



Appalachian Trail Servants

Husband-wife team base ministry in N.C., share Christ

By Adam Miller and Mickey Noah
Baptist Press

To understand a person, walk a mile in his shoes. But if that person is an Appalachian Trail thru-hiker, you'll have to walk several hundred miles.

"It's not until about mile 500 that they start to listen," says North American Mission Board (NAMB) Mission Service Corps (MSC) missionary Suzy Miles. "Before that, they're superheroes."

MSC missionaries Craig and Suzy Miles started Appalachian Trail Servants (AT Servants, www.trailministry.org) six years ago so they could represent Christ through service, evangelism and discipleship to reach the longtrail hiking community trekking the 2,175-mile Appalachian Trail (AT).

The couple has hiked about 1,000 miles of the trail themselves, and visited most of its length to conduct ministry training to churches near trailheads and to minister to hikers through acts of kindness.

The couple is part of the more than 5,300 missionaries in the United States, Canada and their territories supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO). They are among the NAMB missionaries featured as part of the annual Week of Prayer (WOP), March 7-14, 2010. This year's theme is "Live with Urgency: Share God's Transforming Power." The 2010 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering's goal is \$70 million.

As MSC missionaries, the Mileses must raise their own support among family, friends and related churches.

Although they are self-funded, they also receive additional support — such as training, administrative support and field ministry assistance — from the AAEO.



GOING THE DISTANCE — Conceived in 1921 and completed in 1937, the Appalachian Trail passes through 14 states between Springer Mountain in north Georgia and Mount Katahdin in central Maine. More than four million people hike some part of the trail each year; 2,000 "thru-hikers" attempt to go the entire distance.

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The Appalachian Trail is a marked, yard-wide footpath winding through the Appalachian Mountains from Springer Mountain in north Georgia to Mount Katahdin in central Maine. Conceived in 1921 and completed in 1937, it passes through 14 states.

More than four million people hike some part of the trail each year, and another 2,000 "thru-hikers" attempt to go the entire distance.

Suzy grew up in Dahlgene, Ga., with a family and a father who took hikers in, fed them and shared with them the truth about Christ.

A native of Stone Mountain, Ga., Craig had already earned a degree in economics at the University of Georgia and semi-nary master's degrees when he met Suzy. Suzy had been the hiker in her family and shortly after, the couple and her family began hiking almost every weekend in the North Georgia Mountains.

At the time he met Suzy, Miles was working in information technology for a regional bank but believed he had a higher calling.

One morning on the way to work, he stopped by his Baptist church and prayed a simple prayer: "Lord, how can you use our time and talents for your glory?" God was about to answer Craig's prayer.

"Right after I prayed that prayer, I spotted a missionary magazine on a table next to me," Miles said.

"On the cover was a story about extreme hiking in China. It just clicked in my head that we needed to start a ministry on the Appalachian Trail. Suzy and I were seeing hundreds of hikers pass over the roads and trails and through the woods of north Georgia, but we knew their spiritual needs were not being met."

Miles and Suzy married and now six years later, their home and ministry are based in Franklin, N.C., only a short drive from a major Appalachian Trail trailhead.

With two infant children and an expanding ministry, they continue to serve hikers but are beginning to focus their attention on training churches and leaders who have



Photos by John Swain

TALKING — Craig, left, and Suzy Miles, founders of Appalachian Trail Servants, and (WOP) missionaries for the North American Mission Board, minister to a hiker somewhere on the trail. The Miles founded Appalachian Trail Servants, a ministry based in Franklin, Tenn., who want to reach hikers. Check www.biblicalrecorder.org during the WOP for stories.

a heart for hikers who visit the area.

Taking on new name

Hikers are a subculture, Miles said, and most of them use trail names rather than their own.

The Mileses are no different.

Craig's trail name is "Clay," taken from Romans 9:21, which describes God as the potter molding the clay. Suzy's is "Branch," which comes from John 15:5 where Jesus refers to Himself as the vine and believers as branches.

Whether simply hiking on a crisp autumn weekend or thru-hiking the entire Appalachian Trail, the sport is not for the faint-of-heart.

Backpacks containing tents, sleeping bags, food, clothes, first-aid and water purification equipment can weigh 35 lbs. or more.

In addition to the obvious physical and mental challenges, other hazards include severe weather, Lyme disease, steep grades, limited water and poison ivy.

"Thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail takes a tremendous commitment of time and resources," Miles said.

"And the hardest part is not the physical aspect but the mental. Within the first 30 miles, 20 percent drop out.

"By North Carolina, 50 percent have dropped out. By West Virginia, 75 percent have quit.

"Only 15 percent of those who start in Georgia make it to the peak of Mount Katahdin in Maine."

To reach these hearty souls, the Mileses have focused their efforts on training churches and trail chaplains — a select position with AT Servants that requires a mature walk with Christ, a missionary mindset and the ability to walk thousands of miles under often heavy loads.

"We receive dozens of applications every year, but only one or two meet the criteria," Craig said.

Trail chaplains, which have the greatest direct impact on hikers, trudge the 2,175 miles with every ounce of gear any other hiker would carry and with a goal of en-

joying the journey and reaching the end.

But chaplains sit around shelters and campfires with the purpose of representing Christ, answering hard questions from thoughtful, hurting people and walking alongside those same people for days, weeks and months.

In 2005, recent college graduate Jonathan Carter finished his stint as a trail chaplain.

In October 2009, Joel and Cortney Leachman completed their journey. Both of these projects created an entrance into very difficult seasons of people's lives, and resulted in several hikers receiving Christ.

The Mileses believe God gives Christians divine appointments, and they should expect them and take advantage of them.

"We pray for and expect a daily divine appointment during which we might be able to share our testimonies, answer difficult theological questions, provide counsel or share the gospel," Craig said, recounting his and Suzy's experience on the trail.

He recalled a sudden evening thunder-

Macon Assn. le

Several churches in Macon Baptist Association serve thru-hikers with Appalachian Trail Servants.

"Many of the hikers are in transition and are looking for something," said Jeff King, associational missionary. "We want to show the love of Christ to them through acts of kindness."

With around 50 miles of the Appalachian Trail across Macon County, King said volunteers set up at two or three trailheads.

"We will have chairs, drinks, food, batteries, toilet paper, etc.," he said. "We share with them who we are and try to plant a seed of Christ's love in their life."

King pointed out that Christians serve hikers all along the Trail.

When hikers reach Macon County they usually are two to three weeks into their journey. On average it takes about six months to finish the Appalachian Trail.



Photo by Erik Stenbakken

Mission Service Corps and Week of Prayer
hike along the 2,175-mile-long Appalachian
Trail. They provide training to churches near the trail
and videos featuring missionaries.

storm that drove him, Suzy and a group of fellow hikers into the closest trail shelter for protection against a cold, stinging rain.

"Since the next shelter was 10 miles away and none of us wanted to brave the cold rain to get there, we stopped and shared the same shelter for the night. This gave us an opportunity to strike up some spiritual conversation," he said. "This was a divine appointment."

Still on the lookout for divine appointments, Craig and Suzy cultivate the soil of the hiker community with a sense of urgency for those churches and individuals with a heart for hikers.

"We have an amazing opportunity," says Suzy. "If we can represent Christ to someone during a critical few months on the trail, we can see Christ change them for a lifetime."

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Miller and Noah are writers for the North American Mission Board. The Biblical Recorder's web site will have missionary stories and videos daily during the WOP.)

ends hand, heart

"We are involved in the beginning of the harvest process for these hikers," King said.

Working with Craig and Suzy Miles has enabled the association's participants to help this underserved population. Volunteers setup between March and May when the Trail is at its busiest.

The Miles are Mission Service Corps missionaries with the North American Mission Board. They are featured in this year's Week of Prayer March 7-13 (see prayer need at right).

"Craig and Suzy have put together a two-hour training session for people who want to serve on the AT," he said. "The training helps folks understand AT hikers, what is needed to carry-out the ministry to the hikers, and some do's and don'ts."

Visit www.trailministry.org to find out more about Appalachian Trail Servants, how you can donate or how you can serve.

Week of Prayer — March 7-14

Day One



Jim and Myrtle Ballard, Idaho
Associational Missions/
Church Planting

Jim Ballard serves as director of missions for Eastern Idaho Baptist Association working with Hispanic, cowboy, and other people groups.

- Pray for more churches to unashamedly share the gospel with Hispanics in the area.
- Pray for Jim as he encourages, prays for, counsels, and trains pastors and church planters working among a variety of ethnic and cultural groups.

