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SOUTHERN BAPTISTS plant gospel in Mormon heartland

By **JIM BURTON** | NAMB
&
SETH BROWN | BR Content Editor

You’ve looked out the front window of your home and seen them coming. Two young males wearing white shirts and black ties are riding bikes in the neighborhood. When they knock on your door, what do you do?

North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary Travis Kerns would encourage you to love them. That’s what he has learned to do. His love for Mormons grew to the point that he now lives 35 miles from downtown Salt Lake City, Utah and serves as city missionary for NAMB’s Send North America: Salt Lake City.

Kerns has a doctor of philosophy degree in applied apologetics with a focus on Mormonism from The

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Ky. During his undergraduate studies in 1996, he had a class on new religious movements, and Mormonism was the first they studied.

“It took hold of my heart,” Kerns said of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). “In school, every paper I wrote was geared toward Mormonism.”

When he began teaching at SBTS in 2007, Kerns started taking students to Salt Lake City. On the

flight home after his sixth trip there in 2012, Kerns said there were fires on the mountains. As he viewed the smoke filling the Salt Lake Valley during the plane’s ascent, it became a fresh vision.

“What it said to me was that this city is on fire and burning,” Kerns said. “I just lost it; started crying like a baby.”

Mormon heartland

Salt Lake City, where LDS headquarters is located, is the religious center of the Mormon faith. “Utah is 70 percent LDS,” Kerns said.

“LDS members run the state government. The majority of judges, police officers, firefighters, lawyers,

[See Mormon page 8](#)

2015 Send North America Week of Prayer missionary Travis Kerns moved with his wife, Staci, and son, Jeremiah, to Salt Lake City to help reach the city with the gospel. Kerns serves as city missionary for Send North America: Salt Lake City. (NAMB photo by John Swain)

Week of Prayer for **SEND»NORTH AMERICA** and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

**MEET YOUR MISSIONARIES
PAGE 9**

N.C. Baptists, SBC leaders pray for revival

By **K. ALLAN BLUME & SETH BROWN** | BR staff

It’s been more than 200 years since the 1806 Haystack Prayer Meeting in Williamstown, Mass. – the famous prayer gathering of five college students as they took shelter from a storm. That meeting, many believe, was the initial event that led to a revival and a profound missions movement. Many Southern Baptist leaders today are praying for another such event.

Chris Schofield, director of the Office of Prayer for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, says a

prayer for spiritual awakening – a revival – is rising to God all over the country. “It’s been going on for years,” he said.

Pastors and church leaders across North Carolina are coming to Schofield in search of strategies and resources to encourage their congregations to pray.

“It’s been building. It’s been growing – the initiatives, the emphases in the different state conventions have all been dovetailing,” he said. “It’s a groundswell.”

Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and senior pastor of Cross Church in

Springdale, Ark., told Baptist Press in an interview prior to his election to the SBC presidency that, if elected, he would call Southern Baptists to “cry out to God in extraordinary prayer for the next great spiritual awakening in America.”

Floyd has made good on his word. After taking the presidential post, he launched an outright campaign – via an e-book, speaking engagements and blog posts – to plead with Southern Baptists to call out to God in prayer.

[See Revival page 5](#)

When words become meaningless

Words are important. They are the primary tool we use to give definition to every idea, object, feeling, concept or personality.

Words are most valuable when they have potency. When a word powerfully and clearly defines something, it provides depth and richness that gives life to the thing it describes or represents. Words become pictures in our minds.

We express emotion with words. We debate with words. We communicate ideas with words. They can encourage us and motivate us to tackle that dream. They can also steal our hope.

Words are important, even though the hatchet job they take in the world of social media may imply otherwise.

As I drove to the office last Thursday morning my eyes were drawn to the car stopped beside me at the traffic signal. Hanging from the rear view mirror was a large metal, crow's-foot peace symbol. I wondered what generation that driver was living in. Maybe he's just hip on retro, but it took me back to the '60s and '70s when everyone was talking about "peace." It was in style to toss the word around, but nobody was defining it.

To be sure, most believed they were promoting "the absence of war."

All the while, the same crowd lived high on drugs and wild on sexuality, absent of personal peace. There was no peace. The word sounded hollow, robbed of its richness. Jeremiah said the leaders of his day were, "*saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace,*" (Jeremiah 6:14).

Another word that suffers from abuse is "love." Everybody likes to

use the word, but nobody defines it. We love our spouse and our children. But we also love our car, house or favorite basketball team. We love

ice cream, and we love that favorite shirt, shoes or dress.

If you don't agree with someone, they say that you don't "love" them – in fact, they scream that you "hate" them. I shake my head in disbelief. Who hijacked this beautiful word?

John 3:16 provides the context for defining love. God loved the world in such

a way that He offered up His Son. I John 4:10 explains the meaning of the word, "*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*"

Those of us whose embrace the truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ are ridiculed because we don't love everything the sinner is doing.

We are accused of hypocrisy. Those objectors just don't get it, because there is no credible definition of "love" in their world. They say everything they do is acceptable to God because God "loves" them, implying that God's love is equal to His complete endorsement of the sinner's sins.

Words like "marriage" are finding new definitions by those who claim to have "evolved" to a superior state of knowledge and understanding. From their newfound elevated position they gaze condescendingly at

the rest of us, hoping we will blindly adopt the popular new definition of marriage.

Last week Americans were taken into a new state of confusion over the definition of terrorism – which is no longer terrorism. It is simply extremism. And Islamic terrorism actually has nothing to do with Islam, according to President Obama.

A *New York Times* story cites the baffling strategy of the White House as "strategic logic."

In other words, our leaders are trying to defeat terrorism by playing word and mind games.

These same leaders tell us that all religions are good, but all religious expression must be under governmental control, which introduces a new definition of "religious liberty."

After a high-profile White House meeting this week on "Countering Violent Extremism," the president held a press conference providing us a series of bland, generic terms over anything that explicitly connects terrorist attacks or plots to Islam.

Sadly we have a president who is willing to defend Islam as a "peaceful religion," but seems to oppose Christian truth.

The president has publicly identified himself as a "Christian" on many

occasions. Does "strategic logic" mean the term "Christian" does not apply because that would connect his belief system to the Christian faith,

which rejects abortion and homosexual behavior?

Let's be honest. The 21 Egyptians who were murdered by the Islamic State were 21 Christians, intentionally targeted by the Islamic terrorists because they were Christians. The word

"Christian" is an important word. It means something to us. We value the name for many reasons, including the fact that it contains our Savior's name.

Words are important. But they are most powerful when they mean something. It is our responsibility to be sure our words are defined, as much as possible, by the God who created us, to use words accurately and to hold our leaders accountable for being honest with their words.

The psalmist summarizes the issue well, "*For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth*" (Psalm 33:4). **BR**

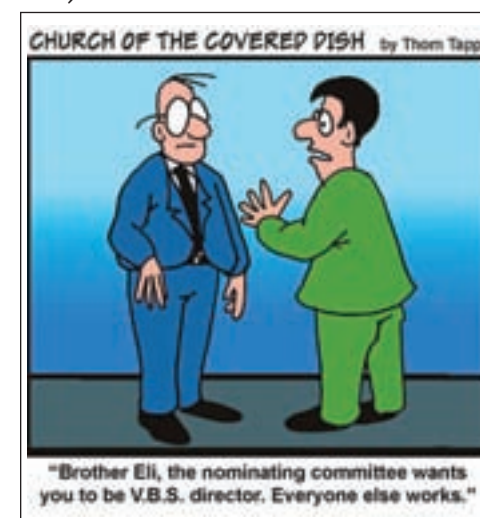


K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

These same leaders tell us that all religions are good, but all religious expression must be under governmental control, which introduces a new definition of religious liberty.

Submissions for Tar Heel Voices (letters to the editor)

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Pray for North American missions March 1-8

Every year, many professing Christians come together during the Easter season to celebrate Jesus' triumphant resurrection from the grave. It is also during this time that Southern Baptists are challenged to pray and support North American missions. We are challenged to give sacrificially in support of a special offering called the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO).

As we approach Easter Sunday on April 5, I am asking you to join other Southern Baptists for a week of focused prayer during the first week of March for North American missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. During the week of March 1-8, please take time to pray specifically for those who are lost in North America and all who are working to reach them with the gospel.

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, which helps financially support North American missions, was started by the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) in 1895 and named after Annie Arm-

strong in 1934. Through prayer, personal involvement and giving to this offering, we can make an impact to help reach the lost in this continent for Christ.

In North Carolina alone, more than half of the population has not accepted Christ as Savior and Lord.

Following our state convention's strategy to make disciples who make disciples, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering will equip God's servants to reach and disciple more people who are lost in North America.

Traditionally, North Carolina Baptists have been some of the strongest supporters of this special offering. In 2014, North Carolina Baptist churches gave \$5.8 million to support the AAEO.

The North American Mission Board's (NAMB) overall goal for this year's offering is \$60 million, all of which goes to help fund missions in North America.

Specifically, 54 percent of the funds will go toward

evangelism and church planting personnel and projects, which will help support and establish mission work in spiritually destitute areas of this continent.

Additionally, 33 percent will be devoted to raising up a new generation of missionaries under the farm system – a system that supports and trains student missionaries and church planters as they live out and spread the gospel on their mission field. The remaining 13 percent will be used to help provide health care benefits for NAMB missionaries.

As we approach this Easter season, will you join me in fervent prayer for North American missions, NAMB president Kevin Ezell, his staff and all of our missionaries as they labor in advancing God's Kingdom in our continent?

