



BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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‘LOVE EVERY MUSLIM,’

Baptist leaders say at evangelism conference

By **SHAWN HENDRICKS** | *BR* Managing Editor

Nabeel's life used to be all about showing others that he is “an ambassador for Islam.” The grandson of Muslim missionaries, Nabeel loved to argue in defense of his religion. And then he unexpectedly befriended a Christian who helped lead him to faith in Jesus.

He shared his story Feb. 25 during the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's 2013 State Evangelism Conference at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church in Pleasant Garden. The theme of this year's conference was Culture Reach: Understanding, Loving and Relating to Muslims.

Nabeel was one of six speakers at the event that featured various Christian leaders, educators, speakers and mission workers. The others included Fred Luter, Mike Licon, Zane Pratt, Alex McFarland, and Nik and Ruth Ripken.*

For Nabeel, deciding to follow Jesus Christ was a life-altering decision.

“When I became a believer I had to give up a lot – my family, my friends, the direction I was going in life,” he said. “And when you have to stand in the face of that you're not going to give up your faith on a whim. ... It means something to you.”

See Love page 18

Luter visits N.C., encourages African-American pastors

By **SHAWN HENDRICKS** | *BR* Managing Editor

Speaking to a group of mostly African-American pastors and church leaders, Fred Luter voiced both encouragement and concerns regarding a few issues Southern Baptists face today.

Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), spoke Feb. 25 at a breakfast that preceded the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's 2013

State Evangelism Conference at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church in Pleasant Garden, N.C.

The first African-American to be elected as SBC president, Luter discussed everything from Calvinism to pastors standing up against societal pressures on issues such as gay marriage. He also encouraged them to join the 1% Challenge that urges all Southern Baptist churches to increase their Cooperative Program (CP) giving by 1 percent.

See Luter page 15



Fred Luter speaks to African-American pastors and church leaders in North Carolina. (*BR* photo by Shawn Hendricks)

CBS Sports host shares secrets to winning game of life

James Brown spends Sundays during the football season as the host of “NFL Today” on CBS with his own team of former football greats: Boomer Esiason, Shannon Sharpe, Dan Marino and Coach Bill Cowher.

As a seasoned sports show host, “JB” has covered the NBA, NCAA basketball, the NFL and the Olympics. This Harvard-educated man, and former college basketball stand-out, is one of the most interesting Christian men in the world of sports. He has been a strong Christian example by consistently living out his faith in both his personal and professional life. In this interview, Roman Gabriel III met with Brown at Super Bowl XLVII in New Orleans to discuss faith, family and sports. Below are excerpts from the interview, which was edited for clarity, brevity and length.



ROMAN GABRIEL
Sports Q & A

Q: Millions of people see you as James Brown “NFL Today” host on CBS. But very few people know that you are out preaching the gospel in churches all over the place in your off time. What are your thoughts on that part of your life?

A: I’m thrilled to be doing such work, but who would have thunk it? That [this] is something I would be doing? But ... I really have a passion for it. ... We often talk about it, and we all talk about how sports mirrors society if you will. And I believe that all truth is parallel, that which is true in the natural is also true in the supernatural. We play games here for the purpose of winning well in the game of life. We ought to be about playing that game for the purpose of winning as well. Because there are winners and losers in the game of life, and I am just trying to do my part. [I want] to walk the walk myself first and foremost. [I] also [want] to be an encouragement to others [and] to understand ... that there are winners and losers in life ultimately.

Q: You interviewed the Baltimore Ravens Ray Lewis recently before his last game in Super Bowl VLVII. What are your thoughts about this athlete?

A: For him to be so passionate about it 24-7, there’s nothing that’s

fake about it when he’s on the air giving credit and giving praise. ... It’s genuine. Yes, there are those out there who would read into it that he’s trying to win us over or he’s trying to cover up what was there in the past [murder charges that were dismissed more than a decade ago]. You know what, that’s between him and the Lord. But for what its worth from my perspective.... the guy is genuine. ... There’s a discernment of spirits that one employs to understand whether or not there’s genuineness there. ... I have not discerned anything else but genuineness in him.

Q: How has studying the Bible daily changed your life?

A: Thankfully, prayerfully the day cannot start without it. If per chance I get up on a given day and embark on it without it, it’s not too hard to see when things start to go awry. ... That’s when the Holy Spirit reminds me. ... God says in His Word to seek Him early and put on the whole armor of God. And when we talk about getting food for the day, so many scriptures are there. God says that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of [His] mouth. We talk about putting on the armor [of] God to prepare for battle. The only thing that is left exposed is my back, and ... God has my back in that regard as well too.

Q: How does that specifically carry over in your life as a broadcaster?

A: Before I go on every broadcast I make it a point ... I now pray with my wife to make certain that my tongue is guarded that I season my words with salt to allow His light [to] shine in everything that I do. It governs everything that I do in life. And I must do that. I don’t go around trying to beat people over the head with the Bible, but I hope that I’m [a] living epistle and an ambassador for Christ, and to model that behavior, because well done is better than well said.

Q: Did you ever have a critical time in your life where you felt like



Roman Gabriel III, left, interviews James Brown, host of “NFL Today” on CBS Sports. Brown stresses the importance of studying the Bible daily. “God says in His Word to seek Him early and put on the whole armor of God. ... We talk about putting on the armor [of] God to prepare for battle. The only thing that is left exposed is my back, and ... God has my back.” (Contributed photo)

God spoke to you clearly?

A: Yes. 1974. I was working for the Xerox corporation as a young salesman, making a little money, nice sports car, my own apartment. [I] thought I was hot stuff on the way up, living the happy hour lifestyle, the whole nine yards, engaged in a life of pleasure hedonistic lifestyle, a seeker of pleasures. And I felt empty. ... I remember a real late night drive ... going home probably from a nightclub. ... I felt so empty, and I remember asking the Lord then because I knew what was missing.

“If You would come into my life, I

accept you [in]to my life. Would You help me change my life? And I’ll commit myself to Your work.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Roman Gabriel III hosts Sold Out Sports Saturday nights at 8 p.m. EST on American Family Radio. He is an evangelist and motivational speaker. Contact him at (910) 431-6483 or email soldoutrg3@gmail.com. His website is www.soldouttv.com.) **BR**

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‘Tag’ conference to help students become leaders

According to recent Barna research, many religious activities are at their lowest levels in a decade among 13-17 year olds in the United States, and although 1 in 4 teenagers still participate in organized religious activities, spiritual activities such as praying and evangelism are declining.

“We want to reverse these statistics, and we want to train our students in the tenants of their faith so that they will grow up as spiritually mature Christians,” said Merrie Johnson, senior consultant for student evangelism and ministries at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. “We want to equip students to not only make their lives count for Jesus Christ, but to stand up for what they believe.”

Johnson is leading the effort to launch a new outreach called “Tag! You’re It” that will focus on training students to be leaders and gospel witnesses among their friends, family and neighbors.

Students will learn how to: pray for their friends who do not know Christ, share Jesus without fear, defend their faith, and lead gender-specific Bible studies and small groups.

TAG YOU'RE IT!

“Students can be the game changer; they can be the ones to set the example and to stand up for what is right,” Johnson said.

“Tag” kicks off April 19-20 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Other “Tag” conferences this year will be held June 30-July 3 and July 3-6 at Ground Zero Auditorium in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Oct. 25-27 at the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell.

Cost to attend the Myrtle Beach conferences is \$240 per person, which includes program fee, meals and lodging at Sea Palms Summer Outreach. Cost to attend the Caswell conference is \$127.

Registration deadline for the Myrtle Beach events is April 1.

Guest speaker for the conferences is Jack Easterby, campus director of the University of South Carolina’s Fellowship of Christian Athletes and founder of The Greatest Champion Foundation.

For more information, visit www.tagevent.org, email tag@ncbaptist.org or call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5566. **BR**

CHURCH NEWS



Boiling Springs Baptist Church, Boiling Springs

Billy Lemons church organist at Boiling Springs Baptist Church, Boiling Springs, retired Feb. 24 after 48 years of service. Previously he had been an organist at Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Shelby, for three years. During the Feb. 24 morning service, Lemons was named organist emeritus and was presented with a plaque. Songs during the service were some of Lemons’ favorites. Pastors, ministers of music and pianists with whom Lemons worked wrote him letters of appreciation that were shared with him and his wife, Sarah, and their family during a covered dish meal after the service. The congregation placed flowers in his honor in the sanctuary and took up a love offering.

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

EDWARD THOMAS “TOM” HOGAN, 80, died Feb. 10 in Gastonia.

Called to the ministry in 1953 while attending Duke University, Hogan graduated from Wake Forest University and Southeastern Seminary in the late 1950’s and from the School of Pastoral Care-Baptist Hospital in 1962.

Hogan served as pastor of several churches: Durham Chapel (1956-59); Masonboro Baptist Church, Wilmington (1959-64); East Baptist Church, Gastonia (1964-72); McGill Avenue Baptist Church, Concord (1972-82); and Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Gastonia (1982-2000), where he was honored as *pastor emeritus* in 2008. After retirement, he served as interim pastor to numerous churches in the Gaston area.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce Elmore Hogan; children, Emily H. Moore of Landis, Sarah L. Hogan of Raleigh, Eric T. Hogan of Gastonia, Andrew C. Hogan of Brevard; stepchildren, Donald Elmore Jr. of New Bern, Lisa E. Gillespie of Waynesville; brother, Robert “Bob” G. Hogan of Hillsborough; brother-in-law Emil A. Gooch Jr. of Durham; step daughter-in-law Kim Elmore of Gastonia; two grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; and three great grandchildren.

Memorials to: Hickory Grove Baptist Church, c/o Family Life Center, 3717 Hickory Grove Rd., Gastonia, NC 28056.

JAMES LINDSAY JOHNSON, 70, died March 5 at St. Joseph Campus.

A U.S. Navy veteran and a member of Ridgeway Baptist Church, Johnson served at the Baptist Children’s Home for 21 years. Jim was an ordained minister and served as an associate pastor for 3-1/2 years at Dellwood Baptist Church, Waynesville.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Vivian Wilson Johnson; a son, Tim Johnson of Waynesville; a sister, Becky Shuford of Wilmington; two brothers, James Donald Johnson Jr. of Waynesville and William Johnson of Bastrop, La.; and three grandchildren.

Memorials to: Baptist Children’s Home of N.C., P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338.

Staff changes

Cullom Baptist Association, Warrenton, has called **LARRY MCELREATH** as director of missions. McElreath was director of missions for Greater Gaston Baptist Association, Gastonia, and Sandy Creek Baptist Association, Sanford.

Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Raleigh, has called **IVAN CRISSMAN** as mission trips coordinator.

Retirement

After 44 years in pastoral ministry, **STUART WHITE** has retired from First Baptist Church of Whitnel, Lenoir, where he served as pastor for the past 10 years. He will be available for supply preaching, interim pastor or revivals. He may be reached at (828) 396-8327.



National Church Building Conference

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The missions and ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina are made possible by your gifts through the Cooperative Program and the North Carolina Missions Offering.

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Women's event offers leadership training, ties into Beth Moore's Living Proof Live

LifeWay's YOU Lead and the Baptist State Convention's Embrace are teaming up for a women's leadership conference on Apr. 11-12 at Sheraton Greensboro Hotel at Four Seasons in Greensboro. Speakers include Chris Adams, Rhonda Kelley and Ashley Allen. This leadership training event will help women effectively reach and disciple others for Christ. The event cost is \$89. It is a pre-conference to Living Proof Live. Women may attend both events for a price break.

For more information and to register visit embracenc.org. Click on "LifeWay's You Lead/Embrace Leadership Training." Or, contact Ashley Allen at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5561.

N.C. Campers on Mission plan spring rally

The N.C. Campers On Mission (NC-COM) State Spring Rally will be held April 18-21 at Denton Farm Park in Denton. Pre-rally activities are planned for Thursday with the rally officially beginning Friday and ending after Sunday worship.

Campers On Mission (COM) is a fellowship of Christian campers who come together for worship, food, fun, fellowship, sharing mission experiences and promoting mission projects.

For registration information call Ed Parks at (252) 955-3268 or Pete Butler at (252) 972-7828. To learn more about NC-COM visit www.nccampersonmission.org.