Day Two



Photo by Peter Field Peck

Michael and Vicki McQuitty,
New York
Collegiate Evangelism

Michael McQuitty is a collegiate evangelism missionary at Syracuse University working through Baptist Collegiate Ministry to witness to students and help them grow spiritually.

- Pray for Michael as he encourages and helps college students to share Christ with their peers.
- Pray for God to burden students for evangelism and give them a desire to help start new churches in New York, North America, and around the world.

Day Three



Photo by Laura Sikes

Vivian and James McCaughan,
Missouri
Church Planting/
Woman's Missionary Union

Vivian assists with multihousing church planting and encourages churches to see these communities as mission fields. Through her work with Woman's Missionary Union, she also challenges women in Missouri Baptist churches to

live a missions lifestyle.

• Pray for Vivian as she encourages churches to become aware of ministry opportunities within multihousing communities and to go beyond the walls of the church to minister to residents there.

• Pray that the 97 percent of multihousing residents who do not have a connection to an evangelical Christian church will experience the power of God's love.

Day Four



Photo by John Swain

Craig and Suzy Miles,
North Carolina
Special Ministries

As directors of Appalachian Trail Servants, Mission Service Corps missionaries Craig and Suzy Miles hike the Appalachian Trail interacting with and ministering to fellow hikers by sharing the gospel through actions and words.

- Pray that long-distance hikers will connect the beauty of the creation around them with the one, true Creator.
- Pray for more qualified chaplains to commit to hiking the trails and sharing Christ in word and deed.

Day Five



Photo by Erik Stenbakken

Bill and Carol Lighty, Colorado
Associational Missions

As area missionary for Pikes Peak Baptist Association, Bill Lighty assists churches in utilizing a variety of strategies to reach many different types of people with a wide variety of backgrounds.

- Pray for Bill as he utilizes a variety of different church styles including ethnic, cowboy, and multihousing churches to connect with the more than 500,000 unbelievers in the area.
- Pray for more church planters to come with a burden and desire to proclaim the gospel to the residents in the area.

Day Six



Photo by Ted Wilcox

Michael and Marla Allen, Illinois
Church and Community Ministry

Michael Allen is the senior pastor and Baptist center director at Uptown Baptist Church, a multicultural and multi-ethnic church and ministry in Chicago.

- Pray for more of the 300-plus homeless men, women, and children who come to the Monday night meal to hear and respond to the gospel.
- Pray for God to continue to give Michael wisdom, compassion, and boldness as he pastors his congregation and shares God's love with the community in action and words.

Day Seven



Photo by James Gregg

Luis and Lourdez Rodriguez,
Puerto Rico
Church Planting

Luis Rodriguez is a Hispanic church-planting missionary and pastor of Baptist Church of Coamo ministering to the community through the church and the Coamo Christian Academy.

- Pray for wisdom and guidance as Luis and Lourdez minister to students and their parents through the Christian Academy Ministry.
- Pray for God to provide more missionaries and church planters to start churches in and around Coamo where there is only one Southern Baptist church.

Day Eight

Louis Spears, Arizona
Church Planting

Louis serves the Valley Rim Baptist Association in

Mesa, Ariz., where he assists church planters with ministries to multihousing communities and mobile home parks. He also encourages church planters working with house churches and Bible studies as they begin congregations.

- Pray for God to send more workers to start new churches.
- Pray for believers already living in Arizona to answer God's call to move into apartment communities in order to share the transforming power of God's love with residents.



Photo by Greg Schneider

SBC loses members again in 2009

Associated Baptist Press

NEW YORK — Catholic, Mormon and Assembly of God churches all posted membership gains in 2009, while mainline denominations and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) lost members, according to an annual report by the National Council of Churches. The SBC — the nation's second-largest faith group — saw its membership decline for the second consecutive year.

The NCC's 2010 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches reported membership of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States — the largest of 227 national church bodies included in the report — at 68 million. That represents growth of 1.49 percent, after a slight membership loss in 2009.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (No. 4) grew 1.71 percent to 5,873,408 members. The Assemblies

of God grew 1.27 percent to 2,863,265 members, passing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to become America's ninth-largest religious body.

This year's edition of the yearbook, the 78th, reports information collected by churches in 2008 and reported to the National Council of Churches in 2009. Some faith groups, such as several historically African-American Baptist denominations, report their membership estimates based on population formulas instead of actual headcounts.

American Baptist Churches posted one of the largest losses, 2 percent, dropping its membership to 1,331,127.

Membership in the SBC, the second-largest denomination behind Catholics, dropped 0.24 percent to 16,228,438 members. That follows a similar loss of 0.24 percent reported in the yearbook last year.

Eileen Lindner, editor of the an-

nual yearbook since 1998, said some observers attributed decline in church membership to increasing secularization of American society but pointed out that some groups — especially of the Pentecostal variety — continue to report gains.

Another factor, she said, is that large percentages of immigrants into the United States in the last 40 years are Christians.

Lindner said statistics in the yearbook reflect "continued high overall church participation, and account for the religious affiliation of over 163 million Americans."

The 10 largest church groups reported in the 2010 yearbook are:

1. The Catholic Church, 68,115,001 members, up 1.49 percent.
2. Southern Baptist Convention, 16,228,438 members, down 0.24 percent.

3. The United Methodist Church, 7,853,987 members, down 0.98 percent.

4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5,974,041 members, up 1.71 percent.

5. The Church of God in Christ, 5,499,875 members, no membership updates reported.

6. National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., 5 million members, no membership updates reported.

7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 4,633,887 members, down 1.62 percent.

8. National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., 3.5 million members, no membership updates reported.

9. Assemblies of God (ranked 10 last year), 2,899,702 members, up 1.27 percent.

10. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (ranked 9 last year), 2,844,952 members, down 3.28 percent.

'Blue Jazz' author takes faith, but not himself, seriously

By Nancy Haught
Religion News Service

PORTLAND, Ore. — Author Donald Miller's best-selling 2003 memoir, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*, is being made into a movie and he's on the phone with his director.

"That explosion and the sex scene?" he says into his cell phone.

"I still want those in there."

He's kidding.

Blue Like Jazz won't be that kind of movie.

It is Miller's account of growing up fatherless, struggling with relationships and finding a Christian faith that wrestles with Jesus, the church and cultural stereotypes.

There are no sex scenes, but Miller, 38, has lived through an explosion of sorts.

Before *Blue Like Jazz*, Miller was a freelance writer sharing a house in Portland's Laurelhurst neighborhood.

His first book hadn't sold well and his tiny publishing business wasn't making much money.

"I reached a point where I had to get a job or write another book," he says.

"I wrote another book."

Cue the explosion. *Blue Like Jazz* was a giant hit.

It made *The New York Times* best-seller list and has sold 1 million copies.

At Portland's legendary Powell's City of Books, where it's shelved in the Red Room with other religious, travel, foreign language and health-related titles, *Blue Like Jazz* sold more copies in 2006 than any other book in the room.

Part of Miller's appeal — and what has made the book so successful — is his "brokenness," says Paul Louis Metzger, a theology professor at Multnomah Biblical Seminary in northeast Portland, a writer himself and a friend of Miller's.

"Don understands at a core level what it's like to feel pain, suffering, abandonment.

"There's a sense of rawness and pain and earthiness to his writing."

And a slightly warped sense of humor.

"That humor is bound up with shared humanity," Metzger says.

Blue Like Jazz caught the eye of documentary filmmakers Steve Taylor and Ben Pearson, who contacted Miller about turning the book into a movie.

Miller's new book, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: What I Learned While Editing My Life*, is the story of that story and everything he's learned so far about living and telling stories.

"The reward you get from a story is always less than you thought it would be, and the work is harder than you imagined," Miller writes in his new book.

"The point of a story is never about the ending, remember.

"It's about your character getting molded in the hard work of the middle."

After a year writing the screenplay and learning about character development and narrative arcs, Miller



"The reward you get from a story is always less than you thought it would be, and the work is harder than you imagined."
— Donald Miller

realized that his actions convey his character. He's just finished a 70-day, 65-city book tour. He's a sought-after speaker and a member of President Obama's task force on fatherhood. He's organized The Mentoring Project, a nonprofit that works with churches to recruit mentors and match them with fatherless kids.

He has dreams of creating a corps of good fathers in the next 20 years, of closing down the prisons that today house so many fatherless sons.

He lends himself — not just his name — to what he calls "noble causes," including a cross-country bike ride to call attention to the global need for clean water.

