

N.C. Baptists respond to quake, tsunamis

BR staff & Baptist Press

TOKYO — A massive earthquake hit northeast Japan March 11, triggering tsunamis throughout the region and to the United States.

A massive wall of water swept away cars, ships and even buildings after the 8.9-magnitude earthquake. It struck about 250 miles from Tokyo. Death and casualty tolls continue to rise as the nation begins to dig out amid a rash of aftershocks.

A spokesperson with the International Mission

Board (IMB) in Asia confirmed that all personnel in Japan are accounted for and suffered no injuries.

Within hours of the quake the Japan Baptist Convention contacted Rescue 24 to request disaster relief assistance. A part of Rescue 24, North Carolina Baptist Men sent a two-man search and rescue team. The team flew out of Raleigh March 11 to respond. This team will be working with another from Hungarian Baptist Aid in initial assessment.

Richard Brunson, executive director of Baptist Men said the team only had delays out of Raleigh and

Chicago but made all their flights. The team as well as Baptist Global Response (BGR) representatives will be meeting with Japan Baptist Convention about what is needed.

“The greatest damage was from the tsunami not from the earthquakes,” said Brunson.

Baptist Men expects to send teams to help with relief efforts as soon as they coordinate with Japan Baptist Convention about what is needed.

(See N.C. Page 3)

W-S church prepares to adopt

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

Just a few months ago, around Christmas time, pastor Rick Speas stood before Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem and shared with them a number that, by the time Christmas 2011 rolls around, should be at least one less.

That number, which according to the International Mission Board (IMB) is now 3,726, represents the number of unengaged, unreached people groups in the world.

While an unreached people group (UPG) has a negligible percentage of Christian believers, an unengaged, unreached people group (UUPG) is a people group essentially void of any evangelical witness. That means 41 percent of the world’s population, or 2.8 billion, have no one to tell them about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Old Town is making plans to adopt one of these unengaged, unreached people groups. The church would actually consider itself “the missionary” working to engage this people group with the gospel. Speas said once Mark Harrison, Old Town’s missions pastor, explained to him about unengaged, unreached people groups and the need for churches to adopt them, making sure Old Town got involved was a “no-brainer.”

Unreached people groups

Some of the countries with the most representation of unreached people groups include Afghanistan, Algeria, India, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey.

The IMB describes a people group as one that shares a “common self-identity.” Language is a primary factor in determining people groups. Other factors include a common history and customs.

The 10/40 Window, a rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude, is home to some of the largest unreached people groups. This geographical area is home to the majority of Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. The top 50 least evangelized



REACHING — More than 3,700 people groups are considered unengaged or unreached by the International Mission Board, including in Tibet, see above. Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem is purposely considering adopting one of the groups for a long-range partnership.

megacities (those with a population greater than one million) are also in the 10/40 Window.

Lasting impact

Harrison said while the church is doing many good things for missions, they want to invest resources in what is best. “To be most effective it’s necessary to focus our attention in a particular direction for a concentrated period of time, so that we will see a deeper and more lasting effect over time,” Harrison said. “We want to see maximum results.”

One way they will do this is by adopting an unengaged, unreached people group. “We want to engage this group wherever they live,” Harrison said. Old Town will engage their people group locally and build relationships with them. They will seek to minister to members of this people group who live throughout the state and North America, as well as minister to them wherever they may live overseas.

Engaging in this missional strategy will help Old Town, as Harrison said, concentrate their energy toward a specific focus in order to have more of a

“rifle than shot gun” impact; more of a laser than a searchlight approach.

Keeping up with the needs of too many different missionaries in too many different places can become overwhelming. The church cannot possibly do ministry in every area of the world where every church member has a passion to do ministry. “My role is not to be the church travel agent,” Harrison said.

In the long run, Old Town will be more effective, and more effective at making disciples, by focusing intently on a particular people group and pouring their efforts into ministry among this group.

Harrison wants the congregation to “develop a heart” for the people group they adopt. From learning the culture to learning how to pray for them to engaging locally and internationally, the effort to adopt a people group will not be limited to church leadership — the entire church body will be involved.

“This will not be a vision of just a select few. We want to build this focus

(See W-S church Page 5)

Repentant prayer first step toward change

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

GREENSBORO — No matter how impressive a church may seem, if the church lacks a strong anchor, it will never succeed.

Ryan Pack, pastor of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, believes that strong anchor is prayer. Pack preached from Daniel 9 during the recent statewide evangelism conference at Friendly Avenue Baptist Church and challenged those in attendance to not only be more focused on prayer, but to refocus on repentant prayer.

Prayer, especially repentant prayer, allows believers to shift their focus from self to God. “We can become so full of ourselves that we miss the presence of God,” Pack said.