My Hope training underway

Throughout North Carolina, training is scheduled to prepare for November's My Hope with Billy Graham. (See story, page 10.)

This event is a nationwide effort to reach people in the United States and Canada with the gospel. Set to coincide with Billy Graham's 95th birthday, there are a variety of training events scheduled:

- **March 19** – Union Baptist Association
- **March 21** – Pleasant View Baptist Church, Morganton
- **March 21** – North Roanoke Baptist Association
- **March 25** – Brier Creek Baptist Association
- **March 26** – The Cove (through Billy Graham Evangelistic Association [BGEA])
- **March 26** – TBD (Yates Baptist Association)
- **April 2** – TBD (Easter Baptist Association)
- **April 8** – Buncombe Baptist Association Resource Center
- **April 8** – Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Rutherfordton (Sandy Run Baptist Association)

- **April 20** – Charlotte (through BGEA)
- **April 23** – Salem Baptist Church, Apex
- **April 23** – Randolph Baptist Association
- **April 25** – TBD (Metrolina Baptist Association)
- **May 6** – TBD (Truett Baptist Association)
- **May 7** – TBD (Elkin Baptist Association)
- **May 9** – Pilot Mountain Baptist Association
- **May 18** – Carolina Baptist Association
- **May 20** – Pleasant Hills Baptist Church, Southern Pines (Sandhills Baptist Association)
- **May 25** – Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (class credit available if enrolled at seminary)

The list of trainings is changing, and more dates may be added and details finalized in the coming weeks.

Some of the events are specifically geared for pastors; others are for anyone who is interested in hosting friends and neighbors in homes to watch a special program. Home hosts are encouraged to share their salvation story and ask their guests if they also would like to follow Christ. Events will be facilitated by Baptist State Convention of North Carolina or BGEA staff members.

Please check with Kathy Bennett at kbennett@ncbaptist.org or call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5557. Also visit myhopewithbillygraham.org/events/.

National Sunday School conference comes to N.C.

BSC Communications

In Matthew 28, Jesus commanded His followers to go into all the nations and to teach people His commands and His truth. People must be taught from God's Word how to live in a way that is focused on the Kingdom of God, and how to apply scripture to their lives.

"If Bible study doesn't transform lives, then it is nothing more than sharing content," said Phil Stone, state Sunday School director and senior consultant for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

"In Romans 12:2, we are called to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We must apply biblical truth to our lives so that we are living, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God."

Stone, who has devoted more than 30 years to teaching and leading North

Carolina Baptists in transformational Bible study, believes that small group Bible study has the power to help equip believers to share their faith and to make disciples.

In an effort to assist local church leaders and teachers in making disciples, the BSC is partnering with LifeWay Christian Resources to host the "Transform... Changing Lives Through Teaching" conference April 13 at First Baptist Church of Indian Trail.

"The goal of this conference is to train people not to teach the Bible as a history book, but to teach people the Bible so that lives are transformed. My prayer is that North Carolina Baptist church teachers in Sunday School, small group ministry, or anyone who teaches the Bible regardless of ministry or program, will attend this significant training event," Stone said.

Conference tracks will be offered for

Don McCutcheon to retire

BR staff

Don McCutcheon, executive leader for evangelization of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), has announced he is taking early retirement effective June 1.

In the March 1 meeting of the BSC Executive Committee at Caraway Conference Center, McCutcheon explained he is the only surviving child of his aging parents, and their declining health requires that he move closer to them in South Carolina.

He added, "My passion to expand and share the Intentionally Evangelistic Church Strategy (IECS) with other state conventions and nations will require more time away from my convention responsibilities in order to accomplish this dream."

Milton Hollifield, executive director/treasurer of the BSC, has asked McCutcheon to continue giving leadership for My Hope with Billy Graham outreach this year. N.C. is considered to be a key state in the effectiveness of My Hope. He will also lead IECS seminars for the BSC under a contract arrangement.

Hollifield said, "Don and I were great friends long before he came to work with this convention, and I will miss having him here as a full-time employee."



DON MCCUTCHEON

"Through his work as executive leader for our evangelization group he has been instrumental in helping many of our churches understand the importance of establishing an intentional strategy for evangelism. ... Dr. McCutcheon's colleagues and I will continue to pray for him as he transitions to a new chapter in life's journey."

Opportunities to extend IECS seminars to other states and to other nations have long been part of McCutcheon's dream. Hollifield underscored the value

that will be given to other Baptist state conventions through the expansion of IECS.

He believes McCutcheon's leadership in N.C. "...will continue to bear fruit for years to come."

In a letter to the BSC Executive Committee and to the employees of the BSC, McCutcheon said, "It has been an honor to serve with the [BSC] staff, the churches and the as-

sociations of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. The support, acceptance and encouragement each of you has provided for the past seven years has strengthened me. Words cannot describe my deep appreciation for the support you provided during the illness and passing of my dear wife, Kathy. Thank you all so much for your prayers, love and concern." **BR**

teachers of pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary school, pre-teen, middle school, high school, young adults, middle aged adults and senior adults, as well as pastors, ministers of education, new Sunday School directors and experienced Sunday School directors.

The conference will focus on topics such as transformational teaching, practical teaching methods, how to plan and prepare to teach, classroom dynamics, and understanding different learning strategies.

Event registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the conference concludes at 2:30 p.m. Cost is \$29 per person, which includes meals.

For more information visit www.ncbaptist.org/sundayschool. **BR**

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Tom Elliff poses 5 questions for Southern Baptists

By **DON GRAHAM** | Baptist Press

Call down God's fire or shuffle into irrelevancy – that's the warning Tom Elliff gave trustees of the International Mission Board (IMB) during its Feb. 26-27 meeting in Las Vegas.

Speaking from 1 Kings 18 (Elijah and the prophets of Baal), IMB's president challenged trustees to ask God to show His power among the nations much like He did when Elijah beckoned fire from heaven, turning Israel's heart back to the Lord. Elliff outlined five questions trustees must ask themselves if they are serious about fulfilling the Great Commission. But the questions aren't just for trustees or missionaries, Elliff added. They are for every Southern Baptist.

Missions is the "stack pole around which the SBC was formed 168 years ago," Elliff said, pointing out that the Southern Baptist Convention and IMB are "inextricably woven together." The degree to which Southern Baptists focus on the needs of a lost world serves as a barometer for the health of the entire denomination, he noted.

5 questions

• If not now, when?

Southern Baptists can no longer afford to delay, Elliff told trustees. They must choose now to live their lives in a way that demonstrates total devotion to the plan and purpose that Christ has for every believer – specifically, making disciples of every tribe, tongue and nation.

• If not me, then who?

"We live in a generation that tries to shuck responsibility," Elliff said. "We don't want to be responsible for anything. But we are responsible, whether we think so or not. ... Elijah thought he was the only prophet left in Israel, and even though he wasn't, what strikes me is that he was willing to do something about it."

• If not here, then where?

Noting IMB's role as the collaborative point for Southern Baptists' international missions efforts, Elliff urged greater support from SBC churches. He said it is "appalling" to think that Southern Baptists are not sending out thousands more missionaries, but emphasized that IMB can deploy only the number of people Southern Baptists are willing to support. "We are ready to recruit, train and deploy thousands more into the dark corners of this globe, but Southern Baptists must first give multiplied millions more through the Cooperative Program



New International Mission Board missionaries Nicholas and Alyssa Peveto share God's call to be His heart, hands and voice in sub-Saharan Africa. (Photo by Thomas Graham)

and Lottie Moon offering," he added.

• If not for God, then why?

Elliff also asked Southern Baptists to question their motives for missions, evangelism and church planting, cautioning against false pride and self-serving interests. "If we don't do everything we do for God, if He's not paramount ... then why do we have a heart for the lost? It's because He has a heart for the lost."

• If not by prayer, then how?

Touching on the essential role of prayer in calling down God's power, Elliff emphasized the role of IMB's "School of Prayer for the Nations." Though still under development, Elliff envisions the school as a tool to help train and focus Southern Baptists' prayer for global Gospel advance. "If we don't do this by prayer ... what fuel do we have in the engine?" he asked. "We've got to pray that God would rain down His power on us in full force."

Elliff announced plans for five key commitments he's going to ask of every Southern Baptist in June at the SBC's annual meeting in Houston. The challenge will include daily, weekly, monthly and annual commitments from both individuals and churches, including prayer, giving and connecting with Southern Baptist missionaries overseas – as well as going to the mission field.

"I believe that if Southern Baptists will ask those questions, I believe that if you and I get honest, the fire of God will fall on us," Elliff said. "[If not], we'll shuffle off down a long, dark hallway of irrelevancy and become just one more of those old denominations people talk about."

New affinity leader

John Brady, the newly appointed head of IMB's global strategy office, introduced trustees to the one who will fill his former shoes as the strategy leader for the Northern Africa and Middle East peoples (NAME) affinity, Jack Logan.*

"NAME is stirring, the nations are raging. If you watch the news, you can't miss it," Logan told trustees. "The Arab

Spring is more than a season, it's a new reality," he said, adding that God is using the chaos to open doors for the gospel.

Refugee work has provided some incredible encounters, Logan said, explaining that NAME personnel are "constantly coming in contact with people whom God is already preparing to receive the gospel. He is orchestrating events and circumstances that we could've never imagined before."

Logan shared a story about a man named Kam* who was helping a Southern Baptist relief team distribute food and hygiene kits to refugees. Kam served as the team's guide, taking them to homes where help was needed most. Though he wasn't a believer, Kam began surprising relief workers with a unique "announcement" as he entered refugees' homes. "Are you dead or alive?" Kam would ask, telling families that the relief workers were there to share "how they could have life."

"He knew exactly what the team was going to do when they came into a home. They were going to meet the needs in the name of Jesus, but they were also going to boldly proclaim the gospel," Logan said. "We need to reset our expectations. They are most often defined by past experience or present realities. But our expectations should be defined by what we believe God will do," Logan said. "And He is up to something that we've never seen before, and He's doing it in the driest, darkest and most dangerous places. Pray that we would believe. Pray also that we would have people who would rise up, count the cost ... and follow after Christ to these difficult, difficult places."

Finances, appointments

David Steverson, IMB's vice president of finance, updated trustees on financial news, noting that IMB was \$4 million under budget in 2012. Steverson said that's evidence of sound planning and stewardship. With a hearty "Amen!" trustees also welcomed a motion to accept four estate gifts to IMB totaling more than \$1.7 million. Elliff told trustees about his plan to strengthen IMB's development department, citing a desire to "utilize every resource we can to speak to Southern Baptists about the importance of giving, so that others might go." Elliff said his goal is to better assist pastors in leading church members to consider making estate plans that provide for Kingdom purposes.

Trustees appointed 62 missionaries, honoring them at an appointment service at Las Vegas' Hope Church.

*Names changed.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Don Graham is an IMB senior writer.) **BR**

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Evangelism-themed Bibles en route to churches

By **TOBIN PERRY** | Baptist Press

Every Southern Baptist and Canadian National Baptist church in North America will receive a case of New Testaments from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) by early April.

The “Find It Here” New Testaments are part of NAMB’s God’s Plan for Sharing: GPS initiative to encourage “Every Believer Sharing, Every Person Hearing” by 2020.

“If your church hasn’t been out in your community sharing Christ in a while, we think these Bibles are a great tool for outreach,” NAMB President Kevin Ezell said. “And if you are already active in reaching your community, this is one more tool we think everyone will want to use.”

Churches began receiving the shipments in mid-February. Because of the large number being shipped, it will take six weeks for churches to receive their New Testaments.

Each case contains 48 New Testaments and a card that tells pastors why the New Testaments were sent to them and how they can order more. Churches are asked to use the New Testaments as part of their evangelistic efforts.

Spanish-speaking churches will receive a Spanish-language translation. Each New Testament has specific verses marked to guide evangelistic conversations. On the back of each New Testament, those looking for spiritual help are given the *findithere.com* site and a phone number where they can find spiritual counseling. The English New Testaments being shipped to churches use the Hol-

man Christian Standard version of the text.