He spends time alone, daydreaming and recharging his spirit with his cast of friends who show up often in his writing.

When he can, he worships at Imago Dei Community, an independent, art-supporting, thriving church, whose founder, Rick McKinley, is one of Miller's closest friends.

"We were nobodies in the beginning," says McKinley, who first met Miller 10 years ago.

"I wanted to start a church and he was becoming an author."

These days, Imago Dei draws 2,000 people every Sunday.

McKinley says his friend's success is making a difference in people's lives.

"There's a whole generation of people trying to make sense of church, of faith, of God. I think he cre-

Miss., Vt., polar opposites on Sunday

By Kimberlee Hauss
Religion News Service

(RNS) The South continues to live up to its Bible Belt reputation, especially Mississippi, which reported the nation's highest church-going statistics in a new Gallup Poll.

At 68 percent, Mississippi had the highest percentage of weekly church-goers in 2009, Gallup said. Vermont remained the least church-going state, with only 23 percent regularly attending. The top and bottom rankings remained unchanged from last year.

Out of the top 10 states, nine are in the South. Utah's large Mormon population boosts it to the top as well, making it the odd state in the West. States in the West and all of New England were among the least church-going. The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 1 percentage point.

In addition to Mississippi and Utah, the most

ated a following that continues to respond to Don."

Miller grew up in Pearland, Texas, near Houston.

His mother, Mary, still lives in the same tiny house where he would shut himself up in his room and day-dream.

"He was very easy to raise," she says, which was a good thing because being a single mother with two children wasn't easy.

"He didn't get into trouble, but he had his own ideas about things."

When his high school band teacher, who would urge students to "visualize yourself marching as you play," complained that Donald was skipping rehearsals, his mom confronted him.

"Tell him to just visualize me," Donald said.

Miller's flippant streak helped him deal with his parents' divorce and the handful of times he reconnected with his father.

"He left when I was 2," Miller says. "I remember being 11 or 12" — the last time he saw him — "old enough to be scared of him, old enough to think, 'Who are you?'"

The prospect of seeing his father again figures in *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*.

It's an idea Miller says he wouldn't have considered except that the filmmakers wanted to inject some conflict into the screenplay.

"If I learned anything from thinking about my father, it's that there is a force in the world that doesn't want us to live good stories," he writes in the new book.

"It doesn't want us to face our issues, to face our fear and bring something beautiful into the world.

"I guess what I'm saying is, I believe God wants us to create beautiful stories, and whatever it is that isn't God wants us to create meaningless stories, teaching the people around us that life just isn't worth living."

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Haught writes for *The Oregonian* in Portland, Ore.)

church-going states are South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, Georgia and Texas.

The lowest church-attending states were reported in New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, Nevada, Hawaii, Oregon, Alaska and Washington. Nationally, 41.6 percent of Americans reported attending church at least once a week in 2009. Following are the top five and bottom five states for percentages of people regularly in the pews:

Top Five:

- Mississippi (63 percent)
- Alabama (58 percent)
- South Carolina (56 percent)
- Louisiana (56 percent)
- Utah (56 percent)

The bottom five were Vermont (23 percent), New Hampshire (26 percent), Maine (27 percent), Massachusetts (29 percent), and Nevada (30 percent).



News Briefs

Mars Hill starts staff furloughs

MARS HILL — A \$550,000 budget deficit has forced Mars Hill College to enact employee furloughs.

“We looked at options, and I did get absolute consensus that the very last option anyone wanted to utilize was laying people off,” college President Dan Lunsford said in an interview in the *Asheville Citizen-Times*.

Affecting 230-240 full-time staff members, the college is also decreasing its contribution to the employee retirement plan for the next four months. Adjustments were made to the health plan too.

The *Citizen-Times* report said the lowest-paid workers will take one day off without pay. Others will take five days. The highest-paid staff will take six, and Lunsford will take eight furlough days. Enrollment was down more than he had budgeted Lunsford said in the interview.

The college is planning a tuition increase for fall. Students will see costs increase 5-5.5 percent, Lunsford said. Yearly tuition and fees at Mars Hill amount to \$20,849 for a traditional, undergraduate student. Professors will take furloughs during times when there are no classes to avoid impact on students.

College ‘Lion Hearted for Haiti’

Mars Hill College (MHC) is getting “Lion Hearted for Haiti,” by joining with several businesses and churches in Mars Hill to sponsor events in the upcoming days designed to raise funds and awareness for the relief effort in that disaster-stricken country.

All MHC sports teams sold “Lion Hearts” for \$1 which will bear the name of the purchaser and will hang in the foyer of Chambers Gymnasium. One hundred percent of proceeds will go to the International Committee of the Red Cross for use in disaster relief in Haiti. The last home basketball game (Feb. 28) ends the fund-raiser.

Women’s basketball coach Jennifer Nance said the teams hope to paper the entrance of Chambers gym with evidence of the community and campus support for this effort. “I’m really excited about the campus and community coming together to raise money for the tragedy in Haiti. The more people we can reach locally, the more money we will be able to raise for the Haitian people,” she said.



SUGAR? — Bars, coffee shops and restaurants topped a recent survey of places to meet new friends. Churches lagged behind these hot spots but edged out Facebook in the survey.

Churches lag behind bars, restaurants as place to meet

(RNS) Americans say Starbucks, Chili’s and bars are better places than church to meet new friends, according to a new survey.

Restaurants, bars or pubs attract 18 percent of Americans as a place to meet people, while churches draw 16 percent and online venues like Facebook pull 11 percent, said the survey released in late January by Group Publishing, a nondenominational publishing house in Colorado.

The online survey polled nearly 800 respondents, more than three-quarters of whom identified themselves as Christians, and has a plus or minus error rate of 4 percentage points.

Why would people choose a restaurant or bar over church? Chris Howley, director of research of Group Publishing, said many people feel “compelled” to be in church. They go as a sense of obligation and therefore have no spiritual motivation for attending. The social atmosphere of a pub or restaurant draws people in without the feeling of obligation, he said.

Social media, the third favorite place to meet new people, may be a new way to boost the friendly quo-

tient. “We don’t think the church should see (social media) as a threat at all, but they should embrace the Internet. It’s a way to engage people and bring people in,” Howley said.

Vaughan concurs. “Since the Internet has become an integral element of our daily lives, pastors and church leaders must be more creative in facilitating social networking — both face-to-face and through the web,” Vaughan said.

CBF plans meeting in Charlotte

ATLANTA — The national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) will gather for its 20th annual General Assembly June 23-26 in Charlotte.

The Assembly theme, “And so we are...” (1 John 3:1-2), will be explored in evening worship services, which feature preaching by Bill Leonard and Lauren Winner, both from North Carolina. Leonard is dean and professor at Wake Forest University Divinity School in Winston-Salem. Winner is author of *Girl Meets God, Mudhouse Sabbath and Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*. She teaches at Duke Divinity School.

A missionary commissioning service will be held June 23 at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church.

The Assembly will offer auxiliary events hosted by CBF partners, events for children and youth, state and regional CBF organization meetings, a resource fair, workshops, business sessions and more. The Assembly will be held in the Charlotte Convention Center and the Westin Hotel, both in downtown Charlotte.

Formed in 1991, the Fellowship celebrates its 20th anniversary June 23-24, 2011, in Tampa, Fla.

Americans spending more, but not on charitable giving

DALLAS — Americans say they are loosening their purse strings on entertainment and other household expenses but not on charitable giving, according to the annual Dunham+Company New Year’s Philanthropy Survey conducted by Wilson Research Strategies.

Compared to the 2009 study, this year’s survey shows a surprising 56 percent jump in the number of households indicating they have not reduced their household budget as a result of the economy. In addition, there are 15 percent fewer households reporting a reduction in their spending on monthly bills and 9 percent fewer reporting a reduction in entertainment spending, one of the areas hardest hit according to the 2009 study.

Yet when it comes to charitable giving, 37 percent of respondents indicate they continue to reduce their charitable donations and nearly 1 in 4 say they have eliminated donations altogether — statistically the same rates as last year.

There are some exceptions, however, said Rick Dunham, president and CEO of Dunham+Company, which helps Christian ministries with their fundraising, marketing and media strategies.

“When you dig into the data, you find that more of those who frequent religious services indicate that in spite of the economy, they are continuing or increasing their support of charity in 2010 compared to 2009,” he said.

Sour economy hurts offerings

(RNS) One year after a majority of Americans said they hoped the sour economy wouldn’t impact their church giving, three in 10 Americans now say they’re putting less in the offering plate, a Barna Group study shows.