Give to God above your regular tithe in support of this special offering. Help spread the message of God's love and grace to all peoples in North America.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

– Luke 24:47 (NKJV) **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

Can you love your enemies?

By D.E. PARKERSON | Guest Column

Several years ago in the Rocky Mountains a bighorn ram approached the home of a man named Ed Bailey while he was watching a football game on television. The bighorn stopped suddenly, seeing his reflection in an unbreakable plate glass window. Thinking it was another ram, he bowed his head, ready to charge. He backed up, and immediately saw that the other ram backed up also.

Every time he moved, his reflection moved. Finally, after a three-hour duel, the ram shook his head and charged full force into the window, knocking himself unconscious.

That bighorn ram reminds me of a few people I have known through the years. I suspect that you have known such persons also – people who were born in the objective case, and live in a combative mood.

What makes them walk around ready to butt heads with everyone they meet – even though in the long run they are the loser for their negative attitude? I am reminded of the humorous story of a western cowboy who was known for being “the fastest gun in the west.” He was so fast, in fact, he could shoot before his gun left his holster. His name? “Footless Frankie!”

I suspect that most of us have shot ourselves in the foot at one time or another by being too quick to criticize, to condemn, to confront, to challenge or to chastise. I certainly have. We need to hear again the words of Jesus, “*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you,*

what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:32-36).

So what if you are good to your mother – big deal! Even Mafia mobsters look after their family and friends. Any person who would be a disciple of Jesus Christ must go further than that. We are challenged to love those people we ordinarily could not stand.

Any person who is serious about living the Christian life must learn to look at others through the eyes of Jesus – the eyes of compassion and understanding. Yes, this includes even those who are difficult to love.

When we look at people through the eyes of Jesus, we see them as individuals having infinite value. It is easy to view a young person in trouble – perhaps pregnant or on drugs – and cast a critical eye. But any parents who read these words know that it could be their child in trouble – and if it were, it would make a tremendous difference in the attitude they have.

We dare not treat any person with contempt, for he or she is a person for whom Christ died. To see every person through the eyes of Jesus is to see him or her, not as an object, but as an individual with hopes, dreams and aspirations equal to our own.

An unloving heart is a spiritual problem. Very often those who have the habit of butting heads with everybody they

meet do so because they have never felt loved or accepted by others. Just as an abused child will often grow up to abuse his or her own children, so the person who has never felt loved or accepted will not be able to love and accept others. The spiritual answer for such persons is that they come to fully understand what it means to be loved and accepted by God. It is in knowing that we are loved and accepted by God that that we learn to accept ourselves and to love others.

As followers of Jesus Christ we are taught to “love our enemies.”

Can it be done? Is it possible? What does it mean? No other word has caused as much discussion and debate as the commandment to love our enemies. So, we must know what Jesus meant. The Greek word He used is *agape*.

It means that we must never allow ourselves to desire anything but the highest good for others – even our enemies. Obviously we cannot love an enemy in the same way we love those nearest and dearest to us, for that would be unnatural, impossible and even wrong.

But we can see to it that no matter what a person may do to hurt us, we should desire and seek nothing but his or her highest good.

Do you have a loving heart? If not, you can have one with God's help. It is for your own sake, for your antagonist's sake and demonstrates to others that you are “a child of the Father.” Retaliation is never redemptive in nature. In a world governed by a holy God, it can never be triumphant. It is when we love that we are most like God.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Del Parkerson is a retired minister who writes *The Paper Pulpit*, a blog at paperpulpit.wordpress.com.) **BR**

Should we pray for the defeat of ISIS, or conversion?

A pastor friend told me last week that he had church members enraged with him when he suggested from the pulpit that we ought to pray for the salvation of Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists. The people in his church told him that he ought to be calling for justice against them, given their brutal murder of Christians, not for mercy.

I thought about my friend a few days ago when these murderous fiends beheaded

21 of our brothers and sisters in Christ because they refused to renounce the name of Jesus. I was not just angry; I was furious. Can such fury co-exist, though, with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)? When we pray about such evil, how should we pray?

The complexity of the Christian calling in the world was seen even in social media. One friend of mine posted that the slaughter of Christians overseas calls for the world's only remaining superpower to take action. Another said, quoting singer Toby Keith, that it was time to “light up their world like the Fourth of July.” To that, I say, “Amen.” Another friend, a former student of mine posted,

See Pray page 12



RUSSELL D. MOORE
Guest Column

Charlotte City Council to vote on transgender policy

By M.H. CAVANAUGH | Christian Action League

Christian organizations and clergy across North Carolina are concerned about a proposed anti-discrimination ordinance to be voted on March 2 by the Charlotte City Council. The ordinance would require businesses that work for the city and any “public accommodation” to abide by a non-discrimination policy which includes “marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity [and] gender expression.”

“Public accommodation” refers to restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors’ offices, pharmacies, retail stores, museums, libraries, parks, public schools, public gymnasiums, private schools and day care centers. It essentially means any establishment serving the public.

Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the North Carolina Values Coalition, cautions, “The proposed ordinance in Charlotte would force every business that provides its services to the public and every business that contracts with the City of Charlotte to have this policy even if adopting one would violate their freedom of conscience and religion.”

“Ordinances of this nature are promoted by various pro-gay rights organizations like the Human Rights Campaign

and Equality N.C.,” said Mark Creech, executive director of the Christian Action League. “They are a serious danger to religious liberty. Their supporters will argue such policies do nothing to diminish religious freedom. But their idea of religious freedom is that you can believe whatever you want, you can worship in private or in your church whatever way you choose, but you can’t practice the tenants of your faith in public except in those ways authorized by the state. This is a clear violation of the principle articulated by the founders in the First Amendment.”

The ordinance would also apply to the city’s public restrooms. Dave Kistler, president of the North Carolina Pastors Network, said, “In other words, an individual claiming a sexual identity different than that which they were born would be allowed, by law, to use the restroom of the opposite gender. Obviously, this is more than dangerous and must be stopped.”

Fitzgerald said this is why these ordinances are commonly referred to as “bathroom ordinances.” “By passing this ordinance, the Charlotte city council will put women and children in danger,” she said.

Council member Ed Driggs (R) argued that the proposed ordinance could put children in danger, also. He said it could

be used as a cover for sexual predators to go in a bathroom opposite of their gender and stalk little girls. “A lot of people worry that you might provide cover for bad actors,” said Driggs. He added that his statements were not aimed “toward people with legitimate gender identity issues.”

Councilman Michael Barnes (D) also raised concerns, saying, “If I send one of my daughters into a public bathroom, and I see a man going into that bathroom, I am going to have some concern.”

According to a report in *The Charlotte Observer*, councilman Kenny Smith (R) asked the council to remove provisions regarding transgender people. He also expressed concern about the bathroom issue in part because of his children.

Smith made a motion to remove the vote from the Feb. 23 agenda, which was the original date for the vote. Smith’s vote was defeated 7-4.

The council made a decision Feb. 19 to postpone the vote until March 2 after a few council members were not going to be able to attend. Similar laws forced Christian business owners Aaron and Melissa Klein of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, to close their business in 2013 because they refused to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple. They argued they could

not comply with the request because of their religious objections to same-sex marriage. But the Gresham, Ore. couple was found guilty of discrimination and ordered to pay a \$150,000 fine to the lesbian couple.

In an email alert, Mark Harris, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charlotte noted the proposed “Bathroom Bill” is also like the one supported by the city council and lesbian mayor of Houston, Texas.

The measure caused an uproar when the mayor called for the sermon transcripts of several key pastors in the city to be subpoenaed, because of their opposition to the city council’s actions.

“Now, the same agenda comes to our own Charlotte, N.C.” said Harris.

Fitzgerald said it’s critical this proposed policy be stopped in Charlotte. Its proponents are planning to take it to every major city in the Tar Heel state, she added.

The March 2 meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – This story first appeared at ChristianActionLeague.org (CAL) and is used by permission. K. Allan Blume contributed to this story. The CAL website provides contact information for Charlotte’s mayor and city council members.) **BR**

Family Christian seeks bankruptcy protection

By ADELLE M. BANKS | Religion News Service

Family Christian Stores, the largest Christian retail chain, filed for bankruptcy, seeking to restructure so it can keep its more than 260 stores open.

Chuck Bengochea, president and CEO, said the Grand Rapids, Mich.-based company “took on too much debt” due to declining sales and was hit by the 2008-09 recession and the digital revolution that has changed the sales of books, movies and music.

“I wish that we had alternatives but we do not,” said Bengochea in a video released last week to explain the restructuring plans.

On Feb. 17, Bankruptcy Court Judge John T. Gregg in Grand Rapids ruled that the company could continue to function during the Chapter 11 bankruptcy process using money it receives from its operations, said Senior Vice President Steve Biondo.

MLive Media Group reported that the chain, which has stores in 36 states, had \$230 million in sales in 2014, down from \$305 million in 2008.

Publishers Weekly reported that the chain has “assets of between \$50 million

and \$100 million and liabilities in the same range.”

The magazine said creditors include prominent publishers such as HarperCollins Christian Publishing, which is owed \$7.5 million.

The company said it does not plan to close any stores or lay off any of its more than 3,200 full- and part-time employees during the restructuring.

In 2012, Family Christian Stores was purchased by three businessmen and donated to the nonprofit Family Christian Ministries. Comparing the bankruptcy process to one used by airline and auto industries, the company hopes Gregg will approve its plan so a new subsidiary of Family Christian Ministries can acquire its stores and e-commerce site within 60 days.