“As we encourage every believer to share, we see this as a tool they can use to talk to people about Christ,” said Al Gilbert, NAMB’s vice president for evangelism. “Then the person hearing about Christ will have the opportunity to find out more on *findithere.com*.”

Gilbert said the Find It Here campaign undergirds the God’s Plan for Sharing: GPS evangelistic initiative. The evangelistic Find It Here website, New Testaments and related materials support what churches are doing to share Christ with every person in North America.

At least one state convention has already made plans for how to use additional New Testaments. The Missouri Baptist Convention ordered 50,000 Find It Here New Testaments to encourage Missouri Baptists to begin a movement that will lead to distributing 1 million New Testaments to Missourians in 2014.

“I chose to use the Find It Here New Testaments because they are marked, use the HCSB translation and are attractive,” said Mark Snowden, the evangelism/discipleship strategist at the Missouri

Baptist Convention. “The Bible distribution strategy is at the heart of our state GPS 2014-15 emphasis on ministry evangelism.”

The Find It Here New Testaments were produced through a partnership between NAMB and LifeWay Christian Resources.

LifeWay assisted in the development of the New Testaments and printed them at a discounted rate.

“The Bible is LifeWay’s number one core value and sharing it with the world is at the heart of our mission,” said Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay. “We are honored to partner with NAMB in developing the Find It Here New Testaments. NAMB’s commitment to serve and equip the local church to reach the lost is truly stellar, and we are excited to help distribute God’s Word.”

Churches can purchase additional cases of New Testaments at *gps2020.net*. The site includes other resources and suggestions for how churches can reach their communities for Christ. The New Testaments will be available in LifeWay stores beginning in early April.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Tobin Perry writes for the North American Mission Board.) **BR**



A graffiti mural of Hugo Chávez, Che Guevara and Jesus Christ is plastered on the wall of a Caracas neighborhood. Since the March 5 death of Chávez – Venezuela’s president for 14 years – the country’s political future is uncertain.

Chávez death prompts prayer

By **LAURA FIELDING** | Baptist Press

With the death of Hugo Chávez, Venezuelans face an uncertain future after his 14-year presidency. The nation’s evangelical community is urging Christians around the world to be in prayer for their country.

Chávez, 58, died March 5 after battling cancer. “... Scores of people came into the street [in Caracas] to view his funeral procession and show their respect for the fallen leader,” a Christian worker in Venezuela said. The country declared seven days of mourning for their president.

Consejo Evangélico de Venezuela (The Evangelical Council of Venezuela), a Venezuelan organization of evangelicals including the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela, issued a statement March 5 on its website and Facebook page, offering condolences to the president’s

family and all Venezuelans, and calling for Christians to pray for peace and unity in their nation.

The statement urged Venezuelans to “avoid hatred, damaging language and confrontational attitudes” during this time of national grief and to “look to God as our only giver of grace and truth.”

Alluding to political divisions and tensions that have plagued Venezuela, the statement encouraged Venezuelans to “live together in the midst of differences” and to “maintain a heart free of bad feelings so that we may see the hand of God acting in our country.” Citing several verses from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7, the statement also challenged Venezuelans to be peacemakers – to “be a country that constructs peace and rejects confrontation.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Laura Fielding is an IMB writer. Maria Elena Baseler, IMB writer/editor, contributed to this story.) **BR**

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Global marketplace becoming a mission field

Baptist Press

In the mountains of Ecuador, Scott Tye's small office serves as more than just a satellite for his business, which is based in Allen, Texas. And it does more than provide an income for eight of his employees.

Tye recently hired a young Ecuadorian couple to manage the office. Their goal is to eventually serve as missionaries in another country.

"They were looking for several businesses that they could use to provide a part of their support," Tye said.

By hiring them, he is helping to do just that, as well as expanding his business in other countries – all for the sake of Kingdom work.

International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff sees Tye's efforts as recapturing the first-century model that led to the expansion of the early church throughout their known world.

"Traveling along sea-lanes and roads, on the back of commerce," Elliff said, "followers of Christ began to carry the message far and wide."

A new office at the International Mission Board called Global Strategic Mobilization (GSM) is assisting Tye and others like him who work in the global marketplace. GSM focuses on identifying, connecting and equipping Southern Baptists for greater involvement in fulfilling the Great Commission through their work across the globe.

"We want to do all we can to get the gospel to the nations through whatever doors God opens," said Scott Holste, IMB vice president in charge of initiative, so that "marketplace professionals in our churches are poised to join with IMB missionaries and others to help finish the task."

Elliff sees GSM as a way of advancing IMB's purpose of helping Southern Baptist churches fulfill their mission of reaching the world for Christ.

"GSM will become IMB's means of challenging corporate leaders and employees, as well as other marketplace



Scott Tye's small office in the mountains of Ecuador is more than just an extension of his Texas-based business. It is a way of using his expertise in the global marketplace to advance the gospel throughout the world, much the same way the first-century church spread it into their known world. (Photo by Matt Miller)

professionals, to place their lives, businesses, resources, international connections and their energies on the altar for the fulfillment of the Great Commission," Elliff said.

"[It will also seek] ... effective ways [for them] to complement the incredible knowledge, training, skill and passion of our IMB personnel who are already in place around the world."

For more information, go to imbgs.com, a website to help Southern Baptists

learn how to connect their vocations more deeply with God's global purposes. Resources will be posted regularly on the website. More immediate information is available on Twitter: @imbgs.

Training materials currently are in development to help SBC churches equip their members as Kingdom workers around the world.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Provided by the communications staff of the International Mission Board.) **BR**

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Movement seeks ‘1 Million Men’ to fight pornography addiction

By JAMES A. SMITH SR. | Baptist Press

Pornography is the “pink elephant in the pew” – the embarrassing, big subject no one wants to talk about – and that silence is feeding a “bubonic plague” harming churches, pastor Jay Dennis told state Baptist convention executive directors and editors gathered in Oklahoma City.

“Our enemy has found the perfect tool to deliver temptation to men – men who love God, men who love their wives, love their children and love their churches,” Dennis, pastor of First Baptist Church at the Mall in Lakeland, Fla., said Feb. 14. “Yet their involvement in looking at pornography has virtually duct-taped their mouths closed and taken them out of spiritual leadership in the home and in the church.”

Dennis spoke to state executives and editors at the invitation of John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, surveying the effort he began at First Baptist Lakeland in 2009 that has become the “Join 1 Million Men” movement to be featured at the Southern Baptist Convention this year.

After his presentation, Dennis told the *Florida Baptist Witness* newsjournal he was burdened to address the issue – even though he didn’t want to – when a growing number of women in his church sought pastoral counsel for husbands and sons who were struggling with pornography.

“I resisted ... because I knew that the spiritual warfare component of this would be immense – and it has been,” Dennis said, citing multiple health challenges he has faced in the last three years.

Unable to find resources written from the perspective of a senior pastor that were sensitive and “grace oriented,” Dennis decided to research the issue and write his own materials for First Baptist Lakeland.

Dennis told the state executives and editors that too many pastors are “out of touch,” believing that pornography affects only a small percentage in their congregations. He cited a 2011 LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 pastors that found 62 percent of pastors believe less than 10 percent of men in their churches viewed pornography on a weekly basis. Dennis believes the figure is more like 80 percent.

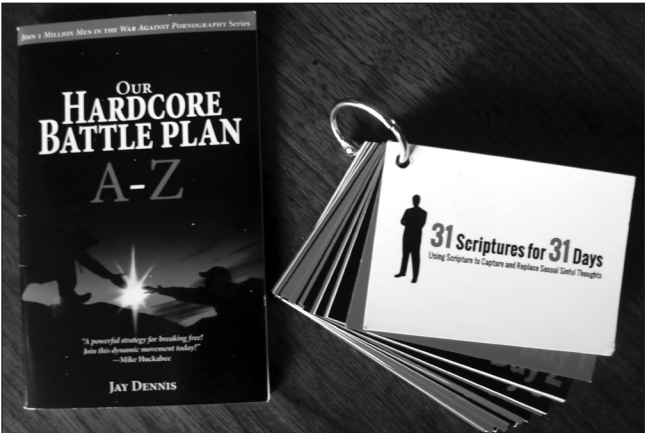
Most churches, he said, respond to the problem of pornography by denying its reality, while others are aware of the problem but are not specifically dealing with it. Instead, pastors must “admit there is a problem and urgently address” pornography by helping men overcome it.

Dennis said pornography is the “pink elephant in the pew” because “we have a huge problem that is primarily directed at men’s attitudes toward women.”

He cited six characteristics that make pornography “so dangerous”: it is accessible; affordable – in many cases free; anonymous; addictive; altering – changing how men view women; and creates amnesia. “This is a winnable war, but we must act very quickly,” he said.

Dennis said the “God-sized project” of creating a campaign for churches of all sizes and denominations seeks to involve at least 1 million men to take a public stand against pornography – and 1 million women praying for men. The campaign is geared to Christian men, he said, because only through the power of the Holy Spirit can men overcome struggles with pornography.

Convinced he needed to address the problem in his church, Dennis said he attended the Institute for Sexual



Key scriptures for men's moral purity, right, and a booklet, Our Hardcore Battle Plan A-Z, will be among the resources for Southern Baptists' upcoming "Join 1 Million Men" anti-pornography campaign. (Photo illustration by Laura Erlanson)

Wholeness in Atlanta where he earned a certification in sexual addictions. He wrote the initial materials and taught them to his men in the spring of 2010 during six Wednesday evening sessions. “The response, honestly, surprised me,” Dennis said, noting that after the third session he asked those who were struggling with pornography to stand while no one was looking. The noise of “theater seats flapping” constituted the “far majority” by his estimation while not looking. “I thought to myself, ‘This sounds like the beginning of freedom in our church,’” he said. “There was a spirit of revival that broke out among our men and this was the beginning of a journey that continues to affect positively the men, marriages and families of our church.”

To date, 1,300 men have signed commitment cards that have been posted to a wall and tower prominently displayed at the church. The porn-free commitment includes 14 statements the men affirm (see box below).

Dennis said he has urged even men who say they do not struggle with pornography to make the commitment as encouragement to those who do and to “draw a line in the sand ... to never go there.”

Join 1 Million Men: The Porn-Free Commitment

I am making a lifetime commitment to being porn free knowing this commitment is kept one day at a time;	ment (savesaver of my wife, if married) and children (if you have children); pictures of wife and children around the computer; using the computer in an open place where anyone can see; download accountability software on my computer; install a filtering software on my computer; share my computer password with my wife or friend; put Scriptures on screensaver; post-it notes with Scriptures on computer; taking a different route to work to avoid temptation; when staying in a hotel asking the front desk to turn off pay-per-view on the cable; if necessary avoid traveling with my laptop and use computer in hotel lobby; and eliminate the premium cable channels on my television;
I am acknowledging that I have the capacity to be tempted by pornography and could give into that temptation at any time;	I will develop the spiritual disciplines of daily Bible reading, prayer, personal worship, small-group Bible study, church attendance, fasting, meditating, and journaling (recording what God is saying to you through His Word, the Holy Spirit, your experiences, and your circumstances along with personal victories and failures);
I am placing my relationship with God as the number one priority of my life and admit that God cannot be number one if I am viewing pornography;	I will recognize those times and places when I am most likely to look at pornography and interrupt those times and places by taking specific steps to guard my mind and heart;
I am placing my relationship with my wife (if married) as my number two priority and admit that she cannot be that priority in my life and I cannot love her like I need to love her if I am viewing pornography;	I will immediately remove [pornography] from my life by destroying any pornography of any kind;
I am placing my relationship with my children (if you have children) as the number three priority in my life and admit they cannot be that priority in my life and I cannot love them like I need to love them if I am viewing pornography;	Because I know I am not alone in my struggle I will be mindful of praying for and seeking to help my brothers in Christ to stay pure;
I understand the only power I have over pornography is the power given by the Holy Spirit as I am surrendered to Him;	I will review and renew this commitment daily.
I will have at least three other men I can call at any hour of the day or night when the thought enters my mind to look at pornography;	
I will consider the consequences to my walk with God, my relationship with my wife (if married) and children (if you have children), my other family members, my job, and everything that is important to me when the thought enters my mind to look at pornography;	
I will do everything possible to create a porn-free environ-	

Reaching Vancouver by ‘accident’

By ADAM MILLER | Baptist Press

Victor and Candice Thomas landed in Vancouver, British Columbia, promising they’d never stay – that was five years ago. They arrived in 2007, so Victor could start a four-month stint as a researcher at Simon Fraser University – what Victor called an extended honeymoon for the newlyweds. His study focused on environmental science and poverty. But the young South African entrepreneurs found a new calling in Burnaby, a quick train-ride from downtown Vancouver.