Compared to a similar study that Barna conducted at the end of 2008, the percentage of Americans who have reduced their donations has increased by a staggering 45 percent.

Many of those who traditionally give to their congregations have been able to maintain their usual level of giving, but those who have not often substantially reduced their giving.

Almost one-quarter of church donors cut their contributions by at least 20 percent.

“The implication is that church and nonprofit leaders should prepare for another lean year,” said David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group.

Mennonite college to play national anthem in March

(RNS) In a break with the past, a Mennonite college in Indiana will play an instrumental version of the national anthem before athletic events despite the song’s “militaristic” lyrics.

Goshen College in Goshen, Ind., is owned by Mennonite Church USA, an historic peace church that advocates nonviolence. But in deference to its increasingly diverse student body and to visitors, the college will begin playing “The Star-Spangled Banner” in March, Goshen administrators said in a statement.

“Playing the national anthem has not been among Goshen College’s practice primarily because of our Christ-centered core value of compassionate peace-making seeming to be in conflict with the anthem’s militaristic language,” said Goshen President Jim Brenneman, and a special advisory council, in a statement.

Brenneman said playing the anthem “in no way displaces any higher allegiances, including the expansive understanding of Jesus,” the statement said.

Christians help defeat Hawaii House civil unions bill

HONOLULU (BP) — A same-sex civil unions bill in Hawaii likely is dead for the year after the House bowed to pressure from Christian conservatives and voted to table the measure.

It’s the second year in a row that opposition from religious conservatives has helped defeat the bill.

House members, via voice vote, voted Jan. 29 to table the bill (H.B. 444), postponing the issue indefinitely unless a two-thirds majority votes to bring it back up, which is highly unlikely. The vote came nearly two weeks after approximately 15,000 religious conservatives descended on the state capital Jan. 17 in opposition to the bill, most wearing white shirts and sporting “iVote” buttons and stickers. The bill would have granted homosexual partners all the legal benefits of marriage, except the name itself, and would have made Hawaii the sixth state with a similar law.

Bishops nix move to force hiring gays in churches in Britain

LONDON (RNS) — Anglican bishops and other members of the House of Lords have nixed an attempt by the British government to force churches and other religious institutions to hire gays, lesbians and transgender people.

The upper chamber of Parliament, which includes 26 Anglican bishops as members, rejected the proposed law change Jan 25 after church leaders argued it would violate tenets of their faith.

Under current British law, churches, mosques and other religious establishments have the right to turn down candidates for jobs as ministers, priests, school principals or youth workers if they are actively gay or have had a sex change.

The defeated legislation would have required churches and other religious groups to hire key staff even if their lifestyles conflicted with accepted religious doctrine.

N.J. mother found guilty in starvation, endangerment case

NEWTON, N.J. (RNS) — A woman who made no effort to feed her four starving children, telling them God would provide for them as they grew weaker and hungrier, was found guilty of child endangerment charges on Jan. 22.

Jurors took just 30 minutes to reach a verdict in the case against Estelle Walker, 50, whose children were so malnourished they could hardly speak when police found them in a lakeside cabin arranged by her church in 2006.

The children — ages 8, 9, 11 and 13 at the time — have since recovered.

In finding Walker guilty, jurors rejected the unusual defense claim that the New York City woman was not responsible for her actions because of her strict religious beliefs and what her lawyer called an extreme reliance on God.

Tax preparation 'tips' for ministers

By Johnny Ross

BSC GuideStone Representative

As the deadline for 2009 tax returns approaches (April 15, 2010), it is important to review some basic tax information for those persons who are considered "ministers for tax purposes." First, be sure your filing status is correct. Most ministers have a dual tax status.

In almost every case ministers are employees for federal and state taxes; therefore, they should receive a W-2 from the employing church, not a 1099. In addition, ministers are always self-employed for Social Security and Medicare purposes for ministerial income; therefore, they pay the full SECA tax of 15.3 percent.

The church should not withhold and send in Social Security taxes to the Internal Revenue Service.

Secondly, the employing church should always count business expense allowances as taxable income. For example, a car allowance, book/tape/periodical allowance, convention/workshop allowance, etc. are reported in Box 1 of the W-2 as taxable income.

It is only when the church has established and administers an accountable business expense reimbursement arrangement that these monies have no taxable consequence. Otherwise that money is taxable.

If any of the business expense funds are given as salary to the minister, even in an accountable plan, then all of those reimbursements become taxable. The standard mileage reimbursement rate for 2009 was 55 cents per mile. That amount has decreased to 50 cents per mile in 2010.

Third, be sure to claim the legal amount for housing allowance.

The law states that the minister must claim the least of the following as the housing allowance for the year:

- the amount designated in advance (this may never be done retroactively) as a housing allowance by the church;
- the amount actually spent for housing costs during the year; or
- the fair rental value of the home furnished with utilities.

For those who live in a parsonage and have housing expenses the person must claim the lesser of the following:

- the amount designated in advance by the church; or
- the amount actually spent for housing costs during the year.

Furthermore, these amounts are only exempt from federal/state taxes; the minister must pay SECA taxes on the housing allowance and/or the fair rental value of the parsonage.

Fourth, be sure to gather and organize all tax documents including receipts for appropriate and correct reporting purposes as you prepare your tax returns or pay an official tax preparer. Be advised in securing a tax preparer that the person whom you enlist understands ministers' taxes since minister tax status is very different from the ordinary citizen/taxpayer.

Fifth, be sure to include your social security number, sign and date your returns, and mail them to the appropriate Internal Revenue Service address by the tax deadline. The IRS has indicated that these are very common mistakes/oversights.

For additional information and a step-by-step explanation of preparing your 2009 tax returns an excellent resource piece by Richard Hammar, 2009 Ministers Tax Guide, is now posted on the GuideStone Financial Resources at www.guidestone.org/taxguide.

Church planting in N.C. — God is up to something!

By Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

BSC Executive Director-Treasurer

Soon after becoming the Executive Director-Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention (BSC) I developed a document entitled, *Seven Pillars for Ministry: Biblical Concepts for a Christ-Centered Vision* to strategically and proactively guide the work of your BSC staff.



"Plant New Multiplication Churches" stands as one of the central pillars of that document and God is obviously blessing our focus on church planting. Let me share with you what God did in 2009 through the church planting ministry of North Carolina Baptists.

In 2009, using your Cooperative Program and North Carolina Missions Offering dollars, the BSC welcomed 122 new churches into our convention.

Ninety-eight of these new churches are new church starts and 24 are established congregations desiring to be a part of what God is doing in the Baptist State Convention.

Of the 98 new church starts over half are non-Anglo church plants.

Your financial gifts helped launch new churches for a variety of people groups God is bringing to our state.

For example, last year North Carolina Baptists started 22 Hispanic churches, two Chinese churches, five Asian Indian churches and churches for immigrants from Haiti, Romania, Burma, and a host of other countries.

God is literally bringing the world to North Carolina, and North Carolina Baptists are evangelistically reaching our new international neighbors through church planting.

We also launched 13 African-American churches, five multi-ethnic churches, five biker churches and seven cowboy churches. I am thrilled to share with you how God is glorifying Himself through these new church starts.

Last year, through the ministries of the church plants receiving financial support from the BSC, 2,341 people came to faith in Jesus Christ — to God be the glory!

More than 7,450 people gathered on a weekly basis to worship in these church plants and our newest BSC churches gave more than \$295,000 to SBC mission causes. Remember, that is just in 2009.

Over the last five years, the BSC has welcomed over 579 new churches! That's right, 579!!

It is simply amazing what God is doing through the church planting ministry of North Carolina Baptists.

As we march into 2010 let me challenge you and your church to prayerfully consider how God wants you to be involved in the planting of new churches to reach the 5.5 million unchurched residents of North Carolina.

Is it possible God is calling you to the life and ministry of a church planter? Is it possible He is calling you to be a part of a core group of believers who come alongside a planter to encourage, support and assist the planter in his ministry?

Is it possible God is calling your church to support a new church plant with your prayers, financial gifts and strongest church members as lay leaders in a new plant?

Yes, God is up to something in the church planting ministry of North Carolina Baptists. I invite you to find a way to join Him.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." 1 Cor. 3:6

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Hollifield's pamphlet, *Seven Pillars*, is available online at www.ncbaptist.org/index.php?id=901.)

Operation Inasmuch planning steps up

By David W. Crocker

Executive Director, Operation Inasmuch, Inc.