Repentant prayer draws eyes heavenward, and it does so by acknowledging God’s faithfulness. Sometimes a person may hesitate to ask someone for forgiveness, even when they know they must, because the response on the other end is unsure.

Not so with God. “God keeps His covenant of love,” Pack said. “He is going to approach us with grace and restoration.” Although sin has consequences, and those consequences may be painful for awhile, God will restore with grace.

“Without acknowledging God’s faithfulness, we have no other steps to take,” Pack said. He urged church leaders and pastors to remember God’s faithfulness, and in light of that, to always seek His glory above all else.

“Sometimes we ask God to bless something He never wanted started in the first place,” Pack said. When that happens, leaders must run to God in repentance.

When leaders only expect God

(See Repentant Page 7)

N.C. leaders glad about RA partnership

Combined wire reports

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — North American Mission Board (NAMB) leaders announced March 2 they plan to partner with Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) for day-to-day operations of the Royal Ambassadors (RA) missions education organization for boys in grades one through six.

The announcement follows NAMB's recent organizational restructuring made to support the entity's "Send North America" strategy to assist Southern Baptists in reaching North America through mobilizing and equipping churches and missionaries for evangelistic church planting.

A statement from Ruby Fulbright, executive director/treasurer of WMU-NC, expressed excitement over working with North Carolina Baptist Men with the RAs.

"The women of WMU and especially of WMU-NC, have long cherished the obligation and privilege of educating boys and girls in missions involvement, support and learning," said Fulbright.

The first RA chapter (Carey Newton Chapter) was begun at First Baptist Church in Goldsboro.

"We believe missions education is a key part of equipping churches for reaching North America — and the world — for Christ," said Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president. "This partnership means churches will continue to receive top-quality material and it allows us to utilize WMU's expertise and singular focus in this area."

NAMB will maintain its missions education ministry assignment, will continue to operate its Baptist Men's ministry work and will maintain close ties with the development of Royal Ambassadors curriculum.

Wanda Lee, national executive director and treasurer of WMU (Woman's



BP photo

NEW PARTNERS — For more than a century, Southern Baptist boys have developed lifelong friendships through Royal Ambassadors, as they've learned what it means to become an on-mission Christian. The North American Mission Board will partner with Woman's Missionary Union to produce missions education materials.

Missionary Union), noted that RAs began with WMU. "RAs was born out of our heart and our soul," Lee said. "We gave it lovingly to the (SBC's former) Brotherhood Commission. Now we welcome them back and pledge our support and partnership with both mission boards to continue the work as best we can."

By 1918, Southern Baptists had established 1,200 chapters. In 1957, responsibilities for RAs transferred to the Brotherhood Commission, which in 1997 became part of the newly formed North American Mission Board.

Richard Brunson, N.C. Baptist Men executive director-treasurer, said he and his staff are also looking forward to National WMU producing missions education materials for RAs and Challengers groups.

"Because of the excellence WMU has shown in missions education mate-

rials, we feel this will greatly strengthen existing RA and Challengers programs in our North Carolina churches," he said. "This will make it much easier for churches to start or strengthen RAs and GAs because they will have coordinated missions curriculum and emphasis."

In addition to a more coordinated missions emphasis, the transition allows churches to order all their children and youth missions education materials from a single source. Brunson said N.C. Baptist Men will continue offering all the statewide RAs and Challengers events, projects, trainings and camps they now provide.

"North Carolina is one of the top

states in the nation in Royal Ambassadors and Challengers programs with many dedicated leaders. N.C. Baptist Men, as we are called upon by churches to coordinate activities with both state and national WMU, is glad to work together for the purpose of missions education," Brunson said. "We have a very good relationship with WMU, and we anticipate this giving us even more opportunities to work together to provide North Carolina churches with the best missions education possible for their children and youth."

NAMB shared the intent to partner with WMU at the annual Missions Education Roundtable meeting, March 1-2 at NAMB's office building in Alpharetta, Ga. Missions education coordinators from 28 Baptist state conventions attended the sessions and had opportunity to discuss the planned partnership. Lee and other WMU staff members from Birmingham, Ala., were on hand to answer questions and discuss the transition.

Specifics of the partnership — which will also include the Challengers program for teenage boys — have yet to be determined.

"The idea for this partnership came from our desire for RAs and Challengers to flourish," said Mike Ebert, NAMB vice president of communications. "We looked across the state line in Alabama and saw some friends who can do it very well and are very well equipped to do it."

NAMB and WMU are working toward finalizing the partnership and related transitions in time for the September 2012 curriculum delivery.