Three weeks before they were to return to Cape Town, Thomas walked the Burnaby campus of Simon Fraser, his eyes seeming to open for the first time. “I saw these students with blank looks on their faces, and I started to tear up. For a South African male that’s not cool,” Thomas said. “It was as if God was saying, ‘Isn’t this the poverty I’ve called you to?’”

From a family with seven generations of pastors, Thomas told his friends he’d never be a pastor. And indeed he’d stayed true to this for more than two decades, though he always served the poor alongside his dad. He also started a company consulting on construction projects in environmentally sensitive areas.

“Life was good back in Africa,” said Thomas. “I’d just hired a friend and we had several big contracts. We’d never intended to stay in Canada.”

As God began to draw the Thomases to the work of The Point Church, a long drive with then-planter of The Point, Kelly Manire, sealed the decision.

“He told us he was moving on,” Thomas said, “and that he wanted me and Candice to take over.”

The Point, a Canadian National Baptist Convention church, had started years previous, but had dwindled to a small Bible study. Taking over The Point would amount to a relaunch of the church. As Thomas saw it, this also meant launching additional campuses in Coquitlam and in downtown Vancouver.

Thomas is just one of several church planters serving in the greater Vancouver area, and is helping to achieve the vision of Send North America: Vancouver. Send North America is the North American Mission Board’s strategy to mobilize and assist churches and individuals in hands-on church planting and evangelism throughout Canada and the U.S.

The annual Week of Prayer for North American Missions, which was recognized earlier this month, and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®, provide



North American Mission Board Week of Prayer missionary Victor Thomas, left, meets with student Sam Woo. Thomas, pastor of The Point Church in Vancouver, leads members to reach college students, families and those less fortunate through the church’s multiple campuses. (NAMB photo by Susan Whitley)

support for Thomas’ work and missionaries who serve on behalf of Canadian and Southern Baptists in North America. With a goal of \$70 million, this year’s offering theme is “Whatever It Takes – Reaching the One.”

“Giving to Annie is essential to help church planters plant the gospel in North America,” said Thomas. “Financially helping us to plant the gospel in metro Vancouver, by starting new churches and helping us with outreaches, is critical.” The Point, which initially started as a university church, has grown to reach the surrounding communities in Burnaby, Coquitlam and Vancouver.

In the beginning a dozen people would show up for Bible studies. But as the Thomases realized the potential for reaching surrounding communities of families, they started a Sunday morning service. Now, during the Sunday service about 40 attend in Burnaby, nearly half of them students. Today across The Point’s four sites more than 90 people gather for weekend services.

“That has continued to grow as we’ve hosted community festivals,” Thomas said. “When God broke our heart for the city it was for the whole city, not just for Burnaby Mountain.

“God laid on our hearts a few parts of the city. Coquitlam for one was an area that’s been on my heart a lot.

It is the least church area of metro Vancouver, which means it’s one of the least-churched areas of North America.”

It also happens to be one of the fastest-growing areas of the city. Soon it will be included on the SkyTrain line and last fall a new work began with a Bible study group.

“I sent a semester missionary over there a couple of times to find a person of peace but he came back and said ‘No one wanted to talk to me and I think security was following me,’” said Thomas, recounting what he’d soon reveal as a miracle. “So I went with him and we

WHATEVER IT TAKES REACHING THE ONE

prayed we’d find the right person to talk to for starting a student group.

“Sure enough we turned down a random corridor and came across a lady taking a picture. We started talking. Usually I’m a little reticent to come out and tell people what we’re doing, but I felt God saying ‘Just tell her.’”

Thomas explained their idea of starting a Bible study on campus. “It turns out that not only was she in charge of student groups at the campus, but she also happened to be from South Africa and had dated one of my uncles,” Thomas said. “She told us she’d help us work it out.”

Since that amazing day, Bible study groups at Coquitlam and in downtown Vancouver have been welcomed by the campus officials and have grown both in size and in stories. “One lady heard about Jesus for the first time and said ‘Wow. He seems like an amazing person. Where can I learn more about Him?’ I told her there’s a whole book about Him called the Bible,” said Thomas. “She went home and read through the New Testament ... and gave her life to Christ.

“She said ‘I wonder why no one ever told me about Him before,’” recounted Thomas. “I was amazed she had never heard the name Jesus.”

For more information on Victor Thomas, visit anniearmstrong.com/victor-thomas. For more information about how you can get involved in reaching Vancouver with the gospel, visit namb.net/Vancouver. A Biblical Recorder page was created to host all the Week of Prayer stories along with video links and a photo gallery. See BRnow.org/Resources/2013-Annie-Armstrong-Easter-Offering.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Adam Miller writes for the North American Mission Board.) **BR**

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Our Vision “By God’s grace, we will become the strongest force in the history of this Convention for reaching people with the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

My Hope preparations begin, leaders discuss impact

by Buddy Overman

For many Americans the image of a prosperous and healthy America is just that – an image. Statistics indicate another America, a nation overwhelmed by addictions, depression, joblessness and spiritual darkness resulting in a level of unprecedented hopelessness.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association hopes to reverse the tide of despair by organizing and training Christians to share the hope of Jesus Christ with lost friends and family members during the November “My Hope with Billy Graham” evangelistic emphasis.

The initiative is modeled after the apostle Matthew’s first encounter with Jesus recorded in Matthew 9:9-10. My Hope trains believers to be like Matthew, who invited his friends into his home to share a meal with Jesus.

“My Hope has the potential to be the greatest single day of evangelistic harvest in our nation’s history,” said Don McCutcheon, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) executive leader for evangelization. “This Matthew approach offers a relational, biblical and effective model of introducing family, friends, neighbors, work associates or campus associates to Christ in a non-threatening environment.”

During the week of Nov. 3-9, “Matthews” will host lost relatives, friends and neighbors in their homes or other informal settings to share a meal or dessert and to watch a 30-minute video that includes powerful music, testimonies and an evangelistic message from Graham. The video will be available via DVD and streaming video, and will be nationally

televised Thursday, Nov. 7 – Graham’s 95th birthday.

After watching the program, “Matthews” will share their testimony and invite guests to receive Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

My Hope coordinates training for those who participate as hosts (Matthews). People attending training events will learn how to identify, pray for and share the gospel with lost friends, family and neighbors. They will also learn how to begin discipling new believers and involving them in the local church.

Event organizers are encouraging churches, families and individuals to begin now in preparation for the November outreach. Online training is available at the My Hope website or through onsite regional seminars. North Carolina Baptists attended a training seminar March 7 at Providence Baptist Church in Raleigh.

McCutcheon said the training will equip believers with the confidence to engage lost friends and relatives with the gospel.

“The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has provided excellent material to equip Christians in the process,” he said. “In the spring of this year Christians will engage in specific praying for non-Christians with whom they have a personal relationship. Then, the Matthews begin to build a bridge of relationship over which they can share the gospel and invite these friends into their home for a meal.”

Since 2002, My Hope has been experienced in 57 countries, and as a result of God working through this effort, nearly 10 million people have come to faith in

Jesus Christ. BSCNC leadership is praying for North Carolina Baptists to embrace the November emphasis as an opportunity to impact lostness in their communities.

Jay Huddleston, pastor of First Baptist Church of Cary, understands the potential impact My Hope could have on his community.

“It didn’t take long for me to know that we needed to integrate this into our 2013 evangelism plans and strategies,” he said. “I feel like this is a true move of God as evidenced by the fact that the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has seen three times more decisions for Christ in the last ten years through My Hope than all of the professions of faith recorded throughout Dr. Graham’s entire ministry.”

Huddleston hopes that all North Carolina Baptists will see how God is using My Hope to impact lostness, and commit to join the effort this November.

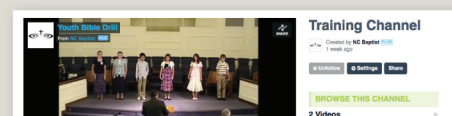
“It’s important for churches to get involved because this event will reach far beyond the crusade stadiums into neighborhoods, potentially in every city and town across North America,” he said. “God is doing something incredibly special through My Hope and we all need to plug in to where the wind of His Spirit is moving.”

For more about My Hope, including information on training events and how to register as a host, visit myhopewithbillygraham.org/events or call Kathy Bennett at (800) 395-5102, ext 5557. Raleigh training seminar information is also available.



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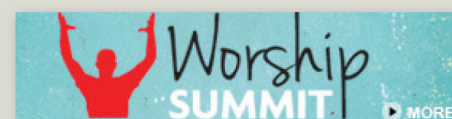


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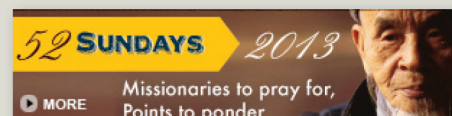


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ncbaptist.org/cp

North Carolina Baptists support many different missions and ministry efforts through the Cooperative Program. Financial giving through the Cooperative Program budget supports statewide efforts such as church planting, discipleship training and evangelism equipping. The BSCNC continues to shift a greater percentage of Cooperative Program ministry dollars to the Southern Baptist Convention for international missions, North American missions and equipping leaders through SBC seminaries.

In order to reach the growing number of lost people in the state, nation and world, giving through the Cooperative Program must increase. BSCNC leadership is challenging all North Carolina Baptist churches to join a global missions advance by increasing Cooperative Program giving by one percent.

If all 4,300 BSCNC churches increased giving by one percent, the result would be an additional \$3.9 million for North Carolina ministries and \$2.1 million for Southern Baptist Convention ministries. If all churches accept the 1% Challenge, the BSCNC would be able to help start 26 more churches each year across the state. The North American Mission Board would be able to invest an additional \$478,000 into church planting each year, and the six SBC seminaries could train 71 more pastors, missionaries and leaders each year.

For more information on Cooperative Program in North Carolina visit ncbaptist.org/cp



NC Baptist Missions Conference

April 5-6

baptistsonmission.org/Events/Missions-Conference

Embrace Leadership Training

April 11-12

ncbaptist.org/elt

Cooperative Program Sunday

April 14

ncbaptist.org/cp

International Student Conference

April 12-14

ncbaptist.org/bcm

Vision Tours

April 18-19, April 23-24, May 13-15

ncbaptist.org/gcp

Church Growth & Revitalization Conference

April 25

ncbaptist.org/cgr

Church Administration Conference

May 2

ncbaptist.org/chadminconf

ncbaptist.org



Upcoming Events

Awaken Prayer Retreats

Prayer retreats will be held throughout the year to encourage personal commitment to prayer. These one-day retreats, focused on the theme “Awaken,” are opportunities for pastors and ministry staff to continue praying for spiritual awakening. Each retreat is followed by an association-wide prayer rally, when churches from across the association are invited to gather together to pray for spiritual revival and a return to personal holiness.

Retreat speakers include John Franklin, John Franklin Ministries; Steve Griffith, pastor of Osborne Baptist Church in Eden; Mark Harris, pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte; Bob Lowman, director of missions for Metrolina Association; and Chris Schofield, director of the BSCNC Office of Prayer.

Learn more at

praync.org/awaken

NCMapID Project

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 75 percent of North Carolinians live in eight metropolitan areas of the state. About 78 percent of non-Anglo North Carolinians live in these eight metropolitan areas.

As North Carolina is increasingly becoming more urban and ethnically diverse, a new effort is underway to identify the different people groups living in the state so that these groups can then be

engaged with the gospel.

The North Carolina Metropolitan Areas People Identification Project (NCMapID) is being piloted in the Greensboro and Charlotte areas. North Carolina Baptists are invited to come to Greensboro and Charlotte to help with NCMapID. For more information email msowers@ncbaptist.org or call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5654.