This is the second in a series of updates for churches participating in the Operation Inasmuch (OIAM) event all across North Carolina on April 24 and May 1, 2010. Watch future issues of the *Biblical Recorder* for more updates.

Where you should be in your planning as of Feb 27

- 75 percent of projects identified with Project Leaders recruited
- Promotion strategy in place with persons in charge of promotion in place
- Continue to announce: "Save the date" (of your Inasmuch)
- Cast a compelling vision to your congregation of what you believe God wants to accomplish through your church in Inasmuch
- Outline of pre- (kickoff) and post-Inasmuch (celebration) gatherings in place

Project Idea — Restock 1 or more local food pantries

- Identify which food pantries to support in your Inasmuch
- Obtain approval from management of local grocery stores to collect food from their shoppers during Inasmuch.
- Prepare and distribute to grocery shoppers a one-page description of the food pantry you are supporting asking them to pick up extra items to leave with you for the pantry.
- Collect the donations and deliver them to the food pantry.

Register your church's participation — Go to www.ncoperationinasmuch.org and look for "Registration."

Official NCOIAM T-shirts available — Go to www.operationinasmuch.com and click on "Resources;" download Order Form.

Operation inasmuch



Tar Heel Voices

Thoughts on weather cancellations

A weekend snow can offer your church great opportunities to model the importance of worship and give the congregation a lesson in financial stewardship. Unfortunately the opportunity most see is canceling the worship service in the name of safety so we can sleep in.

I understand the logic; I once did the same. However, my primary concern of safety changed when an adult I had recently baptized told me of her disappointment.

She needed the gathered community to help her grow in her faith.

She was prepared for worship that Sunday even if that meant walking over a mile in a foot of snow. The day I heard her disappointment was the day I decided that a little snow — or a lot — would not cancel Sunday worship.

"The church will be open for worship," I told the congregation. "Come only if you can do so safely but, regardless, know that some will be gathered in worship."

For some 20 years I followed that policy, even after a heavy snow that caused the congregation that day to consist of only my family and the person who opened the church. Not many gathered but all knew just how essential corporate worship is for Christ followers.

The financial opportunity was a serendipitous discovery. I realized that our offerings suffered far less when the church doors were not closed. Make up giving for snow Sundays jumped from around 50 percent to nearly 90 percent.

People need to be reminded that the church is serious about what we proclaim. Closed churches teach us that worship is subservient to convenience. Closed churches undermine the best stewardship appeals.

I make no claim to know the best decision for every church when snow and ice blanket the ground. I only know what that woman taught me with the disappointment in her voice and what the numbers taught me when the next week's offering was counted. I understood them both as a message from God.

Bob Bailey
retired director of missions,
Eastern Association

New York City redeemed

Things have a way of coming full circle. Think of your teenage daughter stomping her foot and declaring she never wanted to be like her mother, who now is more like her mother than her mother ever was.

Or the preacher's kid who rejected the fishbowl life and poor treatment of his father by the congregations he grew up in, only to embrace the same call and life.

In my first extended stay in New York City some 30 years ago my greatest fear was getting on a subway train to the wrong destination. I just knew I would be lost forever in the concrete jungle with no safe path leading home.

So one night after watching live theater in Central Park I ran to the subway stop and scurried down the stairs because I knew the timing was close for a train to be leaving there going where I was headed.

Sure enough, once I got down the stairs I saw a train idling at the platform. The door was open, and an engineer sat by an open window.

I ran up to him and asked, "Does this train stop at 66th street?"

"Yes it does," he said. Then he shut the door and drove off.

Dumbfounded, I was left standing on the platform with a look stenciled on my face that said, "Not From Around Here" and a story on my lips that has born repeating a hundred times.

Now — after three decades — metro New York has risen to redeem itself. The distinction between "metro New York" and "New York City" is one you will want to keep in mind if you and your church take up the challenge of participating in the partnership with the Baptist State Convention (BSC) and Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. Metro New York includes parts of three states and more than 20 million people.

It extends into Newark, N.J., which is where this story comes full circle.

Last week I drove 90 miles in rush hour traffic to Newark from where I'd stayed a night with family near Philadelphia.

Definitely being "Not From Around Here" it seemed every car on all eight lanes was a projectile launched specifically to take me out.

Toll booths, merges, E-Z pass lanes over cash or credit, I-Roads looping and 18-wheelers ready to straddle me if I slowed made it difficult to read the directional signs. When I finally swung off into the airport my angst multiplied to discover it had three main terminals and I didn't know which one I wanted.

My plan had been simple. Go to covered parking, walk in and find the U.S. Air gate and meet the New Jersey vision team from the BSC. I pulled into the first surface parking that wasn't \$33 a day and drew a calm breath, but I was still lost.

I saw an airport parking authority truck and an employee about to get into it. I drove over to him and explained my dilemma. He calmly assured me U.S. Air used Terminal A, which we could see from our location.

But he must have seen my eyes glaze like a Krispy Kreme donut when he tried to explain how to catch the air train somewhere behind me to get to the terminal. Because he said to me the words any supplicant longs to hear who lays prostrate at the altar, "I will help you."

"Park your car and throw your things into my truck," he said. "I'll just drive you over there."

When the Jews looked out of their tents and saw the ground covered with manna for the first time, they felt no more joy than I felt hearing those words.

And New York is redeemed.

— NWJ



SBC stats reveal two ironies

With all the gloom and doom talk about church and denominational strength or weakness among Baptists, the statistical story on page 10 of this issue that shows Southern Baptist membership dipped for the second straight year is not a surprise. Still, it highlights two ironies developing in the SBC.

One, statistical reporting by Baptist churches is so inconsistent that the numbers are likely not accurate in the first place.

Two, loud and emerging voices from within the Convention have been ridiculing the membership numbers for years.

These voices claim half the 16 million members SBC churches claim can't be found; that membership rolls are never cleaned; that we've become so enamored of being big we can't bear the thought of striking a name that might shrink a roll.

Statistical reporting is important to denominational program leaders for the simple reason that it helps them know what is "working."

If there was a special emphasis to get people to Sunday School one year and the reports show an increase in Sunday School attendance, then we can know that something worked.

If a concentrated effort shows no measureable results, then something different needs to be done.

It's not so much that churches are careless with these numbers as it is that too few send the numbers in on the annual church profile (ACP).

As many as one fourth of churches now ignore the annual statistical profile, justifying their neglect believing it doesn't really matter and that no one pays any attention.

Keep in mind the accumulated weight of this information has alerted Baptists to the fact we've lost momentum, which has led to calls for revival, for a Great Commission resurgence, and for an evaluation of the things we do to make sure we focus on the things that matter.

As Great Commission Resurgence Task Force Chairman Ronnie Floyd quoted Winston Churchill Feb. 22 during his report: "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

The questions we ask determine in large part the direction of an organization because they set expectations.

As Richard Harris, interim president of the North American Mission Board said at the annual editor's meeting, pastors used to make conversation by asking each other how many they'd baptized.

So, a gospel witness among the lost that resulted in baptisms was an expectation.

Later as baptisms dipped and denominational leaders emphasized Sunday School as a way to engage members in gospel training and to engage the lost in your community in small fellowship groups that could lead to salvation experiences and baptisms, the question became, "How many do you run in Sunday School?"

Now culture has changed and the mega church influence has emerged and people are more likely to simply attend worship than they are to join a church. So the question has become, according to

Harris, "How many did you have on campus for worship?"

We are statistical animals. We want to know how we are doing.

We want to know if the \$557 we raised for the food bank this year was more or less than we raised last year.

If it was less, we feel bad and vow to do better. If it was more, we feel good and sense we're moving in the right direction.

There is nothing wrong with numbers or statistics, as long as they are not used to bludgeon people into conformity. It is important that Baptists know some statistics about people they are considering for leadership positions, for example. At the same time, numbers do not tell the whole story and should not be used as such.

As to the second irony of the statistical report, remember that voices are calling for more honesty by cleaning rolls of members who cannot be found. If that were to be done to any great extent, there would naturally be a decline as dust was shaken off old rolls and funerals were taken into account. Names of those who haven't been seen in years, not even for Christmas Eve, could be deleted.

At the very least, honest examination of your rolls might lead you to contact people whose names you can't seem to place and you might

see a surge of renewed interest in a church that seems interested in them again.

If a roll cleaning resulted in smaller numbers that would not mean there were any fewer Southern Baptists. But it would look bad; it would feel as though we were the wicked witch of the west shrinking under Dorothy's bucket of water.

The irony is that better statistical record keeping would be cleaner but would saddle the person cleaning up those records with a record of his own that says a church "shrank" under his leadership.