Chowan, BTSR merger talks off

Wire services

After early reports from Associated Baptist Press (ABP), a North Carolina newspaper article announced March 10 that talks have ended about a possible merger of Baptist Theological Seminary (BTSR) in Richmond, Va., and Chowan University.

The *Roanoke-Chowan News-Herald* said the executive committee of Chowan's board of trustees voted March 8 to discontinue discussions. ABP had reported March 1 that a merger with a university was one option under consideration by BTSR trustees to secure the seminary's future.

"The big elephant in the room is money," said Chris White, Chowan's president.

BTSR has \$7 million in debt.

A blog by BTSR President Ron Crawford said that talk of a merger with a particular university was premature and that Chowan's president overstated the seminary's financial woes.

BTSR trustees will meet March 21-22. Before the announcement that the merger was off the table, it was expected that a formal announcement would

be made at the BTSR trustee meeting. Then the decision would have been up to Chowan's board which is slated to meet April 7.

"Last October our trustees looked hard at our business plan in light of our future," Crawford said. "They asked a committee to study possibilities and make a recommendation at the March meeting of the full board of trustees."

Crawford said those possibilities include "partnering" with other institutions, but added, "We're still in the process of seeing what the best options are. It's a little premature to say we have focused on one option and that's the only one we're looking at."

BTSR receives significant funding from both the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist General Association of Virginia. It's not clear how or if a merger would affect those revenue streams.

Currently, BTSR is one of only two theologically moderate seminaries not affiliated with a university. In 2008 BTSR downsized its faculty and staff by seven due to lack of funds.



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Leighann is a teacher and motivational speaker. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Samford University and a Master of Religious Education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Leighann and her pastor-husband Tom have served in Thompson Station, Tennessee, nearly 20 years. Leighann serves on the Thompson Station Church staff as prayer and women's minister. She is also a women's ministry trainer for LifeWay Christian Resources and the author of five books.

These leadership training events are designed for any woman called into leadership roles in their local churches and associations for ministry in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, missions involvement and leadership. The next Leadership Training will be October 7-8, 2011 in Boone, NC.

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Registration deadline is April 1



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Exec. Comm. set for 2011

By **Melissa Lilley**
BSC Communications

CONOVER — The Executive Committee (EC) of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) met March 4 at Hollifield Leadership Center for a brief business meeting that included hearing committee and budget reports.

The meeting was the first regularly scheduled meeting for the newly elected 2011 EC. Serving on the EC this year are: Bobby Blanton, president, Board of Directors; Phil Qualls, vice president, Board of Directors; Ed Yount, president, BSC; Mark Harris, first vice president, BSC; C.J. Bordeaux, second vice president, BSC; Harvey Brown, chairman, Business Services Committee; Todd Marlow, chairman, Church Planting and Missions Development Committee; Jon Hall, chairman, Communications Committee; Scott Faw, chairman, Congregational Services Committee; Rit Varriale, chairman, Christian Higher Education; Randy White, chairman, Evangelization Committee; Jarrod Scott, chairman, Christian Life and Public Affairs Committee; Cameron McGill, chairman, Christian Social Services Committee; Randy Godwin, president, Associational Missions Conference; Dana Hall, president, N.C. Baptist Men (NCBM); Shannon Scott, chairman, Articles and Bylaws Committee; Stan Welch, chairman, Budget Committee; Michael Barrett, at-large; Mike Ivey, at-large; David Horner, at-large; Lee Pigg, at-large.

Bobby Blanton announced that he has appointed Shannon Scott (chairman), Kay Enloe, Dennis Harrell and Patrick Fuller as new members of the Articles and Bylaws Committee. In addition, Blanton has appointed Stan Welch (chairman) and Bill Grisham to the Budget Committee.

Reporting for the Christian Higher Education Committee, Rit Varriale said the Committee is exploring ways to continue working with the educational institutions affiliated with the BSC.

During the Congregational Services report Lynn Sasser, executive leader, reported that Find it Here 2011: Embracing Christ is underway in churches across the state. He encouraged EC members to participate and to make a commitment to disciple-making this year. “Disciple-making is a serious issue that affects every area of ministry and missions,” he said.

Chuck Register, executive leader for Church Planting and Missions Development, reported that the BSC partnership with Moldova officially kicks off in March. BSC staff, as well as Allan Blume, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Boone; Pam Blume, who has served on the International Mission Board (IMB) Board of Trustees and various BSC committees; Bobby Welch, past president of the Southern Baptist

Convention (SBC) and former pastor of First Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Fla; Bobby Rankin, wife of former IMB president Jerry Rankin; and John Ewart, associate vice president of project development and director of doctor of ministry studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, will spend a week in Moldova leading in a pastor’s, women’s and youth conference.