North American Missions

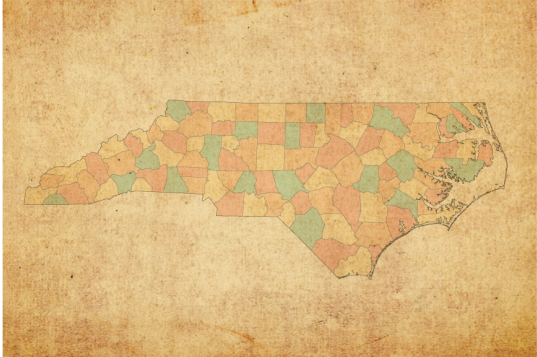
The theme for this year’s Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is “Whatever it takes ... Reaching the One” and the offering goal is \$70 million. About 260 million people in the United States and Canada do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This special Easter offering will help support North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries who are sharing the gospel throughout the United States and Canada.

Resources to help you promote this offering are available at www.anniearmstrong.com. Also available on the website is a prayer guide to help you pray specifically for the missionaries.

NAMB missionaries serve in some of the most unreached areas of North America. They serve among many different ethnic groups and in urban areas of great influence. These missionaries are starting new churches, engaging college students with the gospel, and meeting physical and spiritual needs through ministry evangelism. Please pray for God to work mightily through these missionaries.

Learn more at

anniearmstrong.com



Dockery: greater unity, new partnerships needed in SBC

By **TIM ELLSWORTH** | Baptist Press

Southern Baptists must rise above the rampant individualism and isolation that characterize today's world and embrace each other in new partnerships for the sake of the Gospel, Union University President David S. Dockery recently told Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary students.

"Ongoing disharmony and differences could well lead to our collective ruin," Dockery said. "Today I want to urge us to move beyond consensus ... to move beyond cooperation, which many of us have championed, to a new and even higher calling, toward an intentional and purposeful collaboration."

Speaking in a chapel service at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary on Feb. 14, Dockery addressed Paul's words in Philippians 1, specifically verses five and 27, in which the apostle affirmed the Philippi church's "partnership in the gospel."

Paul was writing in the midst of opposition from without and conflict from within, Dockery said, and challenged his readers to live as worthy citizens of their heavenly homeland. In doing so, Paul appealed to their civic responsibility within the Christian community.

In that appeal, Dockery said, Southern Baptists can learn how to live as dual citizens of earth and heaven, and between the Gospel and the culture.

"It is the standing firm in one spirit that makes it possible for them to participate as partners, striving together for the cause of the faith," Dockery said. "For Paul, the gospel was the beginning and end of everything."

Paul encouraged his readers to embrace both resolve and unity at the same time, which allowed them to address disharmony within the church and external opposition, Dockery said. That challenge is applicable to modern Christians, Dockery said, because people in today's culture have grown increasingly disconnected and isolated from each other.

Even Christians have succumbed to the culture's trend of privatization, whether they realize it or not.

That disconnection stems largely from the Enlightenment, Dockery said, which elevated science and reason above belief in the supernatural and caused the separation of faith and reason from revelation.

"As a result, most of us live through life in compartmentalized ways, and it all comes as a result of this philosophy that undergirds all aspects of contemporary life," he said.

In response to this movement, Dockery said Christians often embraced one of four alternatives: pietism, which largely disregarded intellectual challenges and



David Dockery shares his desire for more unity within the Southern Baptist Convention during chapel service Feb. 14 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. (SEBTS photo)

advocated only maintaining warm hearts toward God; liberalism, which discounted some of Christianity's difficult theological issues; fundamentalism, in which people withdrew from culture entirely; and pragmatism, which accepted ideas and practices only if they worked.

"All of these were usually well-intentioned at the time as an attempt to save the faith from what was going on around them, but it usually led to further disconnection – separating heart and head, piety and education, tradition and inquiry, the gospel and the rest of life."

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is not immune to this fragmentation, Dockery said, with mission board and entities that sometimes don't connect. SBC entities and state convention entities at times are unaware of what the other is doing, he said, and universities and seminaries sometimes find themselves competing with each other instead of working together.

Such a "lone ranger" mindset must be

changed, Dockery said, and the convention must begin to rebuild partnerships and prioritize unity and cooperation to advance the gospel. He acknowledged the difficulty of that task and said humility is the key to success.

"We need a new kind of humility that says we cannot do this alone," Dockery said. "A new kind of humility that says we recognize our need for one another. A new kind of humility in which together I will be the first to say, 'I need to repent of my pride and arrogance.' ...

"We need partners to work together for the good of the gospel, holding hands to advance this work," he continued. "Much grace will be needed to build such a collaborative partnership. We'll

need faith-affirming and grace-filled convictions to frame and guide these efforts if indeed we are to contend as one in this lofty calling."

Dockery added that Southern Baptists will need confessional convictions and biblical boundaries without uniformity

of interpretation in matters that aren't of primary importance.

Dockery called for a new connectedness between and among all elements of the SBC – including churches, entities, mission boards and educational institutions – a connectedness that is faithful to Southern Baptist polity and not one that will lead to "connectionalism." He said Southern Baptists also need a "new gospel-focused motivation" for proclamation, service, teaching and learning, all of which are informed and shaped by the gospel itself.

In addition, Dockery said the convention needs a new vision that connects the gospel with all of life, an appreciation of the multi-ethnic and multicultural society in which Southern Baptists find themselves and a new recognition that gospel partnerships will lead to a focus on the glory and grandeur of God.

"Let us not miss this moment," Dockery said.

"It is a special opportunity that God has given to us. Let us not fail to see the global opportunities for the gospel are incredible, like nothing the world has seen before."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Tim Ellsworth is director of news and media relations for Union University in Jackson, Tenn.) **BR**

Are you praying big?

Hezekiah knew how to pray big! The king of Assyria had destroyed 46 cities, and now he was after Jerusalem. So Hezekiah got right to the heart of the matter and cried out in a very bold, and almost brazen, way to God. In essence, he prayed for God to listen and look and to see that His honor was at stake. God heard his desperate cry, answered his prayer, saved the people and demonstrated His power for all to see. Do you know God well enough to pray that boldly?



Dr. Chris Schofield

In 1906 John "Praying" Hyde, a Presbyterian missionary to the Punjab region in India, "prayed big." He asked the Lord, with great sobs and flowing tears, to give him one soul a day for the first year, two for the second and then four souls a day for the third year. Following that three-year period he had personally won about 2,600 Asian Indians to Christ. Now that is praying big! Are you praying big for your church, your nation and your world? If not, when will you start?

Prayer Points

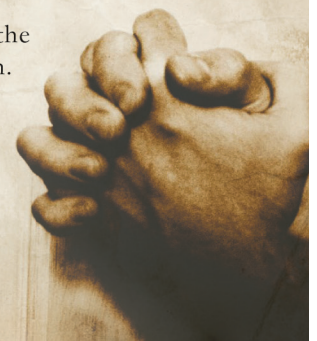
- Pray for the Lord to break your heart because of the moral and spiritual decline in the American church.
- Ask Jesus to give you a heart to pray big toward revival and awakening in North America.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Chris Schofield is director of the Office of Prayer for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. For more information you can reach him at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5514, or cschofield@ncbaptist.org.)

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David Lee to retire as BCM/D exec

Press reports

David H. Lee, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware (BCM/D), will retire July 31. That date Lee, 62, will have completed 19 years of service to the convention, with the last 13 as executive director.

"I have lived a blessed life," he said Nov. 12, 2012, to the messengers at the BCM/D annual meeting in Silver Spring, Md.

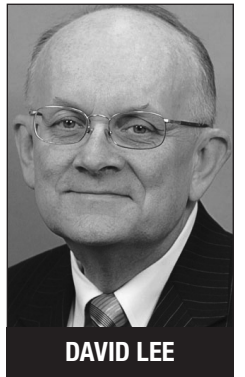
"God changed my life at age 15. At age 16 I said 'yes' to God's call to preach. At age 20 God gave me a life and ministry partner. I would not be where I am today without my wife."

He and Sherry celebrated 42 years of marriage in December. Before joining the BCM/D staff, Lee was pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Glen Burnie, Md. The North Carolina native also has pastored churches in Mississippi and Maryland. Lee was the unanimous choice of

the BCM/D General Mission Board in 2000 to succeed Charles Barnes, who was retiring at the time.

The convention is accepting applications through April 30 for the position.

Visit: <http://bcmd.org/executive-search>. Resumes to executive-search@bcmd.org. **BR**



DAVID LEE

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Pastor. Godwin Heights Baptist Church of Lumberton, NC, is seeking a full-time pastor with five or more years of ministry experience and who holds a seminary degree of a Master of Divinity Degree. The ideal candidate should have the following qualities: an effective communicator and preacher who works well with the church family and community; a strong leader who promotes a spiritual interest of the church; and a caring individual who is gifted in pastoral care. Interested candidates should submit resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, Godwin Heights Baptist Church, 704 Godwin Avenue, Lumberton, NC 28358. Position opened until filled.

Warsaw Baptist Church, in rural Warsaw NC, seeks **full-time Pastor** to serve our congregation and community. Send resume to: Warsaw Baptist Church, 209 East College Street, Warsaw, NC 28398.

Church Staff

Laurel Springs Baptist Church in Deep Gap, NC, is seeking a **full-time Youth and Children's Leader**. Please visit www.laurelspringsbaptist.com for more information.

Lake Lynn Baptist Church is seeking a **Part-time Youth Pastor**. Please send resumes to 3363 Gillespie St., Fayetteville, NC 28306, or email them to lakelynnbaptistchurch@embarqmail.com. Please submit resumes by May 1.

Minister of Music and Worship. We are currently accepting resumes for the position of part-time minister of music and worship. We desire to receive resumes from individuals that are God called and gifted in music leadership. If you feel led to submit a resume, please email it to pfuller@sbcbgreensboro.org or forward it to Southside Baptist Church, 1001 Greenhaven Drive, Greensboro, NC 27406.

Minister of Music Worship. Ephesus Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, NC, seeks a part-time music minister of worship with strong music background, to plan, coordinate, lead and accompany the church in all phases of music. Undergraduate degree preferred. Visit www.ephesusbaptistchurch.org for full job description and information about the church. Email resume to ephesussecretary@gmail.com, attention: Personnel.

Village Baptist Church, Fayetteville, seeks to fill four positions: **Part-time Recreation Director, Part-time Preschool Ministry Childcare Director, Part-Time Preschool Ministry Event Coordinator, and Full-Time Building Maintenance Manager.** Building Maintenance Manager must have large HVAC system, electrical, plumbing and carpentry skills. Send resumes to cathy@villagebc.org or to Village Baptist Church, 906 McPherson Church Road, Fayetteville, NC 28303. No calls please.

Church seeking **Part-time Worship Leader** to lead blended music services. Send resume to: Calvary Baptist Church, 3001 South York Road, Gastonia, NC 28052, or ccalvarybaptist@carolina.rr.com.

First Baptist Church of the Islands in Savannah, Georgia, is seeking a **full-time Student Pastor** to lead their student ministry (grades 6-12) in a growing and thriving church setting. The ideal candidate has a sense of God's specific call to reach and minister to middle and high-school students. Strong personal skills in relating to students and families will be expected along with a desire to invest life and time in the lives of students. Ability to oversee a variety of facets of student ministry is a must. This position will oversee approximately 60-80 students with potential for incredible growth. Please send resumes with cover letter and references to searchteam@fbcislands.com or to: Search Team, FBC Islands, at 6613 Johnny Mercer Blvd., Savannah, GA 31410.

Part-Time Children's Minister. Mt. Ruhama Baptist Church located in Maiden, NC, is seeking a part-time children's minister. Will be responsible for our ministry to children in nursery-6th grade. See website for details: www.mtruhama.org - see Children's Ministry Opening tab or email: phyllisatmrbc@bellsouth.net.

The Memorial Baptist Church of Greenville, North Carolina, seeks a **full-time Minister of Youth/Children and Families**. The ideal candidate will have attended a CBF related seminary and/or divinity school and will have at least one year's experience ministering in one or more of these areas. Greenville, with a population of 100,000, is the home of East Carolina University. We are located half-way between Raleigh and the beach, about an hour's drive from each. Our church is growing and healthy and would be an excellent opportunity for singles or families alike. Please send resumes to Holly Sloan, Committee Chairperson at hollybsloan@gmail.com or to our pastor, Greg Bowers, at bowersg@tmbc.org. Additional information, including a full job description, can be found at our website: www.tmbc.org.