That's a large part of any reluctance to mess with the rolls.

How does a pastor lead his church to identify and locate everyone on the rolls, and to remove anyone they cannot locate when that very exercise might saddle him with being pastor of a church that is smaller now than when he came?

More coverage of GCR next issue

Printing of this issue of the *Biblical Recorder* was delayed so we could bring you news of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force's initial report, which appears on page 1. It was delivered at the Feb. 22 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee meeting in Nashville.

Several recommendations, if approved by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, will affect how Baptist state conventions, including North Carolina, fund certain missions staff.

More coverage of the report will follow in succeeding issues and in coming days online at www.biblicalrecorder.org.



Norman Jameson



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Statement gathers religious expression, law consensus

By Bob Allen and Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — A diverse group of leaders who often find themselves on opposite sides of the contentious battles at the intersection of church and state joined forces Jan. 12 to unveil an unprecedented consensus statement aimed at advancing public understanding of — and preventing needless controversy over — the legal issues around religious expression in the public square.

“In a free society, there will always be conflicts of principle and of interest,” said E.J. Dionne, a *Washington Post* columnist and Brookings Institution fellow who moderated a panel discussion featuring some of the document’s drafters. “But there are useful conflicts and useless conflicts. ... Today’s document sets its face against useless arguments.”

Led by Wake Forest University Divinity School’s Center for Religion and Public Affairs, the document does not advocate a particular direction for future legislation and case law in regard to religious expression. Instead, it outlines what experts in church-state

relations agree that the law currently says in an effort to stave off needlessly divisive debates and lawsuits.

It can become a very handy reference tool for local governments, schools, para-church organizations and other advocates to understand what the law does and does not say about religious expression in the public square.

In a question and answer format it addresses areas such as religion and politics; religious gatherings on government property; holiday or seasonal religious displays on government and private property; government-paid chaplains; and religion in the workplace.

“While this diverse group often disagrees about how the law should address legal issues, the drafters agree in many cases on what the law is today,” said Melissa Rogers, director of the Wake Forest center and a former general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

Fellow document drafter Colby May, senior counsel for the conservative American Center for Law and Justice, agreed.

“What really brought us together is our shared conviction that religious liberty and the freedom of

conscience are in fact fundamental — they are inalienable rights for all people,” he said.

The statement’s signers represent a wide swath of American religious life. Baptists supporting the project include Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission as well as Brent Walker and Holly Hollman of the Baptist Joint Committee — two organizations that often find themselves on opposing sides of church-state debates.

Groups represented by other document drafters include the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Committee, the Islamic Networks Group, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Sikh Council on Religion and Education.

“If experts like this can agree on what the law is, I think it commands our attention,” Rogers said.

Download a copy of the 36-page document at: <http://divinity.wfu.edu/pdf/DivinityLawStatement.pdf>.

(EDITOR’S NOTE — Allen is senior writer, and Marus is managing editor and Washington bureau chief, for Associated Baptist Press.)

Community helps fulfill Chowan’s first international mission trip

MURFREESBORO — Chowan University’s campus ministry team led 12 students, staff and alumni on the university’s first international mission trip in its more than 160-year history.

The group ministered at an orphanage in Mabopane, South Africa, after raising \$30,000 in the community and from among friends to fund the trip.

Besides receiving grants from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the N.C. Baptist Foundation, Meherrin Baptist Church and Galatia Baptist Church shared transportation duties to the airport to save parking fees.

The team carried humanitarian aid and medical supplies as well as everyday items.

They were also able to take 300 orphaned children of the Lotus Home Christmas goodie bags.

Each person on the mission brought something special back home with them from this life-altering adventure, forever changing the way God works in their lives, at home and abroad.

“We took Chowan to Mabopane,

South Africa, to spend 10 days with children inflicted with HIV, all the while sharing and receiving the love of Christ,” said Associate Minister Jennifer Janney.

“Although 12 of us physically went, we took all of you in our hearts, and as you can tell, we left part of our hearts in that small village.”



Classified Advertisements

Pastor

Pastor. White Stone Baptist Church, White Stone, Va., is seeking a pastor. We are an active, established congregation of 160 resident members in the Northern Neck of Virginia. Candidates should have a degree from a recognized seminary. Our church’s statement of belief is the Baptist Faith and Message 1963. We are affiliated with the BGAV and the Rappahannock Baptist Association. We are seeking a pastor to lead us in reaching our community with emphasis on young families. Our mission includes service to those within and outside of our congregation. We also want to use our resources wisely in order to accomplish Christ’s work in our world. Resumes may be sent to Pastor Search Committee, White Stone Baptist Church, PO Box 45, White Stone, VA 22578.

Full Time Pastor. Neill’s Creek Baptist Church is seeking a full time senior pastor with minimum of five years pastoral experience and M.Div. degree. Average 100-135 worship service. Southern Baptist church primarily aligned with CBF. Send resumes to 4200 Neill’s Creek Road, Angier, NC 27501, or email at: ncbc@embarqmail.com. Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

Full Time Pastor. Green Hill Baptist Church, Rutherfordton, NC. Rural church with a diverse congregation. Minimum educational requirement — four year degree from an accredited college or university. Minimum of 2 years of pastoral experience. Average of 80-90 in Sunday School and 125-150 in worship services. Has part time minister of children and youth. Affiliated with the Green River Baptist Association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and the Southern Baptist Convention. Resumes accepted through March 15, 2010. Send resumes to Pastoral Search Committee, Green Hill Baptist Church, 2241 US 64/74A Highway, Rutherfordton, NC 28139.

Pastor for First Baptist Church, Williamsburg, Kentucky. Beautiful, small town setting located near University of the Cumberlands. Diverse membership with an average Sunday attendance of 140 and active youth group. Must be able to work with both SBC and CBF. Parsonage available. Seeking someone with a minimum of M.Div. degree and pastoral experience. Send resume to First Baptist Church, 230 S. 5th Street, Williamsburg, KY 40769.

Pastor. Hallsboro Baptist Church, Hallsboro, NC, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small, rural church with a diverse congregation. We support both CBF and SBC. Applicants should have a master’s degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Please send resume and references to Search Committee, 3815 Sam Potts Hwy., Hallsboro, NC 28450.

Church Staff

First Baptist Church of Blountville, Tennessee, seeks a **Minister of Worship and Education**. Blountville is the county seat of Kingsport and Bristol. First Baptist currently has both blended and contemporary services, with a variety of choirs and ensembles. Education will involve working with teams to coordinate Bible study, VBS, camps and adult education opportunities. Candidate should be team player who is ready to serve as needed. Please submit resume and any DVD or CD’s to: Minister Search Team, First Baptist Church, PO Box 587, Blountville, Tennessee 37617 or on line, fbcbtn@embarqmail.com. Resume’s will be received through April 15.

Mountain View Baptist Church of Hamptonville, NC, seeks an **Associate Pastor of Worship** to lead in sincere, heartfelt worship and be responsible for leading a comprehensive music ministry. Average worship attendance is 275. Our church is theologically conservative and actively involved in missions. E-mail resume to mvbc@yadtel.net.

Associate Pastor for Children, Youth, and Families. First Baptist Church in Boone, NC (www.boonefirstbaptist.org) is seeking a full time associate pastor to develop relationships and implement programs to attract and grow ministries to children, youth, and families. First Baptist, established in 1871, is a moderate Baptist church of 325 resident members that support CBF, the BSCNC, and the SBC. We are located in downtown Boone and adjacent to Appalachian State University. We support missions both near and far and are very involved in disaster relief. We affirm women in ministry and the diaconate. We offer both contemporary and traditional services. Candidate should have seminary degree. Submit resumes by March 15, 2010, to Search Committee, c/o Ted Hagaman, 876 Parkcrest Drive, Boone, NC 28607 or e-mail to ted.hagaman@wilkescc.edu. To obtain a copy of the job description, you may send a request to office@boonefirstbaptist.org.

ASSOCIATE/YOUTH PASTOR. Oakwoods Baptist Church, a conservative Baptist church with 350 in regular attendance is seeking a full-time associate/youth pastor. Responsibilities include working with pastor; planning and executing youth ministry for active youth group grades 6-12; as well as coordinating the children’s ministry. Applicant should possess a sincere love for young people and enthusiasm. Send resume and references to Search Committee, 2385 Brushy Mountain Road, Wilkesboro, NC 28697. Visit our website at www.oakwoodsbaptistchurch.org.

University Baptist Church of Chapel Hill, NC, is seeking a **full-time Minister of Music**. Full position description is available online at: www.ubc-ch.org/position.pdf.