Founded in the 1930s, Family Christian Stores owns two other companies: iDisciple, an app with sermons and music, and the Christian movie production company Giving Films. Those two companies operate independently of the chain of stores and are not part of the restructuring plans.

The closest competitor to Family Christian Stores is LifeWay Christian Stores, with more than 180 locations. **BR**

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SEBTS.EDU/WISDOM

Revival

Continued from page 1

There is a sense of desperation, of dependence, in the words of both Schofield and Floyd. “As we come to God in humility and repentance, entering into this special season of extraordinary prayer, we plead with God for spiritual revival personally, revival in the church, and the next Great Awakening in the United States,” writes Floyd.

Schofield wants to make sure that such an emphasis does not come and go as a fad. He wants to see the call to prayer heeded not only by church leaders and pastors, but by people in the pews as well.

“God is a great initiator of prayer,” says Schofield, “and He’s calling.”

To that end, there are seven prayer conferences planned for North Carolina Baptists in 2015. Six are regional; one is statewide. The Statewide Prayer Conference is scheduled for March 13-14 at Village Baptist Church in Fayetteville. The plan also includes a 50-day prayer focus for Hispanic churches in the state.

“God is raising up leaders in our convention to say, ‘Hey, wait a minute. Our greatest need is not that we become relevant, not that we have the greatest marketing strategy and not that we need some kind of socio-political change. No,

our greatest need is God,’” says Schofield.

The 2015 SBC annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, June 16-17, will emphasize prayer for spiritual awakening according to President Ronnie Floyd. In a recent meeting with Baptist editors, he announced the theme, “Great Awakening,” and a full remake of the convention’s hourly schedule.

Tuesday morning will begin with opening formalities, worship and the president’s address. All six seminaries will follow with back-to-back reports. Floyd said he wants the messengers to see what the “churches are doing through our seminaries.”

The Tuesday afternoon session brings the first introduction of business, including motions, the Executive Committee report and recommendations, the Committee on Committees report, the Committee on Nominations report, the Resolutions Committee report and the election of officers.

“Tuesday night, I want us to call for a national gathering of Southern Baptists to pray for the next great move of God in America and to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” Floyd said. The two hour session will include time

to “unpack the Word of God,” pray a lot and worship.

“Are [Southern Baptists] in clear agreement that the number one need of America is a mighty spiritual awakening? I promise you, I know of no hope apart from that,” he said. “We’re all concerned about our nation, let’s call out to God for our nation. God can do more in a moment than I can do in a lifetime.”

The entire Wednesday morning session is reserved for global missions. Messengers will hear from the Woman’s Missionary Union, North American Mission Board (NAMB) and International Mission Board (IMB), followed by a two-hour celebration of missionary sending. Kevin Ezell, president of NAMB and IMB president David Platt will be speaking.

After the Wednesday noon break for seminary luncheons, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission report will be the center point of the afternoon session that will include a panel discussion.

Floyd said since the Supreme Court will release their decision on same-sex marriage in June, “We felt like there is a real need to prepare our churches for whatever happens. Without a move of God we already know where it seems the pendulum is going.” So a panel of five leading Southern Baptists will be interviewed by Floyd on the subject, “The Supreme Court and same-sex marriage – preparing our churches for the future.”

Go to praync.org to learn more about prayer events in North Carolina. For more information on the SBC annual convention, visit SBCannualmeeting.net. **BR**

Raleigh radio show hits syndication

Christian News Service

The USA Radio Networks announces it has signed Steve Noble to its growing number of syndicated talk show hosts. Steve is host of CALLED2ACTION currently broadcast throughout North Carolina.

The show will air from 4-5 p.m. Eastern Monday through Friday beginning March 2. A house-painter, turned Christian activist, turned Christian radio show host, Noble contends he wants to be the last evangelical Christian anybody expected to meet: resolute in his allegiance to a biblical worldview while also being curiously likable and winsome.



“I am thrilled to join the USA Radio Network family because we share a common vision to have a profound impact on our nation by offering a different kind of dialog,” said Noble. “A dialog that will necessarily create some uncomfortable exchanges, but also one that is bathed in humility, patience, and yes... even love.”

A *Biblical Recorder* story from June 2013 featured Noble’s efforts with California pastor Greg Laurie’s Harvest America campaign.

Noble is a North Carolina Baptist. Visit c2athisweek.org. **BR**

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Southeastern hosts annual Go Conference on the glory of God

SEBTS Communications

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) hosted its seventh annual collegiate conference on the theme “go for the glory of God.”

Approximately 620 students heard from featured speakers Daniel Akin, H.B. Charles Jr., J.D. Greear, Tony Merida and Russell Moore at the SEBTS campus on Feb. 6-7. Breakout sessions gave attendees the opportunity to hear other SEBTS professors and local leaders speak on the glory of God in a variety of areas such as spiritual formation, suffering, seeking justice and vocation.

Greear, lead pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, reminded listen-

ers from Acts 8 that the Holy Spirit is the source of a Christian’s strength and power. “The gospel goes forward faster through lay people than apostles,” Greear said. “Jesus has a prime spot for you in the starting lineup regardless of what your gifting is.”

Moore, the president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said “every Christian is embedded in the public square,” and each one should use his or her arena to manifest the glory of God, even if it seems “scandalous” to others at times.

Friday evening, a panel featuring several of the speakers offered personal insights into what it means to live faithfully for Christ in dating and marriage



Russell Moore, from left, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Tony Merida, pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh and associate professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), H.B. Charles Jr., pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla.; and Danny Akin, SEBTS president, participate in a panel during the Go Conference in February. (SEBTS photo)

relationships. Akin, president of SEBTS, preached on Ephesians 5:21-33 where he outlined a biblical view of marriage as between one man and one woman.

“Marriage is a great gift from a glorious God that should point the world to Christ and the gospel,” Akin said.

Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., emphasized the glory of God in diversity from Ephesians 2:14-18. “Jesus Christ is the only One who can bring peace with

God, with self and with others,” Charles said. “To find peace, you must run to the cross and repent of your sins. The real issue that separates us is sin.”

Charles exhorted Christians to tear down walls of hostility. “Christ didn’t Christianize the Jews, or Judaize the Gentiles. He instead created an entirely new race,” he said.

To view photos, go to flickr.com/southeastern. To watch the messages online, go to multimedia.sebts.edu. **BR**

New board members excited

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Richard Rockwell admitted to feeling a bit overwhelmed at the conclusion of his first meeting as a member of the Board of Directors for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

“I’m overwhelmed, not necessarily by the information, though that is overwhelming,” said Rockwell, a member of First Baptist Church in Swannanoa.

“I’m overwhelmed with excitement about what fellow Baptists are doing in the state and through the state in reaching the world. I’m excited about being a part of something that’s alive, focused and on mission.”

Rockwell was one of 52 new members of the board, which met for the first time this year on Jan. 27-28 at the Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro.

During the day and a half of meetings, new board members met with their respective committees for the first time, heard reports from Baptist institutions and agencies, and shared their enthusiasm and eagerness to serve in 2015.

“What I’m taking back with me is an excitement to be here and knowing that everybody is working together,” said John Elledge, pastor of Liberty Grove Baptist Church in Ashe County.

“There is something for everyone within the church to get onboard for Christ to impact lostness and to make disciples. I’m excited about that. God bless this organization.”

The BSC continually seeks individuals to serve on its Board of Directors, boards of the conventions institutions and agencies, and various committees. More information on the nomination process and forms for making a recommendation are available online: ncbaptist.org/recommend.

Although he has been active in North Carolina Baptist life for more than 20 years, new board member Bob Lowman said, “It’s great to be reminded of the partnerships we have, and I’m excited about the ways we’ll be able to continue those to reach the state for Christ.”

Lowman is director of missions for the Metrolina Baptist Association.

Steve Tillis, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Raleigh, said his first board meeting exposed him to new ministry opportunities that he is eager to share with his congregation. “It’s been a great opportunity to realize that the Kingdom is a lot bigger than just my church,” Tillis said. “I’m excited to take everything that I’ve learned here back to my church, so that they will know all that we’re doing in North Carolina.” **BR**

FUNNELS OR MEGAPHONES?

Funnels and megaphones are essentially the same shape. The difference is in application.

Many churches operate like funnels. Churches plan outreach strategies, attractional services or events designed as entry points. People are “poured” into the big end of the funnel and assimilated into the church’s systems. The intention is to gather people and develop them within the system to become disciples of Christ.

Too often, rather than developing disciples, the church system ends up simply working to perpetuate the funnel. More people are collected, creating a need for a bigger container (buildings, budgets, programs and, of course, bigger funnels). As a result people are assimilated into the life and service

of the institution known as church without necessarily making disciples of Jesus focused on His mission.

What if the funnel was turned upside down? Then it becomes a megaphone. Funnels collect, megaphones distribute. They amplify. Instead of pouring people into an institution to contain them, a megaphone broadcasts the message of the gospel by sending disciple makers into the world. This kind of church releases people from the container and teaches them to

live for the sake of God’s glory among a people. People in this system are disciplined for mission, not merely assimilated.

Should we abandon the funnel altogether? Not necessarily. But we need to reconsider what we funnel people into. The people of God should gather for worship and discipleship in order to preserve doctrinal fidelity, care for each other, and encourage

fellow believers toward love and good works (Hebrews 10:23-25). The church should collect people, but it should never contain them. It is all a matter of orientation. A megaphone system repositions the church and demonstrates to members that the focus should be on God’s mission to be expanding His kingdom outward.

So, what does your church do that looks like a funnel? How could you turn that funnel into a megaphone?