The BSC hopes to send at least one team of North Carolina Baptists into each of the 33 districts in Moldova in order to help strengthen churches, assist believers in unreached areas of the country in planting multiplying churches, and share the gospel with those who have never heard.

Hall reported that NCBM volunteer teams have begun working in central Guatemala with the Quiche Baptist Association and are helping build a health clinic and community center.

NCBM is also working in Honduras. The fourth volunteer team is now in Honduras and 21 teams are expected to go throughout the year.

Under new business, the EC approved a church loan of \$50,000 for River City Church in Hamptonville. River City is a church plant that started about one year ago.

Milton A. Hollifield Jr., BSC executive director-treasurer, and John Butler, executive leader for Business Services, brought the financial report. They shared that Cooperative Program funds are \$4,449,749.73, a total that is 5.77 percent ahead of last year at this time.

Hollifield reported that the BSC, like many other churches and organizations, has been under tremendous financial pressure the past few years.

However, faithful giving from North Carolina Baptists has allowed the Convention to remain in the black.

Although the BSC has reduced its budget by about 8 percent over the past three years, its Cooperative Program giving to the SBC increased 1.5 percent during that same time.

Hollifield also shared that the SBC operates on a different fiscal year than the BSC. The SBC begins its fiscal year October 1, and the BSC begins its fiscal year January 1.

When comparing receipts from October 1-February 28, 2009-2010 to that same time frame in 2010 and 2011, the BSC increased its giving to the SBC by 2.99 percent.

“That came at a time when we were 13 percent under budget,” Hollifield said.

“We have been increasing our Cooperative Program contributions at the rate of half a percent each year. This is helping get the gospel to the nations. If Cooperative Program receipts go up, we can give even more to the Southern Baptist Convention.”

The next Executive Committee meeting is April 14 in Cary.

Campbell, Mars Hill publications recognized

The North Carolina College Media Association (NCCMA) held its awards ceremony Feb. 19.

Among the small college category (6,000 and fewer readers), Campbell University and Mars Hill College received recognition. *The Campbell Times* placed second in the state for the best student newspaper. Both *The Campbell Times* and Mars Hill College’s *The Hilltop* ranked in the top five for best web sites. Mars Hill came in second and Campbell was fifth.

Mars Hill designers Rachel Conner,

Yi Lu, Joshua Doby and Mary Elise Jones placed third in the design category for “To Text or Not To Text.”

Andy Specht, a 2010 graduate who studied journalism at Campbell, won second place for his reporting on stimulus money. Kaylynn Baker of Mars Hill received honorable mention for a tuition story.

Sam Hartshorn received an honorable mention for an untitled work of fiction in Mars Hill’s *Cadenza*. Another honorable mention was given to *Pine Burr*, Campbell’s yearbook.

Platt to nominate Wright for 2nd term as SBC pres.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — Georgia pastor Bryant Wright will be nominated for a second term as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Alabama pastor David Platt announced March 11.

Wright, senior pastor of the Atlanta-area Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, will be nominated by David Platt, senior pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala.

The SBC annual meeting will be June 14-15 in Phoenix.

Platt praised Wright for providing “Kingdom-minded, Christ-exalting servant leadership” for the Southern Baptist Convention this past year.

“I have known Bryant for many years and have great respect for him both personally and pastorally,” Platt said in a statement to Baptist Press. “Bryant possesses a deep love for the local church he leads and for the convention of churches of which he is a part. Over this past year as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, he has graciously and faithfully served Southern Baptist churches, encouraging us to work together for the advancement of the gospel in North America and to all nations.

“Bryant pastors a church full of people who are passionate about spreading the gospel locally and globally,” Platt added. “They are active in sharing Christ in the Atlanta area, baptizing hundreds of new believers this last year and ministering to urgent spiritual and physical needs in their surrounding community. In addition, they are directly involved in ministry to people in more than 30 different countries around the world. They give selflessly — during 2010, their total missions giving comprised over \$3 million dollars.”

Wright, a native of the Atlanta area, holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a bachelor of arts in English from the University of South Carolina. He earned his M.Div. at Southern Seminary and was minister to single adults at Second Baptist Church in Houston before accepting the pastorate of the fledgling Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in December 1981. The church has since grown to more than 7,600 members. Wright and his wife Anne have three children and three grandchildren.

N.C. Baptists respond to quake, tsunamis

(Continued from Page 1)

The team assessed needs in Sendai, which is near the epicenter of the quake, and distributed food at an evacuation center.

Because of the tsunami, power to the Japanese nuclear reactors shut down resulting in the reactors getting too hot. Personnel tried to pump sea water in to cool the reactors down but reports of radiation sickness have been widespread. Stations have been set up to check for radiation poisoning as well as to provide shelter for people who have lost homes.