Concord Baptist Church, Anderson, South Carolina, is seeking a **Children's Pastor/Children's Ministry Director**. This person will develop and lead a comprehensive ministry to children, preschool- fifth grade. The candidate should have a minimum of three years church/children's ministry experience. Preferred candidates should hold a degree from an accredited seminary. Interested persons may submit resumes via e-mail to jjames@concordbaptist.com or by regular mail to Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621. Attn: Dr. Don Cox.

Turner Memorial Baptist Church, Garner, NC, is seeking a **part-time Music Minister** to lead us in our blended/contemporary worship services. We are a growing church in Southern Wake Co. Send resumes to sean.mckenzie@tmbconline.org.

Bethany Baptist Church is seeking a **part-time Minister of Youth** to provide spiritual direction in developing, planning and leading our youth ministry. See website for more details: bethanybaptistws.com.

Part-time Director of Youth and Children.

First Baptist Church, South Boston, VA, (Baptist General Association of Virginia and the CBF) seeks an individual to plan and develop youth and children ministries. A minimum of a collegiate degree and some experience working with youth and/or children required. Submit resumes to: First Baptist Church, Attn: Ted Bennett, 815 N. Main Street, South Boston, VA 24592, or email to: www.tedbennett@gmail.com by May 1, 2013.

Bethany Baptist Church is seeking a **part-time Minister of Music and Worship** to plan, direct and coordinate worship for both contemporary and traditional services. See website for more details: bethanybaptistws.com. Prior experience is desired.

Miscellaneous

Looking for passionate College and/or Seminary students willing to serve at-risk teens during a summer internship. Boys and Girls Homes of NC has two paid internship opportunities available in our Chapel Ministry, June 1-July 30, 2013. For more information please contact our chaplain at john.cobb@bghnc.org or 910-625-7300.

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March 24

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

March 31

Being Served or Serving?

Focal Passage: Luke 22:19-30

Many years ago I remember sitting around the dinner table eating fried chicken that my mom had cooked. Normally, my mom was the last to sit down before we prayed.

On this particular occasion, my mom stayed standing while we prayed. After we prayed all the kids reached for the chicken leaving only a couple of pieces. I noticed after we prayed my mom started making a sandwich.

Looking back now I realized what she was doing. Even though she prepared the meal and even though she had more right to eat the chicken than any of us kids she chose to deny herself and allow us to have a second serving of that delicious chicken.

Do you know someone who has modeled a life of a servant? Jesus said that the greatest among us is not the one who reclines at the table but the one who serves (Luke 22:27).

Unlike our culture, which defines greatest in terms of possessions and position, Jesus defines greatest by serving others. He said, “The kings of the

Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves” (Luke 22:25-26 ESV).

Jesus is the ultimate example of a servant. He gave His life that we could enjoy the full pleasure of knowing God.

How much more then should we, in our everyday lives, seek to honor Him by serving others? We may not know it, but people notice if we have a servant’s heart. Our actions serve as a reflection or distraction to the glorious gospel. If you intend to be great in God’s kingdom it must come through serving others.

For 42 years now I have watched my mom serve our family and the church. In my estimation, when it comes to serving others, there has been no greater reflection of Christ than my mom. Will others say that about you? More importantly, will Christ say that about you?



BARTLEY WOOTEN
Senior pastor, Beulaville Baptist Church, Beulaville

Focal Passage: John 20:1-18

At a conference in 2009, Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, gave an illustration about a tombstone he saw in Indiana that reminds us that death is not our final destination. He shared, “There is a tombstone in Indiana, right across the river from Louisville, Ky., that has the following inscription: – Pause, stranger, when you pass me by; as you are now, so once was as I. As I am now, so you will be; so prepare for death and follow me. Some unknown witness came along and added an interesting comment, – To follow you I am not content until I know which way you went.” Although

those words have a light-heartedness about them they speak a very serious message; namely, that there is life after death and it will be spent either in heaven or hell.

Tragically, many people do not know or do not care how one can be saved from

eternal judgment. We live in a pluralistic society that believes there are many paths to heaven and that no absolute claim is superior to others. However, as Christians, we believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything. When Mary Magdalene and the disciples discovered the empty tomb and realized that Jesus had risen from dead they needed no further convincing that Jesus was truly God (John 20:1-31).

In the same way, believers today know that eternal life only comes through our risen Lord. Jesus said, “... I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, ESV).

Unfortunately, many folks in our world refuse to believe Jesus Christ is God. They look for something or someone to fill the void in their lives and give them hope for the future. Ultimately, all their attempts will fall short and leave them empty and condemned. As Christians, we must strive to help those people recognize that Jesus is the risen Savior. We must pray that as we speak with them about the gospel that the Holy Spirit will open their eyes and they will turn from sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ.

March 24

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

March 31

Care for Others

Focal Passages: 1 Timothy 5:1-10, 16-18

How do we treat others in our congregation? Paul’s wisdom to Timothy was to treat all with the utmost respect: older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, younger women as sisters, and older women as mothers. The greatest attention, however, was given to those older women who were 60 years or older. In those days there were no social security checks, life insurance payouts, IRA’s, 401-K’s, annuities, or pensions. Estate planning and women’s rights were not top priorities in the ancient Roman world. Thus, there was a great need for congregational intervention.

The first obligation of the church was to determine who qualified for assistance. Years earlier the infant church had intervened when Jewish widows were given preference over Gentile widows. Apparently that crisis had been adequately resolved, so in addition to an agreed upon age requirement, the next qualification was her previous marital status. Had she been faithful to her husband, and if

she had remarried because of the death of a spouse, had she been faithful to him as well? Was she a “one-man woman?” Additionally, there was to be a determination of character. Had the widow served others well? Had she “relieved the afflicted” in some capacity? Was she recognized as a woman of deepest integrity and faith? Once these character requirements had met approval, the next issue was whether or not she had family that could and would provide for her needs. If her heirs had the resources to provide for her, the church would not circumvent their aid. But if not, the church had set up some type of benevolence fund. It’s much like a situation recently evidenced in our church. A saintly widow is provided for very well by her children, but her deacon also checks up on her, and during the recent snow, cleared her handicap ramp and put seed in her bird feeder. He understands that church leadership involves caring for others.



WAYNE PROCTOR
Pastor, Eure Baptist Church

Focal Passages: Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

Apastor told his congregation about a dream he had the night before. Perhaps nightmare would be a better descriptor. In his dream he could not find his Bible.

He searched his house, and it was not to be found. He was getting desperate, but then realized he had a second Bible. But efforts to find the second Bible were also futile.

Can a preacher preach without his Bible, he wondered? By now it was time to leave, so the pastor went outside to get in his car. But horrors, his car was also missing!

The minutes were ticking by, the pastor was not going to make it to church, and then he woke up.

He looked at the clock beside his bed and it read 4:23. He got up and used the bathroom, and as he went back to bed he was thankful.

It was only a bad dream. He still had

his Bibles and his car, and he had plenty of time to get to church. It was going to be a great day!

For Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and the 11 disciples, it was going to be a great day.

They had been living their bad dream, their worst nightmare, but this Sunday was going to be a great day. Why? Because their fears were going to be overcome, and the One whom they thought they had lost was going to be found. In today’s text the two Marys had ventured out in the early Sunday dawn with spices in hand to “freshen up” the wrapped corpse of Jesus (cf. Luke 24:1). Instead, they were met with an earthquake, an angel and petrified soldiers. They were terrified!

Then the angel gave them the comforting words that Jesus was resurrected. In their newfound excitement they raced back home to tell the others, only to be halted by Jesus Himself. He also told them to “not be afraid.” Furthermore, “Tell the 11 to go back home to Galilee, and I will meet them there.” And He did. And they believed.

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Luter Continued from page 1

"I've been a part of [the Southern Baptist] convention for 26 years," Luter said. "This is not a perfect convention, but ... I would put this convention up to any in the world."

"We're number one when it comes to evangelism. We're number one when it comes to discipleship, number one when it comes to disaster relief."

Luter recalled how the SBC's Disaster Relief ministry reached out to Franklin Avenue Baptist Church and New Orleans residents left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

"This [convention] has a passion for reaching people," Luter said. "I promise you this convention, bar none, is one that believes in doing the Master's will. And that's why I'm proud to be a part of this convention."

The debate over Calvinism and what some refer to as "Traditional Baptist" views on salvation, he added, is becoming more of a distraction in Southern Baptist life.

"We have a major, major issue with Calvinism," Luter said. "That issue can possibly, if we don't deal with it in a Christian manner, split this convention. Every city I go to, when I [meet] with pastors, [they] will ask what's going to happen with the Calvinism issue."

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page formed a special committee last year to address the Calvinism debate. The committee is expected to report on the issue during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in June.

"There's going to be a proclamation given out that hopefully will satisfy everybody," Luter said. "We've got to look at this thing as spiritual warfare. ... It's an issue that has to be dealt with, and unless we deal with it in a Christian-like manner, I really believe the enemy can come and divide us."

Pastors and church leaders also need to take more of a stand, he said, against the pressures of today's politically correct culture.

"We've got preachers [who] are compromising the scriptures," Luter said. "We need pastors and preachers in this convention who are going to stand on the Word of God."

Luter mentioned an interview he participated in the day after being elected as SBC president. During the interview a journalist asked him about his view of same-sex marriage and whether or not he agreed with President Obama's stance on the issue.

"On this issue I'm totally against the president," he said. "Folks, we're either going to be people of the Book or not. There's just some things in scripture that we cannot compromise on."

"We've got to preach it, we've got to live it, and we've got to stand on it." Another way that Southern Baptists can stand together, Luter said, is through supporting the Cooperative Program, which he described as "the engine that runs our convention."

"That's what helps students in our seminaries," he said.

"That's what helps NAMB (North American Mission Board) do what they are doing in Alpharetta. That's what helps start churches, helps plant churches. That's what helps IMB (International Mission Board) to put more missionaries [overseas]. ... That's how we cooperate to do ministry."

Luter urged fellow pastors to consider increasing their CP giving by 1 percent. It's worth the investment, he said.

"We can plant more churches," he said. "We can grow more churches, and we can impact the kingdom of God."

Luter shared his "frustration" toward pastors who have received training or financial support from Southern Baptists, but they fail to give anything back to the Cooperative Program.

"The [SBC has] given you funds from our local churches," he said. "The state convention has given you funds that are helping you pay salaries ... and you don't give back? That's wrong."

"If the state convention [or] a local church is helping you, then as a man of God, you need to have the same conviction to give to support CP because that's how you got started," Luter added. "To whom much is given, much is required." In regards to church planting, Luter said now is the time to get involved.

"There is no better time in the history of this convention for church planters than right now," he said.

"Kevin Ezell, over at NAMB, he has taken on church planting as his *numero uno* assignment. Kevin's passion is church planting. He just has a conviction that if we're going to reach America, we need to plant churches to do that."

Luter added that providing help for existing churches is also important.

"I told [Ezell] 'I support you in planting churches and starting churches, but we cannot turn our backs on the churches that are already here that are struggling,'" he said.

"We have a lot of churches that are struggling. They are living from week to week. We cannot totally put our efforts on church planting and not help those churches that are hurting. But, there is no better time than now if you're a church planter."

Luter will return to N.C. in November to speak during the Baptist State Convention's annual meeting. **BR**

How to share Christ with Muslim friends

Baptist Press

Muslims aren't just people "over there" in the Middle East and parts of Asia. They live in major cities across the U.S. and many smaller towns as well. More are arriving daily and the vast majority want to live quiet lives making a living for their families.

To many Southern Baptists, evangelizing Muslims in this country may seem to be a daunting task best left to professional missionaries and skilled pastors. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Sharing Christ with people who represent some of the rapidly growing faiths in America (these include Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists) doesn't have to be scary or complicated. Most people of another faith are quite open to hearing about Christianity. Learning a few simple steps and having conversations with adherents of other faiths about Christ actually is quite simple.