You don’t have to wait for the system to change. As a disciple of Jesus, you have already been commissioned to go and make disciples. Maybe the megaphone mentality starts with you!

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Brian Upshaw is disciple-making team leader for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. This article is adapted from a larger entry posted at BrianUpshaw.com.)



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Evangelism workshop tells ‘The Story’

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Whether it's a good book, movie or a friend's latest adventure, everyone loves a good story. They have a way of connecting and engaging people.

On Feb. 10 more than 50 pastors, church staff, lay leaders and volunteers attended a training workshop to learn how to use not just any story to connect and engage people, but “The Story.”

Marty Dupree, adult evangelism and discipleship consultant with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, led the daylong training event for The Story at Temple Baptist Church in Fayetteville.

“The Story is an evangelism tool for sharing the gospel, and it's a discipleship tool that helps people understand the Bible as a whole,” says Dupree. It connects God's grand story of redemption in the Bible – creation, fall, rescue, restoration – to the life stories of individuals by showing how they can join God's redemptive plan.

The tract offers a relational approach to witnessing that encourages Christ-followers to use everyday conversations with family, friends, neighbors, coworkers and others to point them to the Bible for answers to life's most press-



Marty Dupree, center, leads “The Story” training Feb. 10 in Fayetteville. Dupree is adult evangelism and discipleship consultant with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. (BSC photo by Chad Austin)

ing questions. During his presentation, Dupree shared several examples of how he has used The Story to share his faith with a passenger sitting beside him on an airplane, a server at a local restaurant and a fellow sports fan at a college football game.

“If you engage people conversationally with the gospel, they are often open and willing to talk with you about it,” Dupree said.

“Although many people we come in contact with will say they don't have any particular spiritual beliefs, many are still interested in talking about the Bible, who God is and the big questions of life.”

Barry Lawrence, pastor of Fusion Church in Spring Lake, attended The Story workshop and said he found the training “invaluable.”

“The Story is a method that's pertinent for our world today because many people don't have a church background,” Lawrence said.

“So when we share the gospel, we can begin at the beginning of the story in Genesis.”

The Story can be used one-on-one or in group settings.

Lawrence said he plans to preach a sermon series based on the themes of The Story leading up to Easter.

Theron Hawkins, pastor of True Vine Community Baptist Church in Fayetteville, wants to use The Story in small groups as a way to equip his congregation to be more prepared to share their faith.

“The Story shows how stories can be used to reach people for the cause of Christ,” Hawkins said. “There is a need to tell people your story and tell people about His story.”

More regional training sessions are planned across the state throughout the year. For more information about The Story training events, visit ncbaptist.org/thestory.

To learn more, visit viewthestory.com. **B3**



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SEND

Continued from page 1

real estate agents and bankers are LDS. Almost everyone here is LDS.”

When Kerns moved into a home with his wife, Staci, and their son, the neighbors already knew it was the “NAMB” house.

“The LDS Church does research when real estate transactions are done,” Kerns said. “Plus, we didn’t show up at the meeting house on Sunday.”

Mormons attend meeting house (comparable to church) meetings based upon their residence. Between Logan and Provo, Kerns estimates there are over 4,000 meeting houses or halls.

“It’s so Mormon here, many have never met or heard from anybody who is not Mormon,” Kerns said.

Church planting challenge

Southern Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination in Utah, but the presence is minimal. Most Protestant churches run between 50 and 100 people.

“The hardest part about any Christian church (in Utah) is that the average tenure for pastors is 14 months,” Kerns said. One key to success, he believes, is to keep showing up.

As city missionary for Send North America: Salt Lake City, one of 32 Send North America cities, Kerns oversees church plants in the metropolitan area.

“The Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention has a goal that by 2020 they want to double the number of churches [in the two-state convention],” Kerns said. “That means another 150 churches. We want to be one third of that number, 50 new churches by 2020.”

By 2014, there were 18 active Southern Baptist church plants through Send North America: Salt Lake City, with 12 having started within the year. Kerns spends much of his time mentoring the current church planters while recruiting and assessing future church planters. Utah County, which Kerns calls the cultural capital of Mormonism and the home of Brigham Young University, garners most of his attention.

Accepting the church planting challenge

Ben and Lindsey Neiser, former members of North Wake Church, Wake Forest, N.C., moved to Utah with their two daughters in July 2014.

They chose Provo-Orem as a place to plant a church for a few reasons. Neiser kept an open mind as he and his wife considered locations. “God, you’ve given us a heart for church planting,” he said, “now You fill in the blank.”

Neiser was already engaging LDS missionaries around Wake Forest while attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Then in a seminary class, he saw a list of the 50 most unreached metropolitan areas in North America; Provo-Orem topped the list.

The International Mission Board classifies a people group as “unreached” if it is less than two percent evangelical. Provo-Orem rates 0.6 percent evangelical. “It’s really heartbreaking,” said Neiser. “What reason do we have not to go?”

The religious atmosphere in Utah is unlike North Carolina, though. “This is not like planting a church in any other context that’s within the United States,” Neiser said. It’s more similar to an international church planting effort among an unreached people group.

Neiser’s posture toward church partnerships also resembles church planting efforts in international contexts where there are few evangelicals.



Utah Idaho Southern Baptist Convention Executive Director/Treasurer Rob Lee, center, speaks with Travis Kerns and ministry assistant Sally Teny, left, at the convention office in Salt Lake City. Kerns, a 2015 Send North America Week of Prayer missionary, serves as city missionary for Send North America: Salt Lake City. (NAMB photo by John Swain)

The couple joined First Baptist Church Provo (FBC), and they are serving the church in various ways as they become acclimated to the area.

“Everything that I do ... comes from a very high view of the local church,” Neiser said. They teach Sunday School classes at FBC and lead a campus Bible study at Brigham Young University.

Neiser’s plan is to start a house-church under the oversight of FBC after a period of pastoral assessment. He also wants to “plant pregnant,” meaning they hope to take along one or two families from FBC with the intention of planting another church in the future.

Neiser would like to see other church planters come to Utah as well. “There’s plenty of opportunity. There’s no doubt about that,” he said. Though it is difficult, according to Neiser. “But what keeps us here – what holds us here – is a deep sense of God’s calling.”

Church planting needs

The cultural challenges church planters face in Utah often translate into logistical challenges too. Whereas in most major cities church plants can meet in public schools, that does not happen in Utah.

Most new churches spend much money on rent,

typically commercial space. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® (AAEO) and Cooperative Program (CP) help new churches meet those challenges.

“That money goes directly to our church plants to help them reach people,” Kerns said. “Without CP and AAEO, there would be no Send North America: Salt Lake City. There’s been no shortage of resources when I’ve asked. It’s because of the generosity of Southern Baptists.”

Kerns was close to tenure at SBTS when he accepted the call to lead Send North America: Salt Lake City. Through his research, Kerns has built relationships with many LDS leaders.

“In 18 years of doing this, I’ve only seen two people convert from Mormonism to Christianity,” said Kerns who notes that on average it takes from two to seven years for most Mormons to convert, the majority being much closer to

seven years. “Being around leaders of the LDS church to share my faith with them drives everything that I do.”

The goal for the 2015 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is \$60 million.

To learn more about the Week of Prayer, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and how your church can be mobilized to push back lostness in North America, visit anniearmstrong.com. **BR**



Ben and Lindsey Neiser and their two daughters made the move from Wake Forest to Utah in 2014. They are praying toward the planting of a new church. (Contributed photo)

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Kingdom moves forward in Moldova partnership

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

Aaron Wallace heard leaders of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) talking about the launch of a partnership between N.C. Baptists and the Baptist Union of Moldova in 2012, and it piqued his interest. Wallace, lead pastor of Hephzibah Baptist Church in Wendell, saw this as a great fit for his church.

A vision trip to the small Eastern European country convinced him to lead Hephzibah in a partnership with a northern region of Moldova on the Ukraine border. On the trip he met Moldova Baptist leaders, church planters, pastors and regional coordinators.

But when he met Peter Mikhalchuk the connection to Moldova came alive. Pastor Peter, as he is commonly called, is an enthusiastic, deeply committed pastor who has served the northern region for more than two decades. His testimony includes opposition to his ministry from communists.

When he began the work there was only one evangelical church for every 25 villages in the north. Today there is one church for every five villages.

“One of the reasons we chose northern Moldova is that we wanted to work with a pastor who has a vision,” said Wallace. “We wanted to work with churches that are willing to have ‘some skin in the game.’ We didn’t want to carry the whole load financially, but work with people would be willing to sacrifice. They have faithfully done that.”

He added, “We found Pastor Peter and other leaders in Moldova to be very well equipped. We’re getting to join what God is doing, and we get to be part of the vision and direction of these pastors. Every time we go we see the kingdom moving forward.”

Wallace understands that pastors in the states may be reluctant to commit to a partnership with leaders in another country. “For a lot of people the hesitation with missions is they get over there, the pastor is distant and things are not organized,” he said. That is not what he has seen. “Our experience is that there seems to be such a passion for outreach and discipleship. We feel like everything we’re investing in is productive.”

Effective partnerships are not simply a relationship between two pastors. Lay leadership is a critical ingredient says Wallace. That’s where Steve Johnson enters the picture.