Seismologists said it is the largest earthquake to hit Japan and the seventh largest to be recorded, according to the U.S. Geological Survey data. Tsunami warnings extended to the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, the Pacific coast of Russia and Hawaii. Mickey Caisson, disaster relief team leader for the North American Mission Board, said minimal damage was caused in Hawaii and along the West Coast of the United States.

Southern Baptist missionary Cornelia Walker was in her family’s 10th-floor apartment when the quake hit, buckling the road in front of her home.

“It was rather scary to be in the hallway, with hands against the walls while things fell in the dining area and kitchen,” Walker told Baptist Press. “We went downstairs to the yard with other folks and checked in with a few of the older people next door.

“Everyone was scared but OK,” she said. “Japanese children were walking home from school with their earthquake hats on, and there are still sirens going off outside.”

The quake rattled buildings and toppled cars off bridges and into waters underneath. Waves of debris flowed like lava across farmland, pushing boats, houses and trailers.

International Mission Board personnel stayed in touch with families and friends via Internet. Missionary Mark Bennett used Facebook posts to let people know his family was safe.

“The boys said their school had ‘cracks,’” Bennett said in one post. “The street in front of our house is buckled and tons of grey sand has filled the street. Utility poles down the street have fallen down but we still have water, electricity and Internet.”

This quake was the latest in a series in the region the same week. Early March 10, an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.3 struck off the coast of Japan’s Honshu island. On March 9, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck near the same island.

As aftershocks continue to rock the nation and other countries in the area, missionary Lana Oue asks friends to pray for continued safety.

“There are still many strong aftershocks, so please continue to pray for safety,” Oue posted on Facebook. “Pray for our personnel and for the many Japanese people who have been affected.”

An IMB assessment team will also evaluate and determine what response might be facilitated through local Japanese churches. BGR, an international relief and development organization, told Baptist Press it has allocated \$100,000 for an initial response and is in touch with partners in the region to assess immediate relief needs.

If disaster relief specialists are needed, Baptist Global Response will mobilize teams from the Baptist state conventions on call, said Jeff Palmer, executive director of BGR. “We have notified our call-out states to be on standby,” Palmer said.

Donate: make your check payable to N.C. Baptist Men, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512. Designate on your check Japan Earthquake/Tsunami Fund.

News Briefs

Two pastors murdered

MADISONVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Two unrelated murders of Baptist pastors in Tennessee and Texas have left friends, family members and church members in shock and disbelief.

In Tennessee, Darrell Franklin, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Madisonville, was killed March 2 at his business, Fay Innovative Waste Solutions, in Athens. According to news reports, he allegedly was shot and killed by Darrell Hester, an employee of the company who then killed himself. Police are calling the incident a murder/suicide, according to news accounts. Franklin was bivocational.

In Texas, Clint Dobson, pastor of Arlington's NorthPointe Baptist Church, was killed and his ministry assistant, Judy Elliott, critically injured March 3. NorthPointe is a satellite campus of First Baptist Church in Arlington.

Christian Pakistan leader dies

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The only Christian in Pakistan's government was assassinated March 2 after pushing for reform of harsh laws that mandate death for people who leave or "insult" Islam.

Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's minister for minorities,

had declared he was prepared to die for his convictions after Salman Taseer, governor of the country's Punjab province, was killed Jan. 5 by a bodyguard who said he was angry that the politician opposed Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

Bhatti was on his way to work in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, when unidentified gunmen sprayed his car with bullets, according to news reports. A radical Islamic group associated with the Taliban terrorist movement reportedly claimed responsibility for the assassination in a note left at the scene.

WorldCrafts launches new site

WorldCrafts has officially launched its new branding campaign, which includes a new web site, www.WorldCrafts.org.

The new site features easier navigation, streamlined products, larger images, and new party ideas. WorldCrafts underwent rebranding in 2010, which resulted in a new vision, mission statement, tagline, logo, and colors.

The new mission statement is, "WorldCrafts and its local partners develop fair-trade businesses that provide sustainable income and offer eternal hope for impoverished people throughout the world."

Two Rivers changes name

Two Rivers Baptist Church, a prominent Southern Baptist congregation in Nashville, is changing its name beginning March 20 to the "Fellowship at Two Rivers."

The church says the name change was driven by a desire to distance itself from controversies from the past few years that made headlines. The controversy involved members who were dissatisfied with former pastor Jerry Sutton. Some sued. Sutton retired early, telling members in a letter, "Although we have won court cases and church votes, the conflict continues."