First Baptist Church of Reidsville, NC, a church of around 250 in regular Sunday attendance is in need of a **Minister of Music**. First Baptist Church is associated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Candidates should have at least a bachelor’s degree in a music related field, experience in leading and directing choral groups and ensembles and adhere to the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. The successful candidate will be expected to lead in both traditional and contemporary worship styles. Candidate should submit resume to: Music Minister Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 409 S. Main Street, Reidsville, NC 27320.

Full-time Youth Minister. Ideal candidate will have a degree in youth ministry, or its equivalent and have past experience in full-time youth related vocation. Send resume to: Bellview Baptist Church, 901 Bellview Road, Woodruff, SC 29388 or email: msgrits@prtcnet.com.

Polkville Baptist Church, located in the southern foothills of North Carolina, is seeking to fill a full-time position for **Minister of Worship and Discipleship**. We are a purpose driven church in a rural community averaging 250 during Sunday morning worship. Interested persons should have a degree in music with additional studies in Christian Education. For a full job description visit our website at www.polkvillebaptist.com. Please send your resume by March 1, 2010. Polkville Baptist Church, Attn. Personnel Committee, PO Box 245, Polkville, NC 28136

Minister of Youth and Missions. Wake Forest Baptist Church, a dynamic CBF affiliated church of over 900 members in Wake Forest, NC, is actively seeking a minister of youth and missions as part of a multi-staff team. This position will primarily oversee a vital, growing youth ministry averaging 50-60 weekly. This position also includes responsibilities of overseeing the church’s missions efforts. Seminary/divinity school degree and minimum of two years experience required. Submit resumes to: Wake Forest Baptist Church, 118 E. South Ave., Wake Forest, NC 27587, Attn: Minister of Youth and Missions Committee.

Full time director of child care center. Daycare experience and education needed. Please submit resume to: Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 596 East Washington St. Ext. Rockingham, NC 28379. E-mail: officemobc@yahoo.com.

Denominational

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) is seeking a **Regional Elder Care Director (RECD)** for the Western Region of the state. The RECD is responsible for orchestrating ministry/services of NCBAM in their region as well as working with NCBAM. Master’s degree in gerontology, social work or related field; or bachelor’s degree in gerontology or social work plus two years experience in related field preferred. Visit www.ncbam.org/about/employment for more information. Interested individuals may apply by sending a resume, references and support material to NCBAM Elder Care Director Position, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27360. Deadline March 2, 2010.

Miscellaneous

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Cost for Baptist churches and 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 that run in the paper also are carried online.

Lesson for March 7

Formations

Lesson for March 14

A Question of Piety

Focal Passage: Luke 13:10-17

In this, the third of five stories in our series on Jesus and His critics, a miracle occurs. The story begins with Jesus teaching in one of the synagogues, “and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for 18 years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all” (Luke 13:11). I believe there is something significant about the length of the woman’s deformity. We designate 18 years as the proper amount of time for a child to mature into an adult in our society. At age 18, a person is old enough to be independent, and is his or her own separate entity. A long-term illness or deformity can mature into an entity that takes on a life of its own and controls a person. I once worked with a woman who suffered daily “visits” from “Arthur” (severe arthritis). For her, “Arthur” had become an independent living entity that controlled her life. Our text tells us, “When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, ‘Woman, you are set free from your infirmity’” (Luke 13:12). Jesus then touched her. As she was healed, she immediately began to praise God. The picture appears to be perfect. Jesus is in the synagogue, a place of worship. A woman is healed. She who

was bent is now straightened up in the house of the Lord! However, once the leader of the synagogue saw that the woman was healed, he became upset. He told the people there that the Sabbath was not a day for healing. Healing was considered to be work, and work was prohibited on the Sabbath. To the leader of the synagogue this woman could have waited for one more day to be healed. For him, there was no sense of urgency — piety was seen as more important than pity. Most people categorize something based on how it affects them directly. It is amazing how the amount we benefit from a particular situation controls our sense of urgency. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote a piece entitled, *Why We Can’t Wait*. In it he noted that those who would not benefit from Civil Rights legislation felt change was moving too quickly, while the African-American people felt change was happening too slowly. Keeping the rules was of utmost importance to the Pharisee. Freeing the oppressed and healing the sick was important to Jesus (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus was rebuked in the synagogue. How well would He be received in our churches today?



DuPre Sanders
pastor, Roxboro Baptist Church

A Question of Outrageous Claims

Focal Passage: John 6:41-59

Our text for today thrusts us into the middle of a conversation between Jesus and the people who experienced the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. They had followed Jesus to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and He exposed their motives by accusing them of only wanting another free meal. The people were seeking a Moses figure that would feed them every day. In response, Jesus told them that they should desire spiritual food that lasts rather than food that is consumed and gone. This passage begins with the people grumbling about Jesus’ statement: “I am the bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:41). They knew His parents, and questioned how Jesus could say that He came down from heaven. Jesus does not try to clarify His statement, but instead responds with a clear command: “Stop grumbling among yourselves” (John 6:43). There is an obvious parallel in this passage with the Jews in the wilderness that grumbled against Moses (Exodus 16:2; Numbers 11:4-6). In this text, the grumbling refers specifically to what Jesus has said, but it also has a general application. Every

church could benefit from a “No Grumbling” sign prominently displayed! Jesus further upsets the crowd when He says, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:53-54). The people question, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (John 6:52). In the book of John we often see people taking Jesus’ analogies in a literal sense. Nicodemus was confused when Jesus told him to be born again (John 3:4) and the woman at the well wondered about the water that would keep her from thirsting again (John 4:15). Like the people in John’s gospel, there are those who interpret Jesus’ words literally. They believe that, in communion, the bread actually becomes the body of Jesus and the wine becomes His blood (transubstantiation). Baptists understand Jesus’ words to be symbolic. The prophets spoke of eating the word of God (Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 3:3). Eating the word symbolized receiving the word into their lives. To have Jesus in one’s life is to find ultimate satisfaction. Our deepest hunger is met. Our deepest thirst is satisfied. In Him we have sustaining food that satisfies all our needs!

Lesson for March 7

Bible Studies for Life

Lesson for March 14

When Members Won’t Get Along

Focal Passages: 1 Corinthians 1:10-15, 26-29; 3:1-4

Remember Rodney King? Whether that name jolts your memory to scenes of lawlessness or police brutality, and at some point each is appropriate, most any of us over a certain age do have some memory of King. We may not remember specifics on either side; like the fact that he was more than two times the legal limit for blood alcohol level while driving when he led officers on a high speed chase. Or like 7 officers dished out more than 56 blows to King, many of which came after he was handcuffed. But perhaps what King is most remembered for is what he said after the whole deal. “People, I just want to say, you know, can we all get along? Can we get along? “Can we stop making it, making it horrible for the older people and the kids?... It’s just not right. It’s not right. It’s not, it’s not going to change anything. “We’ll, we’ll get our justice. ... Please, we can get along here. We all can get along. I mean, we’re all stuck here for a while.

“Let’s try to work it out. Let’s try to beat it. “Let’s try to beat it. Let’s try to work it out.” King was speaking in the face of race riots, street looting, and a nearly martial law state. And sadly, he could have been talking about the church. Maybe we aren’t looting the church buildings, but many of the issues that are breaking up churches are just as charged as Los Angeles in the wake of the King mess. Church people need to learn to get along. It made me cringe when I heard a friend say, “The worst I’ve ever been hurt emotionally was in the church by church people.” Paul reminded the Corinthian church that they should not be divided. He called for same mind and same judgment. He called for Christians to “just get along.” The world is watching. There is enough turmoil and conflict outside the church that people won’t go if there is no difference inside.