Johnson, a member of Hephzibah, became a Christian after he retired from the Raleigh Police Department. “When I was a police officer, I was one of those guys that people said, ‘I hope he gets saved,



When the Hephzibah Baptist Church team departed Moldova, all 250 students from the camp overwhelmed them with cheers and high fives. Larry Lindsay, right, a Wake County high school teacher and coach, enjoyed the moment. Below, as Bibles and Christian tracts were distributed in the village an older man sat down and intently read every word. He asked a lot questions about the Bible, said Aaron Wallace, Hephzibah’s pastor. (Contributed photos)



but I just don’t know,” he said. Johnson had a dramatic conversion, and now wants his life to impact others for Christ.

“You never repay the Lord [for salvation] but you can always say ‘thank you.’ My hope is just to say ‘thank you’ every day to Him for what He has done for me,” he said. “The Lord placed on my heart the need to be a witness for Christ.”

He began to witness and to train others to be a witness. The desire to better understand the Bible led him to enroll in Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. “I got the MDiv in evangelism and biblical languages. So I’ve been teaching

evangelism and going on mission trips,” Johnson said.

When the potential for a partnership with Moldova surfaced, Wallace called Johnson, who had been on short term trips to Eastern Europe. “Aaron knew I had a heart for Eastern Europe so he invited me to go on the vision trip,” said Johnson.

Now he coordinates the partnership that includes medical clinics, youth and sports camps for ages 16-22 and preaching events in churches. Johnson believes Hephzibah’s work adds strength to the pastors in Moldova. “We’re trying to help pastors have a better standing in the community in the face of the Orthodox Church. Pastors show the villagers the love of Christ. We help with medical missions and camps, then we leave, but [the pastor] stays and has better standing in the community.”

A nine-day medical clinic is held each year covering 14 villages. The first year 550 Moldovan villagers were examined for a variety of medical needs including blood pressure and diabetes. Prescription medications that are not normally available are distributed by Ukrainian doctors who partner with the North Carolina team. During the 2014 clinics 650 people were served.

The greatest expense of the clinics is the medicines. The church works with medical professionals in Moldova, sending money ahead of the teams so the medicine can be purchased all year long and stored up for the clinic. “There are

no medical doctors in the villages and even if they have a doctor, they don’t have access to the medicines, so that makes the clinics important and effective,” Wallace said.

Last year 115 people came to know Christ through the medical clinic and camps. Johnson said the local pastors are heavily invested in reaching teenagers. “The pastors bring the youth to the camp. Then they spend a week in the camp with the youth. Then they go back to their communities with a relationship with these kids that they built at the camp.”

Pastor Peter reports that most of the decisions for Christ happen the week after the camp when they returned to the churches. “That shows that its not about presenting Christ and walking way,” Johnson added. “It’s about that long term desire to have discipleship that continues on in relationship-building.”

Wallace said, “Our goal is long term discipleship. We want to help pastors [reach] people but also lead those people to be disciple-makers.”

When Hephzibah church got involved in the partnership, there were nine regions in Moldova that needed to be adopted by churches in North Carolina. Seven of those regions now have committed relationships in progress. Two regions are yet to be adopted. The church’s goal is to help other churches build a partnership with a church in Moldova.

Wallace said the needs are great in

See Moldova page 15

Southeastern hosts interracial dialogue for community

By ALI DIXON | SEBTS Communications

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in cooperation with the town of Wake Forest hosted the first community dialogue on racial reconciliation entitled, “It’s Time: Interracial Dialogue.”

Walter Strickland, special advisor to the president for diversity and professor of theology at SEBTS, helped coordinate the event and served as the moderator for the five speakers.

“We are here today because in recent months there has been an unusual number of high-profile cases where the issue of race has been front and center,” Strickland said. “First and foremost, the loss of life is heartbreaking, and secondly, the nation’s polarized responses to these events, particularly the Michael Brown and Eric Garner non-indictment decisions, have been unproductive at best, and often inflammatory.”

The aim of the event was to facilitate dialogue in a community environment where each person has a voice. Organizers hope to begin developing strategies to cultivate racial harmony.

“It’s time for the people of God to lead this conversation in a way that only we can: saturated with the humility of our Savior, and with the humble posture that we took before the cross at the moment of our salvation,” Strickland said. “We must maintain this posture of humility before each other especially in this tense cultural moment in which we find ourselves today.”

The event was a time of listening to community leaders, discussing these issues and establishing relationships across racial, cultural and denominational lines.

“Our efforts are not in vain,” Strickland added. “This time is not a meaningless token of our desire to see change in our community. We are participating in God’s redemptive mission to restore the brokenness in creation as a sign of his rule and reign that is to come in the New Kingdom.”

“At present, we live in a time where the scars of brokenness mark our world, but as the redeemed in Christ, we have the opportunity, no, the responsibility and privilege to live out the restorative plan of God until we meet him in Glory,” Strickland said. “It’s time for God’s people to gather together and mend what Christ died to heal, and today in particular we address strife along the lines of race.”

Speakers were encouraged to provide a specific strategy to facilitate healing along racial lines in the community. Following each talk small groups brainstormed practical steps to apply the strategy presented.

Wake Forest Mayor Vivian Jones shared about ways the Town of Wake Forest seeks to foster a positive relationship between police officers and citizens through school and community events. Advisory boards are a way for the community to stay connected and participate.

“We should continue to demonstrate respect for one another by listening to one another and working together to make Wake Forest an even better place,” Jones said.



Wake Forest residents gathered recently for an interracial dialogue on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Organizers hope this and future events will cultivate racial harmony in the community. (SEBTS photos)



Wake Forest Mayor Vivian Jones, right, shared about ways the town tries to foster positive relationships between police officers and residents. Walter Strickland, left, special advisor to Southeastern’s president for diversity and professor of theology, helped coordinate the event and served as moderator for the five speakers.

Enoch Holloway, pastor of Friendship Chapel Baptist Church in Wake Forest, shared about having intentional dinners with others to build diverse relationships in the community.

Holloway called listeners to be intentional about loving others. “Racism can never be touched if the hu-

man heart is not touched,” Holloway said. “My white and black brothers, we have to step up to the plate and serve, asking the question of ourselves, ‘What can I do?’”

The associate minister at Friendship Chapel Baptist Church in Wake Forest, Leon Harris, said, “Racism is an evil cancer in our society; it spans the globe in every country and continent. It can only be eradicated by the power and will of Almighty God.”

“I believe that it is God’s divine plan that we come together to talk about what’s going on,” Harris said. “Until we call on the name of the Lord, we are doing it in our own strength. We have to learn to depend on Him so He can do it, and He gets the glory.”

Darryl Fisher, senior former associate superintendent of Wake County Public Schools, said, “We have to be in it for the long haul. If we are persistent, change will come. It is not enough to be opposed, we must confront these issues head on.”

Ken Steigler, Civil Rights legendary pastor who marched with Martin Luther King and strategized with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), shared the importance of relationships, acceptance, intentionality and listening (RAIL) when addressing racial issues. The event hosted about 100 attendees in Southeastern’s Ledford Center on Jan. 22. The group hopes to build upon the event by hosting “It’s Time: Part II” in the coming months.

To watch a recording of this event online, go to multimedia.sebts.edu. **BR**

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Pray

Continued from page 3

“Oh, that there might be an ISIS Saul standing there now, holding the cloaks, whose salvation might turn the Arab world upside down with the gospel!” To that I say “Amen,” too.

These are not contradictory prayers.

Jesus says to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). The Spirit of Jesus in the prophets and in the apostles also tells us that those who turn a blind eye to the killing of others are wrong. The fact that we feel contradictory praying both for justice against ISIS and salvation for ISIS terrorists is partly because we fail to distinguish between the mission of the state in the use of the temporal sword against evildoers (Romans 13:4) and the mission of the church in the use of the sword of the Spirit against sin and death and the devil (Ephesians 6). But that’s not, I think, the main problem.

The main problem is that we sometimes forget we are called to be a people of both justice and justification, and these two are not contradictory.

It sounds awfully spiritual, at first

blush, to say that we should not pray for the defeat of our enemies on the field of battle. But that’s only the case if these enemies are not actually doing anything. This terrorist group is raping, enslaving, beheading, crucifying our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as other innocent people.

To not pray for swift action against them is to not care about what Jesus said we should seek, what we should hunger and thirst for, for justice. A world in which murderous gangs commit genocide without penalty is not a “merciful” world but an unjust horror show.

As Christians, we ought to be, above all people, concerned with such justice. We not only have the common grace standard of caring about stopping murder and injustice, rooted in the image of God and the law written on the heart. We also have the personal implication here. It’s our household being wiped out in the Middle East, the very place where our church started. For us, this isn’t a matter of “them;” it’s a matter of “us.”

At the same time, praying for the salva-

tion of our enemies, even those committing the most horrific of crimes, is not a call to stop praying for justice against them. The cross, after all, is not forgiveness in a contemporary therapeutic sense – in which one is merely absolved of wrongdoing as though it were all a misunderstanding. No, that’s precisely the Apostle Paul’s point in the Book of Romans.

The gospel does not say, “Don’t worry about it; it’s OK.” The gospel points us to the cross where sin is absorbed in a substitute. God’s righteous condemnation of sin is there. He does not, and cannot, enable wickedness. And God’s mercy is there in that He is the One who sends his Son as the propitiation for sin. He is both “*just and the justifier of the One who has faith in Jesus*” (Romans 3:26). The gospel doesn’t leave sin unpunished. Every sin is punished, either at the Place of the Skull, in Christ, or in the judgment of hell, on one’s own.

The thief on the cross – a Middle Eastern terrorist by Rome’s standards – in his act of faith did not believe that his

salvation exempted him from justice. He confessed that his sentence was justice, and that he was receiving “*the due reward for our deeds*” (Luke 23:41) even as he cried out to Jesus for merciful entrance into the Kingdom of Christ (Luke 23:42).