New Hope promotes web site

As book publishing rapidly enters an exciting new era of connectivity, New Hope Publishers is pleased to announce the upcoming launch of *NewHopeDigital.com* this April. *NewHopeDigital.com* is an innovative web venture, providing readers and retailers with fresh content from top authors in multiple digital formats.

NewHopeDigital.com will feature regularly updated magazine-style content — articles, columns, feature stories, podcasts, videos — from New Hope authors and other contributors. Each month the site will have a specific theme.

Staff change

TIM NICHOLS has been called as pastor of HollyHunter Baptist Church, Charlotte.

First Baptist Church, Mocksville, has called SHANE NIXON to his first pastorate. Nixon was the director of church relations for Baptist Retirement Homes.

Opportunity Corner

A cappella group visits Creedmoor church

First Baptist Church in Creedmoor is hosting The Master's Men at 6 p.m. April 3. The group is a male a cappella ensemble started in 1995.

Contact David Richardson at (919) 528-2352, ext. 24, or drichardson@fbc-creedmoor.org. Visit www.mastersmen.org for more concert dates.

International college students live 'dream'

The International Student Conference is set April 8-10 at Fort Caswell. "Dream the Dream" will allow international students at colleges across North Carolina to come together for a week-end getaway.

There will be opportunities to learn some history as well as about other cul-

tures. Registration is \$75 and includes five meals and two nights lodging. A \$20 deposit is due to the Baptist Campus Minister by Friday, March 25. Register by contacting your Baptist Campus Minister.

Contact Rick Trexler at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5560, rtrexler@ncbaptist.org.

'Ignite Youth Explosion' event set April 10

Planners expect more than 2,500 people to attend the next Ignite Youth Explosion April 10 at 6 p.m.

The event, which is scheduled at the Polk County High School gym and auditorium in Columbus, will be a three-county event. Students from six high schools and six middle schools in the area will be involved. Admission is free.

There is also a return to the Asheville Civic Center in the works

There have been 15 "Ignite" events throughout Western North Carolina so far.

Over 2,500 professions of faith have been recorded, and more than 575 youth and adults have announced their calling to ministry and missions.

Contact Pastor Ricky Mason, First Baptist Church, Maggie Valley: (828) 926-0065 or rickymasonfbmv@gmail.com. Visit www.igniteasheville.com.

N.C. Campers on Mission plan Spring Rally

The N.C. Campers on Mission (NC-COM) State Spring Rally will be held April 14-17 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 fel-

lowship of Christian campers who come together for worship, food, fun, fellowship, sharing mission experiences and promoting mission projects.

Registration information: Ed Parks, (252) 977-7357; or Pete Butler at (252) 972-7828.

Visit www.nccampersonmission.org.

Conference on tap for instrumentalists, directors

Instrumental Encore, a music conference designed for worship leaders and instrumentalists, is scheduled April 29-30 at Tri-City Baptist Church in Concord.

There will be jazz sessions available as well as sessions with master teachers for certain instruments. Individual rate

is \$75 which includes lunch. Groups of 10 or more people get a \$10 discount per person. Hotel conference rates are available (includes breakfast).

Visit www.instrumentalencore.com for more information or contact Sherry Thompson at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5634, or sthompson@ncbaptist.org.

Around the state

Church News



► *First Baptist Church, Taylorsville, recently hosted Ruby Fulbright, executive director/treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) in celebration of the organization's 125th birthday and the Heck-Jones Offering. From left: Tim Marsh, pastor; Fulbright; and Myrna Deal and Jennifer Patterson, co-directors of the church's WMU.*

'Why is my church news not here?'

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to print significant news from the churches, but our staff relies on our churches and associations to send us information.



Accuracy and timeliness are enhanced if you send the information to the *Biblical Recorder* as soon as it is available (generally within two weeks after the event).

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7 steps to adopting a people group

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A people group shares a basic identity and view of the world.

Individuals within a people group frequently have the same language, culture, history, customs and family/clan identities.

From a missions perspective, a people group is the largest group through which the gospel can flow without encountering significant barriers of understanding and acceptance.

An unreached people group is comprised of less than 2 percent evangelical Christians.

Your church can play a key role in bringing an unreached people group to Christ.

Adopting a people group helps churches take an active and direct role in missions.

Pray for God's guidance

• As in any spiritual endeavor, your search for an unreached people group to adopt must begin with prayer.

Discover church's natural affinity (DNA)

• Do you already have a connection to an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary? Have you sent out a missionary from your church?

Do you have a parent or children of missionaries who are members?

Has a team been on a mission trip where they felt a connection to the people group(s)?

• What are the skills and spiritual gifts of your church members?

• What people groups live near your church or its members? Check out www.peoplegroups.info to find people groups in your area.