Muslims throughout the world regard Christ as one of their prophets and turn to Him to save them from their sins. At the same time, the pervasiveness of Islam in the news and the seeming fervency of Muslims' beliefs unnecessarily strikes fear in the hearts of some Christians about talking to Muslims about Christ.

If we follow a few simple rules, we can find a bridge to talk with many Muslims about Christ. In my book, *How to Share Christ with Your Friends of Another Faith*, I spell out steps that help build these bridges. None of the plans is complicated. Each provides a step-by-step blueprint of what to say.

With a Muslim friend, for example, consider these four steps toward sharing your faith:

1. Befriend a Muslim. A simple act of kindness such as bringing a small gift to a new Muslim neighbor can set the stage for the process of friendship.

2. Avoid the urge to be only a friend. Look for opportunities to bring God into your conversation for the purpose of letting your Muslim friend know you are a person of faith. For example, invite a friend out

for coffee and then incorporate into the conversation something about how God recently has blessed you personally.

3. Look for "spiritual clues" that your new friend is interested in God. If the person mentions any desire to know God, you will know that God must be working in his or her heart. In preparation, read John 12:32 or 16:8 for proof that only God draws individuals to Himself.

4. Take the opportunity to share your faith even if clues don't present themselves. If you have invested in several visits with your Muslim friend, you have earned the right to share Christ.

For approaching a cultural Muslim who is not fervent in his faith, meanwhile, Wade Akins, an evangelist who has worked in Muslim countries, gives this suggestion:

"My main objective is, as soon as I can, to get this person into the Word of God. I will do this simply by offering a New Testament or Bible. I simply say, 'I have a love gift for you.' Then I watch the facial reaction. ... My objective simply is to get Muslims to receive God's Word.

"They may read it at night in secret or openly. If they react positively ... then I might say, 'May I show you a few verses that explain to you how you may know for sure you will go to Paradise after you die?' If the response is, 'Yes,' then I share with them either the [Bible or New Testament] or the following verses that explain the gospel: 1 John 5:13 and Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9 and 10:13."

Remember: In any encounter, whether your effort to share Christ is successful is not up to you. God is the one who changes hearts, not us. We just need to watch God do His work.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Jeff Brawner is chairman of the department of missions and assistant professor of missions, theology and church history at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Cordova, Tenn. His book, *"How to Share Christ with Your Friends of Another Faith,"* is available at www.hannibal-books.com and such online sites as amazon.com and barne-sandnoble.com.) **BR**



JEFF BRAWNER
Guest Column

Boys allowed in girls' restrooms?

According to a recent directive issued by the Massachusetts Department of Education, public schools in the Bay State must allow boys and girls who identify as the opposite sex to utilize whichever restroom and/or locker room they feel most comfortable using. And they won't need a doctor's note to do so.



KELLY BOGGS
Guest Column

Additionally, if a boy believes himself to be a girl, or is more comfortable identifying himself as a female, he must also be allowed to participate on girls' sports teams. The same would hold true for a girl who chooses to identify as a male. So, in Massachusetts, if a boy starts singing with conviction, "Man, I feel like a woman," (with apolo-

gies to country singer Shania Twain) then he should, if he wants, be able to use girls' facilities and play on female sports teams. Of course, in the case of a little girl, if she identifies more with country crooner Brad Paisley's "I'm Still a Guy," then, of course, she should, if she so desires, be able to use the bathroom and shower with boys.

Welcome to the convoluted and confused world of gender identity. According to the Internet site Medscape Reference, gender identity is defined as "a personal conception of oneself as male or female (or rarely, both or neither) ... Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified ..." According to that description, gender iden-

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Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

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

Thankful for your partnership

With each passing year that the Lord privileges me to serve Him, my appreciation, understanding and amazement of all that I observe God doing continues to increase. As I look toward next month and my seven-year anniversary of serving as your executive director-treasurer [of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina], I am filled with gratitude to God for the tremendous blessing of serving N.C. Baptists in this capacity.

In these last seven years I have been granted a front-row seat to see God at work. I have seen God use N.C. Baptists to start new churches so that more people will be reached with the gospel. I have seen God work

through national and international partnerships as we seek to push back lostness. I have been blessed to see churches grow spiritually and provide opportunities to involve more of their members in missions.

I encourage you to not grow weary in your efforts. I ask you to continue in your work for Christ's church as we do not have time to waste or to dwell on things we have accomplished thus far through His Holy Spirit. With millions of lost people in our state, we must utilize an Acts 1:8 model in fulfilling the Great Commission. I am fully committed to helping this Convention of churches, by God's grace, become the strongest force in the history of

this Convention for reaching people with the gospel.

In my address to our Board of Directors during their last meeting I shared an update on the work of our Strategic Development Committee that is working to develop the foundation for a five-year strategy. The strategy will focus on strengthening churches in order to push back lostness through the making of disciples.

I will present this strategy before the Executive Committee next month, during which time I will also bring a proposal to restructure [BSC] staff. Since I strongly believe that structure follows strategy, while our committee has been crafting the strategy, I have also been developing a staffing structure to support the strategy.

Please pray for me, and for our staff, as

we take the necessary steps to position ourselves to better serve the churches and associations of this Convention. Our mission as your [BSC] staff is to assist the churches in accomplishing their divinely appointed mission. The staff often hear me say "as we serve the Lord, we work for the churches of this Convention."

Although I have seen God bring forth much fruit in the last seven years within and through the work of this Convention, my prayer is that the days to come will be even more fruitful for His Kingdom. Please know of my prayers for you and your churches. Thank you for allowing me to serve with you.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy....for your fellowship (partnership) in the gospel...." *Philippians 1:3-4.* **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive director-treasurer

Hope for America

On Nov. 7, 2013, Billy Graham will celebrate his 95th birthday. This is the man who may be responsible for more people coming to Christ than any single figure in the history of Christianity. He has carried the gospel to almost every nation in the world. He wants to be clear that his mission is not over.

Graham still passionately carries a burden for his homeland, the United States of America. It is his conviction that many do not know Jesus as Savior.

While his health and natural aging limits his ability to preach regularly, Graham, his family and his staff believe God can use the video recordings of his preaching to reach the lost. Coupled with current testimonies of changed lives, the evangelist's sermons are being hailed as an effective tool to help believers reach their neighbors with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Labeled "My Hope with Billy Graham," the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) has launched a major evangelistic outreach to America, culminating on the evangelist's 95th birthday.

Some organizers believe My Hope could be Graham's "final call to America to turn to God."

The strategy is built around relationships and has been used in 57 nations around the globe over the past decade. The BGEA believes more people have come to Christ as personal savior through this worldwide video outreach than all of Graham's crusade ministry over a span of about 60 years.



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

The strategy has been a good fit in multiple cultural settings. When the vision to bring My Hope to North America was first considered, some were reluctant, believing it may not be effective in our culture. But the cultures of other nations are here on our shores. Maybe My Hope is ready for its day in the USA.

Biblical Recorder Managing Editor Shawn Hendricks interviewed BGEA's Preston Parrish and wrote a story on My Hope, published in the Sept. 29, 2012, edition of the *Recorder*. Parrish is vice president of My Hope. In that article Parrish said, "North Carolina, and specifically North Carolina Baptists, represent a swing constituency that can help set the

pace and develop the momentum for this gospel effort across our nation."

"We're asking every single person in North Carolina who loves Jesus Christ to begin getting involved right now with their prayers. We're praying that the beginning, the epicenter of this great national movement, will indeed be right here in North Carolina," Parrish said.

A powerful video entitled "Defining Moments" was posted on the ministry's website recently, providing clearer definition for the movement. (<http://myhope-withbillygraham.org/defining-moments/>)

In it, Billy Graham shares the timeless message, quoting Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

He repeats the appeal we have heard him proclaim over the years, "No matter how much time you have wasted in the past, you can still have tomorrow."

His son, Franklin, says, "It's going to be the largest evangelistic effort that this nation has ever seen. ... Let's fight for every soul [in this nation.] Let's tell them about Jesus."

We believe sharing the gospel is not an option for Christians. It is our divine assignment.

Sharing the gospel is not limited to select Christians. All who have received the grace of God through salvation are called to share that same grace with those who have either not yet heard or not yet responded to the gift of eternal life.

If we really want God to be glorified in our lives and through our lives, we need to seriously ask, "What gives Him glory?" Is it our impressive music or skillful preaching? Is it our attractive buildings and spacious parking lots? Is it the display of our talents and abilities?

I believe God is most glorified when the purpose of His Son's mission to earth finds fulfillment in a repentant, changed life – a life that has completely abandoned to Jesus Christ, His death on the cross for our sin and His resurrection from the dead. Therein is God glorified.

In John 14:13 Jesus promised, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Ask God for the salvation of your neighbors. Build relationships that will last for eternity. Be committed to joining Graham in bringing hope to America.

The list of coming training events is on page 4. See page 10 for a related story about My Hope. Visit MyHopeWithBillyGraham.org for more information. **BR**

Boggs

Continued from page 16

tity is completely subjective. The description indicates it is based solely on "personal conception" and it is "self-identified." Objectivity is dismissed and even rejected.

The definition of "conception" that would apply here, according to the Concise English Oxford Dictionary, is "the ability to imagine or understand." So, a male who imagines or understands himself to be female is to be treated as a female. If a male imagines or understands himself to be both male and female, is he then to be treated as both? Or is he to be treated as a male on odd days and a female on even days, or vice versa? How, pray tell, is a person to be treated who imagines or understands himself/herself to be neither?

Let me say that I am sympathetic to people who are, for whatever the reason, confused about their gender identity. I will not pretend to understand their plight, but I believe they would benefit more from counseling and prayer than by being encouraged to pretend they are something that they obviously are not – especially

if they are children. Children and teenagers rarely have the good sense to come in out of the rain. They are also very impressionable. To promote and encourage gender identity that is opposite of the sex God gave them at birth is, at best, naive. The only thing that is worse is parents who give prepubescent children hormone blockers in order to delay puberty so that their gender-confused offspring have more time to decide if they want to have a sex change operation. Yes, there are parents who are, in fact, doing just this.

If a kid pretends he or she is a spider monkey, we accept this as exploring the imagination. But if the same kid insists he or she is a monkey and begins using the bathroom on the floor, eating fleas and swinging on the light fixture, it's time to start looking for a counselor, not encouraging the behavior.

What has happened in America? What has happened is that in recent decades more and more secular psychologists and psychiatrists have come to reject the idea of a

divine Creator. This leads to the outright rejection of the Bible and the idea of God creating human beings as male or female.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the classic work by Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky, one of the book's main characters, Ivan Karamazov, contends that if there is no God, everything is permitted. Proverbs 29:18 in the Bible succinctly says, "Without revelation people run wild."

Dostoyevsky's understanding as expressed through his character is correct. If there is no God, everything is permissible. And, as the Bible states, when people have no understanding of God they are morally unrestrained, even to the point of promoting and encouraging the convoluted and confused idea of gender identity expression to children.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Kelly Boggs is a weekly columnist for Baptist Press, director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention's office of public affairs, and editor of the Baptist Message, newsjournal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.) **BR**

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Love

Continued from page 1

“[For a Muslim], your religion is part of your identity,” he added. “To leave Islam is to not just leave what you have believed, but to leave all of the people you know.”

Nabeel continues to pray for his family and hopes they will one day put their trust in Jesus.

“Our job is to share the love of Christ – period,” he said. “That’s our calling. Individually in our lives we should portray unadulterated, unabashed love for every Muslim we come across.”

Community and family is everything to a Muslim and that bond should never be taken lightly, said Nik Ripken, who has served for 25 years alongside his wife, Ruth, in North Africa and the Middle East.

“[Most Muslims] would rather go to hell with their families than go by themselves to heaven,” he told a crowd during the final session of the conference. Christians must reach out to families, not just individuals, he added.

The author of *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected*, Ripken has interviewed Muslim background believers in more than 60 countries. Friends of his have lost their lives for their faith. He is considered by many to be a leading expert on the persecuted church in Muslim cultures.

The number one cause for persecution on the planet is people choosing to follow Jesus, Ripken said earlier during a panel discussion. But persecution is also a sign of Christian growth.