We ought, indeed, to pray for the gospel to go forward, and that there might be a new Saul of Tarsus turned away from murdering to gospel witness. At the same time, we ought to pray, with the martyrs in heaven, for justice against those who do such wickedness.

Praying for the military defeat of our enemies, and that they might turn to Christ, these are not contradictory prayers because salvation doesn’t mean turning an eye away from justice. We can pray for gospel rootedness in the Middle East, and we can pray to “light up their world like the Fourth of July,” at the same time.

We are, after all, the people of the cross.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Russell D. Moore is the president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.) **BR**

Millers Creek church celebrates worship through art

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Worship comes in different forms. While many equate the term with music heard during a church service, others say the word has a broader meaning.

“Worship is much more than music,” said Andrew Heathershaw, worship pastor at Millers Creek Baptist Church in Millers Creek.

The church is hosting an art exhibit March 29-April 19. The theme – “Encounters with God: Biblical Scenes of Worship and Transformation” – was aimed at offering artists a broad definition of items to display.

“I was just trying to find ways to expand our congregation’s idea of worship,” Heathershaw said.

While this is the first art exhibit the church has done, Heathershaw said he hopes it is not the last.

One of Millers Creek’s church members has been working closely with Heathershaw on the project. Linda Joines has been a member of the church for 14 years. She found the church after her retirement from Lowe’s Home Improvement headquarters.

She wanted to be involved in ministry, and Millers Creek offered her that opportunity. She sings in the choir, teaches Sunday School and volunteers with various ministries at the church including adopted grandmother to Heathershaw’s children.

“I’m in all these classes with all these wonderful people who have natural talent,” said Joines, who belongs to an artist group that meets once a week. She began painting after she retired. It was something she had always wanted to try.

Since oil was the first medium Joines used, she finds it hard to choose another, but for her submission into the church’s exhibit she went with acrylic.



Linda Joines’ entry – “We Have Come to Worship Him” – to her church’s art exhibit displays the three wise men as they follow the star to Jesus. Millers Creek Baptist Church is hosting an exhibit featuring “Encounters with God” March 29-April 19. (Contributed photo)

Her painting is a silhouette of the three wise men on their camels following the star from Matthew 2:1-12.

“I’m a perfectionist, a realist,” Joines said. “It has to look like something.”

Normally, Joines said, it takes her a long time to complete a painting because she wants every detail to be perfect. This piece was different.

“I was really relaxed,” she said. “I was not concentrating” as much as usual.

She liked the painting so much she’s already chosen it as this year’s Christmas card. Joines said she works with three or four art groups and has been amazed at their responses.

Joines said only two topics are off limits at the art classes she takes – religion and politics.

She received a little pushback when she tried to let the group know about the exhibit, but they were able to send out an email announcing the call for submissions.

Another member who has training with museum exhibits is helping with the frames and displays.

The church often has opportunities for musicians to share their art with the congregation but this is a different kind of talent, Heathershaw said.

The church, which is the site of Millers Creek Christian School also has submissions from students of all ages.

Submissions have varied from oil paintings to stained glass and mixed media.

Art will be displayed in the main hallway of the church with labels next to each piece indicating the artist’s name, title of

the piece and a verse of scripture that inspired the art. Heathershaw hopes artists will dig into the Bible to find many instances of worship.

“We’re hoping that as people look at [the art] that they will be inspired,” Heathershaw said. “I would hope that it would grow from here.”

The exhibit will be open during church office hours and before and after church services.

The church is taking submissions up to early March. Contact (336) 838-4446, ext. 26, for more information about submissions or visiting hours.

Visit millerscreekbaptist.org. **BR**

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Discover, engage people groups in your city

With God bringing the nations to North Carolina, do you and your church know who these people are, where they are from and how best to engage them with the gospel of Jesus Christ?



Those are just a few of the questions that will be addressed during the upcoming "People Group Discovery and Engagement

Workshop" March 30 to April 1 at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) offices in Cary.

Representatives from the International Mission Board will provide hands-on training for pastors and church leaders to help them discover and engage unreached and unengaged people living in their own communities.

The cost of the workshop is just \$25, but space is limited. The deadline to register is March 23. Meals and lodging are not included in the registration fee.

The workshop will feature both classroom and field-ministry components. Attendees will learn how to conduct web-based research on unreached people groups and be trained on how to apply the results of their research by engaging with individuals in the community. Contact Steve Hardy with the BSC Great Commissions Partnerships team at (910) 810-0353 or shardy@ncbaptist.org. Visit ncbaptist.org/gcp; click on "Events" in left-hand menu.

Fruitland to show Billy Graham's 'Heaven'

"Heaven," a new message from Billy Graham, depicts the true stories of two people who came face-to-face with death – and heaven. The showing will address life after death and is to be held at 7 p.m. April 9 at Fruitland Baptist Bible College in Hendersonville. Admission is free.

N.C. Baptist Missions event set April 10-11

Baptists on Mission is holding the 2015 N.C. Baptist Missions Conference April 10-11 at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. Keynote speakers include Kyle Idleman, author of *Not a Fan*; Bryan Loritts, lead pastor of Fellowship Memphis Church; and David Nasser, author of *Glory Revealed*. Music will be led by Grammy and Dove award winner Laura Story. Special features include breakout sessions, mission fair exhibits, volunteer supper and mission testimonies. The event costs \$15 and will start at 4:30 p.m. Friday and close at 4 p.m. Saturday. This event is open to men, women and students. To register visit baptistsonmission.org/Events/2015-NC-Baptist-Missions-Conference.

Father, son overnight set at Caraway

Baptists on Mission's Camp Caraway will hold a father/son camp on April 24-25. These camps are a great opportunity for fathers, grandfathers, uncles or adult male mentors to spend some quality time with their sons/boys by being involved in a schedule of Christian fun and meaningful activities that boys love. It is important for men to be active in the development of boys. Fathers may bring up to three boys who are in 1st-6th grade. Lodging will be in modern, air-conditioned cabins. Attendees will stay together in a cabin with other fathers, sons and a staff member. Cost is \$72 per attendee.

To register visit baptistsonmission.org/Camps/Camp-Caraway/Registration/2015-Spring-Father-Son-overnight.



CHURCH NEWS



Sandy Springs Baptist Church, Harmony

On Jan. 28, Sandy Springs Baptist Church, Harmony, celebrated Baptist Men's day with a special recognition. At the conclusion of the worship hour, the church honored a special Baptist man from the church family: Tom Stroud. In October 2014, Stroud retired from serving as the Yadkin Baptist Association Baptist Men's director for 38 years. He worked with churches in the association in meeting needs and restoring dignity to the lives of hundreds of people from New York to Florida, but primarily in North Carolina. Stroud led groups of men, women and youth in disaster relief, building churches and restoring homes in cooperation with the Baptist State Convention's North Carolina Baptists on Mission (N.C. Baptist Men). He was instrumental in the church's purchase of two trailers which are filled with tools for disaster relief and two vans. The church presented Stroud, seen here with his wife, Betty Jo, with a plaque featuring a picture of Stroud wearing his blue hat on a work site. The congregation also presented him with a check for \$10 for each year he served (rounded off to \$400) from the church's mission fund.

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

VIRGINIA HIGHFILL CLARK, 92, died Feb. 8 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

At one time she was employed at P.H. Hanes Knitting Co. for several years. Clark was a graduate of Meredith College and the Carver School of Social Work (master of religious education) in Louisville, Ky. She was minister of education at



VIRGINIA CLARK

Angier Avenue Baptist Church, Durham, prior to her appointment as a missionary through the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) where she served in Japan from 1950 until 1984. She received a distinguished alumnae Award in 1986 from Meredith. After returning from Japan, she worked with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina as a language consultant (1984-1991). She has been a lifelong member of Northwest Baptist Church, Winston-Salem. In 2008, she married Dr. C.F. Clark, medical missionary at the Baptist Hospital in Kyoto, Japan.

She is survived by her husband; three step-sons; Robert, Tim, and Chris; brother, W. Lawrence Highfill; a sister, Lena H. Thomas; and step-grandchildren.

ALBERT ALBA YOUNG, 97, of Hickory died Feb. 17.

A North Carolina native, he graduated from Mars Hill College (now University) and Furman University. Young had seminary training at Southern and Southeastern seminaries and at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center's School of Pastoral Care. He was ordained to the ministry in 1940 at Clinchfield Baptist Church, Marion. His pastorates included

student pastorates at Mars Hill and Furman and at Oaklawn Baptist Church, Winston-Salem. He served as pastor of Viewmont Baptist Church, Hickory, from 1951 to 1978. After retiring he served 10 more congregations as interim pastor.

He is survived by his son, Charles R. Young Sr. of Hickory; daughter, Rebecca Y. Abernethy of Lincolnton; five grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.

Memorials to the Albert A. Young Ministerial Scholarship at Furman University, 3300 Poinsett Hwy Greenville, SC 29613 or to Viewmont Baptist Church, 1246 2nd St. NE Hickory, NC 28601.



ALBERT YOUNG

Staff changes

BARRY SWAIN has been called as pastor of Centerview Baptist Church, Marshville. Previously, Swain served as interim pastor at Corinth Baptist Church, Chadbourn, and he is also the president and founder of Church Out Loud ministry which ministers to unchurched people who have separated from the church due to hurtful experiences.

Oak View Baptist Church, Kings Mountain, has called **DAVID TURNER** as its pastor.