Determine your church's expectations

• Do you want to commit to pray for an unreached people group? To be a prayer partner, call (888) 462-7729 or find prayer resources at imb.org/compassion-net.

• Is your church ready to pray and connect with a missionary on the mission field by going on multiple volunteer trips?

• Is your church ready to pray and become the “missionary” to an unreached people group that has no missionary working among them? Are you ready to study the culture, develop the strategy and take ownership of reaching a people group that may never hear about Christ unless you go?

Identify a missions champion

• Has God laid a particular people or part of the world on the heart of one or more church members?

• Are they ready to find ways to take the gospel to those who have little or no access to it?

• Who in the church will be the point person to communicate with those on the field?

• Is this person willing to be trained in security measures to allow communication to restricted areas where there is a lack of openness to the gospel?

• Can this person help influence the congregation to focus prayer for your unreached people group?

• Are they willing to lead teams and work with church and IMB field leaders?

Investigate opportunities

• Do you feel led to reach a megacity or a rural area or something in between?

• Are there volunteer opportunities available that

might help you discover the people or area of the world where God is leading you? Explore opportunities at going.imb.org.

• Has your state convention or local association adopted an unreached people group?

• Assign teams or individuals to research various people groups and areas at peoplegroups.org.

• If you feel led to a specific area but have not yet selected a people group, contact an IMB mobilization specialist assigned to your state at (800) 999-3113, ext. 1667, or go to the “Lead Your Church” section at imb.org, and find “Church Services.”

Celebrate God's direction

• Once you have determined your adopted people group, follow God’s leadership, find ways to bring the whole church into the process and meet with church leaders to plan a celebration time.

Communicate, follow through and keep commitments

• Learn from field personnel.

• Connect with other churches to multiply your efforts.

• Communicate with field personnel as your team trains and prepares.

• Keep your commitments. Building trust is vital. Follow-through will lead to more opportunities.

• Evaluate your role every year. If God leads you in another direction, communicate this to the field and other churches that have joined in this effort and develop a strategic exit plan.

To learn more about adopting a people group, go to the “Lead Your Church” section of imb.org.



W-S church prepares to adopt unreached

(Continued from Page 1)

into the hearts and minds of as many as possible. Twenty years from now we hope the children in our church will still be working with this people group,” Harrison said.

Can't do everything

As a missions pastor Harrison knows the needs are great, and they are many. “There are a lot of things we could do, but we can’t do everything,” he said. “You can dabble in all kinds of things;

there is a never ending stream of requests.”

To help filter through requests, Old Town maintains a criteria that any missions efforts they participate in, whether local, statewide, national or international, must fit what they call the “Missional Matrix.” This Matrix helps the church determine whether an activity is missional. To fit the profile, the activity must be Kingdom-focused, gospel-centered and church-based.

Kingdom-focused ministry involves God’s people in a hands-on demonstration of God’s love by meeting physical needs, such as hunger, poverty or sickness. Gospel-centered ministry

intentionally engages people’s spiritual needs. “The greatest need for every person is to hear the gospel. Missions is not missions if we don’t share the message of salvation,” Harrison said.

Church-based, Harrison explained, means the goal is to engage the local church in God’s mission so that the church multiplies. At the same time, church members are challenged to embrace missions as a lifestyle, outside what the local church organizes and supports.

“If all we ever do is what the church organizes, we are not really a missional church. We hope that our church’s mission actions are catalytic, moving people to a greater involvement in the wider mission of God,” Harrison said. “We hope people will get involved here, and then get involved in whatever else God is calling them to do.”

A church engaged

After Harrison and Speas met with the church leadership and deacons, they shared the idea of adopting an unengaged, unreached people group with the congregation. Speas said getting the congregation on board with the vision was never a challenge because the con-

gregation already thinks outwardly, as Old Town has a long history of leadership dedicated to making missions a priority in the church.

Old Town is in the education stage in their journey of adopting a people group. They are making a concerted effort, through Sunday School classes and other small groups, to pray for unreached people groups and to pray about the group God would have them adopt. Church members have been asked to pray for open hearts to recognize people groups already living among them. Small groups are also studying David Platt’s best-selling book *Radical* and thinking more about what God is doing locally and globally and how they can be more involved.

Harrison and Speas expect to have the people group picked out sometime this year. The process may also include leadership visiting certain areas in the world.

“Ultimately, God will bring all this together for us,” Harrison said. “We are trying to be obedient one step at a time.”

To learn how your church can adopt an unreached people group, visit www.ncbaptist.org/gcp.

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Drugs, murder loom on couple's mission field

By Mickey Noah

NAMB Communications

LAREDO, Texas (BP) — Among the hundreds of places North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planting missionaries work and minister across the United States and Canada, none is more dangerous than Laredo in south Texas, where Chuy and Maria Avila live and serve.