“People, I just want to say, you know, can we all get along? Can we stop making it, making it horrible for the older people and the kids?... It’s just not right.” — Rodney King

When Immorality Comes to Church

Focal Passages: 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 9-13; 6:15-20

March 21, 2003, will stand in infamy as the day that a new phrase was introduced to the world: Shock and Awe. According to Wikipedia, “shock and awe” is “technically known as rapid dominance and is a military doctrine.” The writers of the doctrine, Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, say it will “impose this overwhelming level of Shock and Awe against an adversary on an immediate or sufficiently timely basis to paralyze its will to carry on . . . (to) seize control of the environment and paralyze or so overload an adversary’s perceptions and understanding of events that the enemy would be incapable of resistance at the tactical and strategic levels.” Sound familiar? It should. It’s exactly what Christians face, in a world such as ours. Specifically, sex has become something so constantly in the face of all who live in these times that it really feels like a war is going on. In an “immediate and sufficiently timely way” we are all “overloaded” everywhere we look with sex — so much so that our “perceptions and understanding” render us “incapable of resistance.” We have become a society,

both inside the church and out, where anything goes and nothing’s sacred. Sexual immorality within the church is very difficult to cope with. Christians are called to hold each other accountable and sexual immorality is not outside that calling. Literally, in chapter 5, verses 12 and 13, the word “judge” is *Krino* meaning to “enter within a judicial contest with.” In essence, Paul is encouraging Christians to “call out” other Christians. We must walk the line between lovingly correcting and passively condoning church members’ immoral choices with the focus on bringing them to a life of grace and eternal salvation through our Lord and Savior. Paul reminds us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps using his own shock and awe campaign, he asks the church in Corinth if he should “unite the members of Christ with a prostitute.” Even today, the language he uses shocks us and reminds us of the consequences of physical union outside of marriage. No matter how powerful it may seem, the shock and awe campaign we face in reference to sex has a very distinguishable difference from the military doctrine. The one who has launched the attack has no power over our Creator and therefore, no power over us. When Christians seek to unite with the Lord, we have victory over all things that tempt us ... including sexual immorality.



A. Shane Nixon
Director of Church and Community Relations, Baptist Retirement Homes

What are your plans?

Operation Inasmuch is coming April 24 and May 1. Please make arrangements now to have someone at your church or association to send

photos to share with Biblical Recorder readers. Contact (919) 847-2127 or e-mail diana@biblicalrecorder.org.

Operation inasmuch

Volunteers make contacts at Winter Olympics

By Adam Miller
Baptist Press

Making an impact at the Olympics means serving others beyond what they are expecting.

"I'm a Christian. Isn't this what we're supposed to do?" asked Irina State, a member of a Romanian Southern Baptist Church in British Columbia.

State echoes the feelings of more than 400 Southern Baptist volunteers from 25 states and two Canadian provinces who have joined about 600 other volunteers in making Christ known among crowds in Vancouver for the Olympic Games.

With a home base at churches throughout Vancouver, "More Than Gold" volunteers fill large portable containers with hot chocolate and coffee and hit the streets as the days turned cool.

While it's an awkward contraption to wear for three or four hours, there's little doubt the large cylinder attracts attention from a distance — jutting out as it does among throngs in downtown Vancouver. "Free coffee!"

From train stop to train stop, dozens of these backpack coffee dispensers bob around street corners, usually surrounded by volunteers wearing the trademark blue More Than Gold jackets.

Their backpacks filled with brand-new trading pins, city guides and copies of Mark's Gospel, the volunteers engage passersby with conversation and coffee.

"People come to the Olympics for excellence, and that's what we want to give them," said Steve Timmons, director of the University of Nevada-Las Vegas' (UNLV) Baptist Campus Ministry.

The pins are premium quality, coffee



BP photo by Adam Miller

BOWING — Baptist volunteers Kenneth Hungerford, left, and Chris Clifton pray on the streets of Vancouver about the witness they have had to people in town for the Winter Olympics. Showing kindness and hospitality have given Hungerford, Clifton, and nearly 1,000 More Than Gold volunteers tangible ways to engage people with the gospel. Go to www.biblicalrecorder.org for more coverage from the Olympics. There are videos and stories about Christian athletes.

is organic Nicaraguan and the pocket guides include profiles of Christian athletes and helpful city maps.

Timmons and a dozen college-aged volunteers form an assembly line along Granville Avenue just outside the doors of the nearby SkyTrain station.

Coffee dispenser, cup bearer and sugar and cream holder all perform their jobs working out of pocket-stitched aprons and a large tank strapped to the biggest volunteer's back. They remain mobile, going where the crowds gather.

If they're serving hot chocolate, someone stands with a can of whipped

cream at the ready. A crowd will form around them, depending on how cold it's become. The temperature drops by 15 degrees after sunset, and the Northwest offers its fair share of rain.

"People really respond to this," says Chris Clifton, a volunteer from UNLV who, just two nights earlier, had talked with an atheist for two hours.

"It was an amazing conversation," Clifton said later.

"The guy has two kids and I'm thinking, 'Why is this guy out in the cold after dark with kids at home?' There were some deep issues there."

Coffee isn't the only thing that grabs tourists' attention. So does pin trading.

When handing out the More than Gold pins, volunteers use the colors on the pins to tell about Jesus.

Developed for the 1996 Summer Olympics by the International Sports Coalition in association with the North American Mission Board, More Than Gold seeks to provide a tangible gospel presence in host cities, benefitting Olympic committee work and as well as the witness of local evangelical churches.

Nearly 1,000 volunteers — almost half of whom are Southern Baptist — joined the effort in Vancouver.

"This has been a very unifying experience for our churches," said Alan Au, a local Baptist pastor who helped plan the More Than Gold outreach in Vancouver.

"The results will extend far beyond the Olympics, both here and in the lives of athletes and spectators returning home. This is only the beginning."

When there was more than a week left in the Games and volunteer teams were continuing to arrive, they knew there was no limit to what God would do with the time left.

"Our only hope is that God will use our efforts to create divine appointments," said Debbie Wohler, a NAMB missionary in Vancouver deployed from Tahoe Resort Ministries in California.

Wohler has been a presence at more than a dozen Olympics and maintains contact with people she's shared the gospel with over the years.

"The world is here," she said. "This is our chance!"

(EDITOR'S NOTE — See more coverage at www.biblicalrecorder.org.)

Pastor's hospital visit leads to bobsledder's salvation

By Tim Ellsworth
Baptist Press

WHISTLER, British Columbia — John Napier couldn't believe what he was seeing. Here his father was dying in the hospital, and in walked Derek Spain, pastor of Lake Placid Baptist Church, who had driven more than two hours to visit him.

"It kind of astounded me that this guy drove five hours total that day just to see my father," Napier said. "Who would do that? What kind of human being? It was my first witness of Christ-like love."

Napier's father died two days later, but that encounter set Napier on the path to faith in Jesus Christ. Now, five years later, making his debut as the youngest bobsled pilot at the Winter Olympics, the 23-year-old says he owes all his success to the Lord.

"I'm trying to walk as close as I can and do everything I can for His glory," Napier said. "When I could have fallen, He's been there to catch me."

His father's death was the first of two major valleys Napier has navigated in his life, which has always centered on bobsledding, largely stemming from his parents both being bobsledders. His father was diagnosed with cancer when Napier was 18 but was able to see John's first World Cup race before he died.

"After he passed away, I was dev-

astated," Napier said. That's when he began attending Spain's Bible study.

As a bobsledder, Napier spent a lot of time training and competing in Lake Placid. Since Spain had ministered to Napier by visiting his father in the hospital, Napier figured he owed Spain at least a few visits to the Bible study.



Napier

Until then, Napier had grown up Catholic but had never been taught about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He did a lot of studying and a lot of learning over the next few months, and decided he needed to give up some of his worldly lifestyle — women, alcohol and even drugs.

So there was a change in Napier's life, but not a complete one. "It was kind of a halfhearted walk, still," he said.

The second valley for Napier came after a girl he had been dating ended the relationship. That sent Napier plunging into despair yet again.

"Instead of putting God first, I put her first, and that was a huge problem," he said. But Napier would soon discover how God would take the hardest chapters in his life and turn them into something good.

A friend told him to read Jeremiah 29:11. He did, and the Lord used that verse to open Napier's eyes.

Tired of living halfheartedly for God, he called Spain to step forward in baptism. "From there on, it's just been an awesome walk with people who have

been guiding me — other Christians, my pastor," Napier said.

Spain has seen the difference in Napier's life. "He is now deeply committed to Christ," Spain said. "He and I have great conversations about the word of God and what God's doing in his life, not only changing his behavior but giving him hope and focus and joy and strength and all those blessings that we have in Christ."

Now bobsledding has taken on a new significance for Napier, and his successes on the track have given him opportunities to talk to a broader audience about what Christ has done in his life.

"Maybe He wants to use me for an instrument of His glory," Napier said. "Maybe He wants to use me to show that you can be humble and respectful in defeat."

This year has been a breakout season for Napier, who came out of nowhere to win the World Cup in Lake Placid — a lifelong dream come true for him. Now he's anxious to see what the Lord has in store for him in Vancouver.

"I should not be accomplishing what I am, in my eyes or in a lot of people's eyes," Napier said.

"But I am. He's pushing me down that track."

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