NICK GARNER has been called as director of children's ministry at First Baptist Church, Creedmoor. He is currently pursuing a master of divinity degree with a concentration in international church planting at Southeastern Seminary.

Retirement

DAVID SIMON has retired from his position as minister to adults and senior adults at Peninsula Baptist Church, Mooresville. He served at Peninsula for more than 13 years. Simon grew up Jewish and specializes in Jewish traditions and leads Passover Seders. He will be available for revivals, interim and pulpit supply and can be contacted at kosher-copy@gmail.com.

Ordination

Cornerstone Church, Maiden, has ordained **KEVIN NICHOLS** as its newest deacon. Nichols' wife, Brandy, has been the children's minister since August 2009. Nichols was ordained Feb. 8, and a reception followed at the church.

Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Submissions will be edited. Please send information immediately following an event, or for opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance.

All submissions will be subjected to *Biblical Recorder* styles and guidelines and will be edited. Send to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.

March 8

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

March 15

A Birth Like No Other

Focal Passage: Luke 1:26-35

TIME ran an article in 2011 entitled, “Miracles in Japan.” It described how, as a devastating earthquake and tsunami ravaged Japan, a four-month old baby was literally swept away from her parents’ arms. Three days later Japanese soldiers were filtering through the rubble when they heard a cry. Removing the piles of debris, wood, shattered glass and rock, they found her. Not only was the miracle baby alive, dressed in her pink woolen bear suit, she was returned home safely to her family.

Miracles happen every day all over the globe, but not every miracle grabs our attention. One of the greatest miracles is human childbirth. Some of those, though, are more miraculous than others. In the Bible one can read about the unexpected and miraculous births of Isaac, Samuel and John. The miracle of birth for supposedly barren mothers brought great joy to those families. But without doubt, the greatest birth of all time is the birth of Jesus Christ.

Mary was a virgin. Her marriage was properly arranged, with full disclosure

and consent. We are told Mary was a young woman who loved God passionately and was completely committed to obeying Him. Among the millions of women alive at that time, God chose Mary to be the biological mother of His Son. God had “*favored*” her (vv. 28-29). What a remarkable honor!

Mary’s response to the angel’s announcement was predictable. She was confused. She questioned God. She knew there had been no sexual relations between herself and her betrothed. She also had other dilemmas to navigate, such as how to communicate her unexpected circumstance to her parents, and to Joseph, and his parents, and to their friends. She probably feared their rejection. What Mary accepted, however, was that the pregnancy and subsequent birth was far bigger than her. It was a birth like no other because the implanted seed of life came from God Himself. The baby Jesus was fully human, and yes, fully divine – a miracle indeed.



WAYNE PROCTOR
Pastor, Eure Baptist
Church, Eure

Focal Passage: Mark 4:35-41

Do you ever have weird, non-sensical dreams? If yes, do you know why? Not long ago I had such a dream. I was in college, it was a few weeks into the semester and there was a class I had not yet attended. I struggled to get out of bed and go to class.

My worry was that if I went, it wouldn’t matter. I would have already failed.

As I awoke out of my nightmare, I shook my head and said, “What in the world was that about?”

It has been almost four decades since I’ve been in college, and I was always a conscientious student. All that is clear to me about this peculiar dream is that it described some fear stirring inside.

I’m convinced that many dreams reflect our fears.

I’m also convinced the two things we fear most are failure and death. And while the vast majority of our fears never

materialize, when they do crop up, they often paralyze or destroy us.

Our text describes what started out as a normal evening in the life of Jesus and His disciples.

Jesus had been preaching and teaching and healing, and now it was time to travel across the Sea (Lake) of Galilee where Jesus would begin a new chapter in His ministry the next day. Exhausted, Jesus nestled in the back of the boat and promptly fell asleep.

Their boat was solid, the crew was well versed in water navigation protocols and Jesus was with them. No need to fear, right? Somewhere across the sea, however, a monstrous storm erupted. Gigantic waves pounded the boat, and even the hardest of sailors among them feared death was imminent (v. 38b).

Jesus did, then, what He always seemed to do. He heard their cry and came to their rescue. He ordered the violent and deadly waves to cease, and the crisis was averted. Then Jesus asked a most telling and embarrassing question (v. 40b): “*Why are you fearful? Do you still have no faith?*” Jesus’ message to us is “Don’t fear. Trust Me completely.”

March 8

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

March 15

Everyone Accountable (or Expect Judgment)

Focal Passage: Zephaniah 1:1-11

C.S. Lewis once wrote, “We all want progress,” and he was right. There is an innate desire within us to learn, create, grow and develop. Our culture reflects this too. There are rapid technological advances and constant globalization. Businesses are connecting to global markets, and consumers are browsing foreign fashion from the comfort of their kitchen table. Transcontinental flights are carrying people greater distances with ease, as well.

As Christians, such worldwide access ought to spur us on to greater work for the glory of God among all nations. It should also draw us closer to the absolute truth of the gospel. There is one God who sent one Savior to redeem the sins of the world. Only He is worthy of worship; only He can save. Without Him, there is no hope in judgment. Before God, all that matters is a person’s standing with Christ.

Connectedness is a two-way street, though. There is also the sobering reality of non-Christian influence on the people of God.

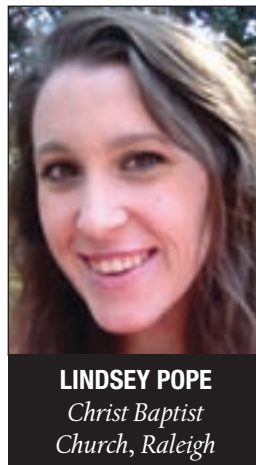
We have the Word of the Lord in-

stantly available on our smartphones and tablets, and more access to biblical resources than ever before. Still, are we heeding the warning Zephaniah gave so many years ago? Are we allowing God’s grace to humble us towards daily confession, repentance and evangelism?

Zephaniah prophesied to remind the people of God whom they stand before and who alone is worthy of their worship. We need to hear and be reminded of his words. We need to live for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

“We all want progress,” Lewis wrote, “But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turn, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man.”

What kind of progress are you making, dear Christian? Whose kingdom are you building?



LINDSEY POPE
Christ Baptist
Church, Raleigh

Focal Passage: Zephaniah 3:8-17

Imagine a nation full of corrupt leaders who refused justice and prohibited fair trial. Rather than speaking up on behalf of others, officials ravaged them instead. Instead of protecting the vulnerable, judges provoked them without constraint. Imagine prophets who avoided prophesy, and priests who forgot their God. This was the state of Jerusalem and the nations at the time of Zephaniah’s prophesy.

The speech of the leaders was weak and profane, yet they were shameless. Unlike them, God spoke with clarity and truth through His prophet: the Day of the Lord was coming when He would judge and punish their sin.

He would ruin their streets and empty their cities of inhabitants. Yet in that day He would also save those who called on Him. He would be merciful to the repentant.

From the beginning God has desired to dwell among His people. In the gar-

Our Great Salvation

den, He walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. When they rejected His word and hid from His presence, what did He do? Though omnipresent, He called to them. Though omniscient, He asked them what they had done. At the moment of their greatest shame, God made Himself present among them.

He met with Moses in the desert. Though His people complained, He fed them with manna. He inspired David to song and Solomon to wisdom. He guarded His people, protecting them, feeding them and leading them back when they strayed. God delights in fellowship with us, but He is holy. His holiness is a mystery that we may never fully understand. Whatever we can imagine at our most innocent and creative, God is greater – more pure and more powerful. Yet throughout the Old Testament, He guarded a remnant for Himself. He made promises, and He kept them. He drew His people away from sin and into fellowship with Him.

In the midst of unjust circumstances or difficult times, God can be trusted. Through Christ, we can be forgiven and redeemed. We can again worship Him in innocence – in spirit and in truth.



Medical clinics opened many doors to share the gospel. They were staffed by volunteer medical professionals from North Carolina and doctors from both Moldova and the Ukraine. (Contributed photo)

Moldova Continued from page 10

Moldova. Realizing the limits of his church in reaching everyone, he has an offer for North Carolina Baptists. “If any pastors or church leaders in North Carolina want to see what missions looks like in Moldova, we would like to invite them to go with us,” he said.

“We’ll be glad to go a few days earlier and introduce them to the leaders and show them the needs. There are still two regions that have not been adopted in the partnership,” Wallace added. “We’ll be glad to show them what a medical clinic looks like. Please let us use our mission trips as a vision trip for you and your teams. There are other pastors across the state who are involved in Moldova and will be glad to help, also”

Partnership missions has strengthened Hephzibah church. “We have watched our church grow through partnerships over the last four years,” said Wallace. “Last year we had more than 160 people who went on a partnership trip to Moldova or Canada. When you look at the giving of the church, I believe 80 percent of our people are financially involved in the mission of the church and praying for missions. That’s been huge for us.”

Chuck Register, BSC’s executive leader for church

planting and missions partnerships, said, “The church-to-church model that Hephzibah is exhibiting is at the very heart of what we are seeking to accomplish through the office of Great Commission partnerships. It’s where a church in North Carolina develops a church-to-church partnership with a congregation of a different people group or a different country that the most is accomplished for the Kingdom.”

The BSC-Moldova partnership was designed to establish relationships between churches and to see churches in the state adopt all nine regions of Moldova. Register added, “There are two regions left in Moldova where we are prayerfully trying to facilitate additional church-to-church partnerships. If there is any way that we can resource such a partnership, we would love to assist North Carolina Baptist churches.”

The partnership will continue as long as churches in North Carolina are actively engaged with churches in Moldova.