“Where we’re seeing the greatest growth of the church is in places where persecution is the most widespread,” he said. “Perhaps we don’t ask why those people are persecuted. We ask, ‘Why aren’t we?’”

Though persecution toward Christians is real and a problem in many parts of the world, there are many misconceptions about Islam, said Zane Pratt, who worked with the International Mission Board in Central Asia for about 20 years.

He is now the dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

One of the biggest misconceptions of Muslims is that all – or at least most – Muslims are terrorists.

“That simply is not true,” Pratt said. “... The Muslims we have known, who constitute the vast majority of Muslims, are not violent people. They are warm and friendly. I believe they are wrong [about Jesus], but they are not terrorists.”

When Pratt and his family moved back to the United States he described the transition as “incredibly disappointing.”

“Nobody came over to help us when we moved into our house,” he said. “I can guarantee you every time we moved into a house anywhere in the Muslim world all our neighbors came and helped.”

Other common misconceptions include the idea that the words “Arab” and “Muslim” mean the same thing, and that the word “Allah” comes from the “moon goddess.”

Both are untrue, Pratt said.

The word “Arab” refers to people group and language. While most Arabs adhere to the Islamic religion, many do not, he said. The majority of Muslims live outside the Arabian world, and the largest population of Muslims can be found in Indonesia. Other heavily Muslim populated areas include Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.



Mike Licona, associate professor of theology at Houston Baptist University, and Marty Dupree, with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, discuss how one can present an “airtight” argument for the resurrection. They chatted Feb. 25, during a Q&A session, at the 2013 State Evangelism Conference at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church. (BR photo by Shawn Hendricks)

And the word “Allah,” Pratt said, is simply the Arabic word for “god.”

“‘Allah’ is related to the Hebrew word for ‘God’ that you find in the Old Testament,” he said. “[It] is the word that Arabic speaking Christians and Jews used for ‘God’ before Muhammad was ever born.”

When speaking English, Pratt said he avoids referring to God as “Allah” because in English the word is tied directly to Islam.

“[But] if I’m speaking a Middle Eastern language,” he said, “It’s just the word that means ‘god,’ and that is the word I use because that’s all it means.”

Pratt added that Christians still must “import” Biblical content into whatever word they use.

“You need to assume that people don’t understand what you mean,” he said. “You need to explain yourself very carefully.”

Both Mike Licona and Alex McFarland spoke on the importance of Christians being able to clearly articulate themselves on issues of faith. All Christians should be able to explain what they believe and defend why they believe it.

“Sometimes we want to drive the point home by saying, ‘What I’m telling you is true because it works for me. Let me give you my testimony,’” said Licona, associate professor of Theology at Houston Baptist University and president of Risen Jesus, Inc.

“And that works in a lot of cases with people whose Gospel language is testimony and experience. But there are other people who say, ‘I don’t care about your experience ... I want the facts.’”

Licona is the author of numerous books including *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* and *Paul Meets Muhammad*.

Christians can begin a discussion on faith with Muslims by pointing to the Quran, where Jesus is referred to as Isa.

Most Muslims acknowledge Jesus as a “good prophet,” who was virgin-born and performed many miracles. But they also believe the Bible has been corrupted, and they do not believe Jesus is God.

By learning what the Quran says about Jesus, comparing that with eyewitness accounts in the Four Gospels and with what most historians say about Jesus’ death and the resurrection, a Christian can make a solid case for Jesus to Muslims.

“I call it the Catch-22 moment for Muslims,” Licona said.

The key to remember, Licona said, is that Christians can do better than “quot[ing] a couple Bible verses and walk[ing] away.”

Today Christians live in the “Golden Age of apologetics,” said McFarland, an author, speaker, an occasional Fox News guest and director for the Center for Apologetics and Christian Worldview at North Greenville University in South Carolina.

“We’ve had 50 years of C.S. Lewis and Josh McDowell,” McFarland said. “There’s no reason that every one of our churches shouldn’t be equipping people to present, explain and defend the faith.”

“What we have is opportunity because we’ve got the one message of hope in a world that, with little reflection, concludes there is no hope.”

In September (Sept. 27-28), McFarland and North Greenville University will present an apologetics conference at Northside Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

“We’ve got to remember that our mission is that every succeeding generation know about salvation and about the gospel,” he said. “I will submit to you that we’ve forgotten our mission.”

Ultimately, we all need Jesus no matter who we are, said Fred Luter, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

“You can receive the Gospel no matter your culture, no matter your language, no matter your race, no matter your ethnicity,” he said. “You can receive the gospel.”

“The only thing God is concerned about is the color of the blood because the blood is what makes us whole. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

*Names changed BR

‘Send your babies to Mecca,’ Christian worker says

By SHAWN HENDRICKS | BR Managing Editor

Building relationships with Muslims, and people of different ethnic groups, isn’t “rocket science,” said Nik Ripken.*

Ripken has served with his wife, Ruth,* as a Christian worker in North Africa and the Middle East for 25 years. Ripken, the author of *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected*, describes Muslims as “loveable” and in need of friendship like the rest of us. There are three things a person can do to provide more opportunities to share the love of Jesus, he said.

‘Fix them a bologna sandwich’

First, invite a Muslim family to dinner, said Ripken, who spoke Feb. 25 at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church in Pleasant Garden, N.C. The event, Culture Reach: Understanding, Loving and Relating to Muslims, was part of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s 2013 State Evangelism Conference.

“Fix them a bologna sandwich,” joked Ripken, who clarified that the bologna should be made out of beef, not pork. “Jesus knew this himself that there’s nothing that encourages witness, that facilitates love more than breaking bread together.

“... When was the last time you had a lost family in your house on purpose that wasn’t your relatives?” he added. “What would it mean to the tens of thousands of Muslims in North Carolina if you were to feed them, and invited them in your home.”

While meeting and interviewing Muslims in the Bible Belt, Ripken said nearly

100 percent of those who were asked about their lives in the United States said they had never met a Christian. They said no one had mentioned Jesus to them, and nearly all described America as a lonely place to live.

“Almost all of them had [invited family from overseas] to come and live with them because no one had ever spoken to them from this country,” Ripken said. “Some of them had been here for 10 years.”

All it takes to begin a friendship with a Muslim neighbor, he said, is to have “an obedient heart.”

‘Speak in tongues ... It’s not what you think’

Churches need to take more initiative in learning the native tongue of different ethnic groups, Ripken said. Christians need to be better equipped when they travel overseas, and learn to speak to people in their “heart language.”

“Yes, with the military. Yes, with industry. Yes, with all kinds of businesses all over the world. And through the church, we equip our kids with the languages needed to go to the nations,” he said. “In the midst of that we can teach ESL (English as a Second Language).” Having the attitude “you’re in America, speak English” is counterproductive, Ripken said.

“We don’t have a church planting problem,” he said. “We have a biblical problem. Everybody [who] came to Jesus in the New Testament came to Jesus in their heart language or in a regional language that is close to them.”

Anybody can do it, Ripken said. “Even if you’re getting gray haired,



Ruth Ripken* visits with Somali women whose homeland has been devastated by civil war. She and her husband Nik* spent years assisting teams seeking to meet desperate human needs in the Horn of Africa. Later they began a long-term effort to understand the nature of persecution and how God works through it. (IMB photos)

no hair, we can teach you four or five sentences in most of the languages of the world, and you can go up to people and say ‘Hello’ and ‘How are you?’” he said. “I know everyone in this room could be taught just those few sentences.”

‘Send your babies to Mecca’

Ripken said he heard an “audible gasp” as he told the crowd “Send your babies to Mecca, Saudi Arabia.”

“One of the lies that Satan has told the church is ... ‘If I give myself full time to my church, especially in the missions department, then [God] is to keep His hands off my kids,’” Ripken said. “And that is a lie, not from God, but Satan himself.”

Missions needs to be in the DNA of every

church, Ripken said. As churches dedicate children, they need to give each one a Bible and a passport application that is folded up inside the pages. The church, he said, should also start a savings account (maybe \$50 or \$100) for the child to help them save up for his or her first mission trip.

“If [parents] are not willing to give ... to the nations, they’re not willing to give that baby to God,” he said. “I believe if you are not going to the nations overseas, you’re not going to your neighbors here.

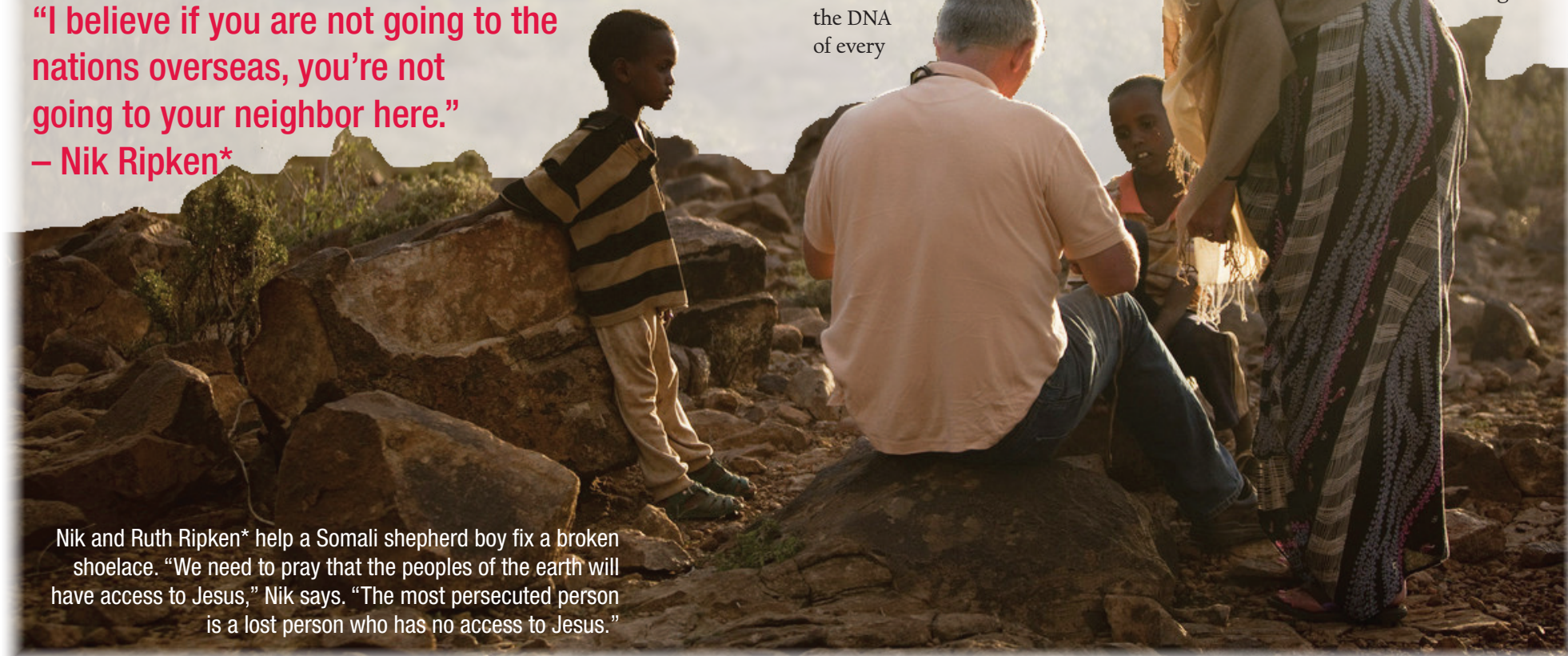
“I believe it firmly.”

Ripken ended his message by urging those in the crowd to truly consider “if no one else will go, we will go.”

* Names changed. **BR**

“I believe if you are not going to the nations overseas, you’re not going to your neighbor here.”

— Nik Ripken*



Nik and Ruth Ripken* help a Somali shepherd boy fix a broken shoelace. “We need to pray that the peoples of the earth will have access to Jesus,” Nik says. “The most persecuted person is a lost person who has no access to Jesus.”

Can NC Baptists help send out 21 more international missionaries in 2014? YES! IF WE ACCEPT THE 1% CHALLENGE!

*CP Sunday
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Eric Reese

**International Missionary
Brazil**

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