For more information on how your church can join the partnership, contact Steve Johnson at Slj4him@live.com or Steve Hardy, at the Office of Great Commission Partnerships at shardy@ncbaptist.org. **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Kure Beach First Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Pastor**. KBFB is a Southern Baptist church with a membership of 120 with attendance higher during the summer months. We are looking for a mission-minded servant leader with a passion for reaching the local community and one who is committed to preaching and teaching the Word of God. Parsonage is available. Send letter of interest, resume, and references to: Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 242, Kure Beach, NC 28449, by March 14. Include in the letter of interest a starting salary range that you would consider.

Corinth Baptist Church located in Elizabeth City, NC, desires to determine availability of potential candidates having an interest in serving as an **Interim Pastor** for our congregation. The period of service would be for an unspecified length of time, but begin approximately mid-2015. We are an active congregation with approximately 325 attending worship weekly. More information about our church may be found at www.corinthbaptist.com. If you would be interested in learning more about this possible opportunity of service, please forward your resume with contact information to: Corinth Baptist Church, ATTN: Chairman of Deacons (Confidential), 1035 US Highway 17 S, Elizabeth City, NC 27909, or you may respond electronically to bruce.brickham@dom.com.

First Baptist Church, Robbins, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. Average attendance is 150 in worship service and 75 in Sunday School. Seminary graduate and pastoral experience required. Please send resume to Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 400, Robbins, NC 27325, or email to RobbinsFBC@gmail.com. Resume deadline is March 15.

Lillington Baptist Church, Lillington, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **Pastor** who is biblically grounded, mission minded, with visionary leadership and strong communication skills. Our current church membership is 283 members with Sunday School attendance averaging 123 and worship attendance averaging 158. Must hold an advanced seminary degree with a preferred minimum of 10 years experience as a Pastor or commensurate experience. Please send resume to Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 160, Lillington, NC 27546. Resumes will be accepted until March 31, 2015.

Church Staff

First Baptist Church of Woodbury, TN, is seeking a **full-time Associate Pastor for Student Ministries and Education**. This position will involve primary responsibility for student ministries from ages 12-25 and education administration for the church. Break down of position will be approximately 60% student ministry, 30% education and outreach, 10% pastoral care. Previous ministry experience, seminary degree, and strong relational skills are required for this position. This church values traditional worship and is affiliated with the SBC. Please submit resumes and cover letter to: Personnel Committee, PO Box 218, Woodbury, TN 37190; or send email to fbcbwry@dtccom.net.

Neill’s Creek Baptist Church in Angier, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **part-time** (20 hrs per week) **Children’s Minister** to continue growing a thriving children’s ministry (20-30 children). NCBC is a traditional Baptist congregation affiliated with both the CBF and the SBC, that averages 150 in Sunday worship. For a list of qualifications and responsibilities and to submit a resume please email the church at ncbc@embarqmail.com or mail to 4200 Neill’s Creek Rd. Angier, NC 27501; 919-639-6126; www.neillscreek.org.

Forestbrook Baptist Church, a growing church in the heart of Myrtle Beach, SC, is seeking a **full-time WORSHIP LEADER**. This man will lead our church in blended style worship – which includes various choirs, praise band and praise team. Please send resume or to request more information to: pastorrandy@forestbrook-baptist.org; deadline to apply is March 15, 2015.

Elkin Valley Baptist Church in Elkin, NC, is searching for an **Associate Pastor of Discipleship and Missions** to direct the discipleship focus of the church and oversee the fulfillment of the church’s mission strategy. Elkin Valley is a member of the SBC and in agreement with the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. A seminary degree is required. Detailed information on the position may be found on the church’s website at www.evbcfamily.org. To apply e-mail cover letter and resume to: evbcstaffvacancies@gmail.com or mail to: EVBC Search Team, 118 N. Elkin Drive, Elkin, NC 28621.

Ocean View Baptist Church on the Outer Banks of North Carolina is currently looking for a **part-time Youth/Children’s Director**. OVBC is a part of the SBC. Experience with children/youth and an understanding of Baptist doctrine required. Interested candidates please send resume and transcript to Rev. Steve Siegrist @ Ocean View Baptist Church, 902 South Virginia Dare Trail, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948, or pastorovbc@yahoo.com.

Full-Time Minister to Families. Memorial Baptist Church, Staunton, VA - 450-500 avg attendance church seeking Minister to Families. Position mostly youth ministry, but includes children, special needs and encouraging parents. Please send resume to revmjones1@gmail.com.

Beck’s Baptist Church seeks a **full-time Minister of Children**. Please send resumes to Children’s Minister Search Team, Beck’s Baptist Church, 5505 Becks Church Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27106, or email to becksbaptist@windstream.net.

Miscellaneous

NCBAM has planned a special event for ministers 65+. Call 1.877.506.2226 to register for FaithQuest2 – to be held March 31 in Winston-Salem.

Do you have staff changes at your church or association? Let the BR know by calling (919) 847-2127 or email editor@BRnow.org.

Share the Biblical Recorder – FREE. Order a three-month free subscription. Contact Erin Gandy at (919) 459-5693 or erin@BRnow.org to make arrangements.

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- Send e-mail to: alison@BRnow.org.
- Submit the information via the *Recorder*’s website at BRnow.org.
- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

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

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

Evangelism urgent in a hostile culture, seminary presidents say

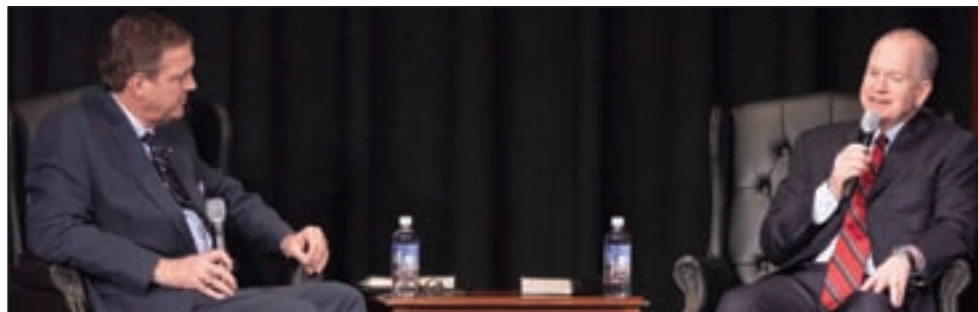
By **CHARISSA CROTTS** | SBTS Communications

An increasingly secularized American culture sees evangelism based on the exclusivity of the gospel as a threat, said two Southern Baptist seminary presidents in a Feb. 10 panel discussion at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The school hosted the panel with President R. Albert Mohler Jr. and Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, as part of Southern's Great Commission Focus.

"In the eyes of many, a belief in the particularity of the gospel is a threat to world peace," said Mohler.

Mohler specifically referenced the recent National Prayer Breakfast, where President Barack Obama said religions that claim to be the only way to God are dangerous. Mohler mentioned that William Saletan, agreeing with Obama, wrote on *Slate.com* that Islamic terrorists and exclusivist evangelicals were in the same category.

In this changing culture, Mohler noted two questions that he previously found useful in starting gospel conversations. He learned from Evangelism Explosion, a ministry that teaches people to share the gospel, and asked their questions:



R. Albert Mohler Jr., left, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, discuss the urgency of evangelism during a Feb. 10 panel discussion at Southern Seminary held during the school's Great Commission Focus. (SBTS photo)

"Do you know for sure that you are going to be with God in heaven?" and "If God were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into my heaven?' what would you say?" However, those questions no longer work, he said, because people no longer fear hell. Now Mohler asks, "What are you living for?" and "How is that working for you?" People usually answer these, while often rejecting someone who tries to talk directly about spiritual things.

Akin, former dean of the School of Theology and vice president of academic administration at Southern, said the gospel has always been scandalous but "in this day and age, it's becoming a hostile scandal." He said Christians should expect opposition, not only on gender issues but also to the gospel itself, but they

must not let fear of rejection stop their evangelism. After all, Christians are not ultimately the ones being rejected.

"If we present Christ, then it's Christ who is either seized upon as the Savior or who is rejected," Mohler said.

The presidents also discussed how much people must understand about Christ to be saved. Akin said someone must understand that Jesus lived a sinless life, died in our place, and rose from the dead, and Mohler said someone must also grasp the divinity and lordship of Christ. Though Christ is the heart of the message, both speakers said that failure to understand sin is what prevents most people in this culture from believing the gospel.

"If sins are the problem, then moralism is the answer. If sin is the problem,

then only Christ is the answer," said Mohler, who said he knew about Jesus growing up but did not feel the weight of his sin until he was 10 years old. He realized then that he did not just commit sins but that he was a sinner.

Akin and Mohler said that Christians must consider the context of the person they are evangelizing and remember that the gospel is counterintuitive. As Romans 10 says, people must hear it before they can respond.

Mohler said, "The glad responsibility of every single believer, if faithful, is to share the gospel because the idea of a non-evangelistic disciple is just not found in scripture."

Proclaiming this message takes practice, said both leaders. Mohler said that learning a basic outline of the gospel helped him not forget any of the components. Akin recalled a man teaching him to use the Romans Road, a method of explaining the gospel using only verses from the book of Romans.

Mohler and Akin encouraged attendees to evangelize without fear because it is the Christian's responsibility to be faithful and it is God's responsibility to save.

"It's the Word of God that he blesses, not our presentation of it," said Akin. **BR**

1 DAY

EQUIPPING LEADERS TO MAKE DISCIPLES

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FOR PASTORS, STAFF, TEACHERS, LEADERS & VOLUNTEERS

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