Laredo — with a population of 300,000 in the city proper — sits on the north bank of the Rio Grande, right across the river from Nuevo Laredo in Mexico.

The Laredo-Nuevo Laredo metro area has a combined population of more than 700,000 American and Mexican citizens.

It's a center for cold-blooded murder, drugs and chaos.

Nuevo Laredo to Laredo is a thoroughfare for an estimated \$20 billion drug market operated by drug cartels between Mexico and the United States. With the drugs come unchecked violence and bloodshed.

A recent local shootout between Mexican Federal Police officers and drug cartel members left a dozen dead and more than 20 wounded.

It's routine for Laredo citizens to hear gunfire echoing across the Rio Grande from the Nuevo Laredo side of the border.

Chuy, 48, and Maria — jointly sponsored by NAMB and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention — are two of 5,000-plus missionaries in the United States, Canada and their territories supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

"Laredo is a dangerous place to minister," Avila said. "I need prayers and support from my Christian brothers and sisters."

Born into a Catholic family in Juarez, Mexico, Avila was only 5 years old when a missionary came to town to hold a tent revival.

"This is the way the gospel came to our family. My mom got saved, my father was saved and I got saved when I was 21 years old. The next year, I was called into the ministry," Avila said.

Only 18 months ago, the Avilas were working and living in Tennessee, where he spent 11 years as a Hispanic church start strategist.

"I knew nothing about Laredo at the time," he said.

"I was praying for a new challenge and a new vision, and the Lord put Laredo in my mind and in my heart."

After visiting, the Avilas fell in love with the south Texas border town.

In Laredo, Avila's strategy has been to go into neighborhoods — he calls them "colonias" — where there is no existing evangelistic work in place and where he feels a need to start something new, such as a Baptist church.

He begins with block parties and Vacation Bible Schools, and every Laredo family that shows up at a block party receives a free Bible.

Avila has formed partnerships with local pastors and laypeople and established a missionary house — a house fully equipped to hold up to 30 people. As people spend a week there, they are hosted, taught and disciplined by Avila. The missionary house doubles as a church on Sunday.

"There are only 53 evangelical churches in Laredo," Avila said.

"To reach just 25 percent of the population of 300,000, Laredo needs



Photo by James Gregg

PLANNING — North American Mission Board church planting missionary Chuy Avila and his wife Maria — along with pastor Lorenzo Luna, left, — map out areas for outreach on the outskirts of Laredo, Texas. See video online.



278 new churches. We now have only 14 Baptist churches, averaging 50 people each.

"We need to start an additional 50 churches during the next five years just to keep up with Laredo's population growth."

Aside from the danger, Avila said, Laredo is a challenging place to minister.

"The average age of the population is only 30 to 35 years old," he said.

"And not only are the people young, 80 to 90 percent speak Spanish and 70 percent are bilingual.

"So Laredo is a city offering different kinds of situations than other U.S. cities."

Avila's vision is to impact Laredo with the gospel one family at a time, so he focuses on reaching entire families for Christ.

Long process

According to Avila, Baptists have been in Laredo for 135 years, but those efforts have only produced 14 Baptist churches.

With his goal of 10 new churches a year — for a total of 50 new churches in five years — Avila will have started more churches in five years than past Baptists started in Laredo in the last 135.

"We want to start house churches, contemporary churches, traditional churches, cowboy churches, truck driver churches and more Spanish- and English-speaking churches," he said.

Avila sees his role as a catalyst who maps out the city, tries to find where a new church is needed and determines what kind of church to plant.

"Because of the average young age of the population, we may need a contemporary church. In an area of empty nesters, we might need a traditional church.

"For the Texas cowboys, we would need a cowboy church.

"My role is to discover the needs of the city and then try to find the right person to start a church."

While Avila would welcome church planters from the outside, his preference is to train and equip indigenous church planters and then deploy them throughout the Laredo area.

Does Avila's ministry in Laredo make a difference? It did to Angel Contreras.

Just 19, Contreras already had made some serious mistakes in his life by the time he and Avila met.

He had gotten married at 16, was the father of a baby girl, but was seeking to divorce his teenage bride.

"Angel passed our church and saw some cars in the parking lot, so he thought there was someone that could pray for him because he was depressed," Avila recounted.

Ironically, Avila was holding a conference on marriage and the family, and with Contreras he had an eager student.

Over coffee the following day, Avila led Contreras to Christ.

Contreras is now trying to rebuild his marriage, and Avila is discipling him to be a leader in one of the 50 churches Avila plans to plant in Laredo. Contreras also directs Avila's block party ministry.

"I thank God for Chuy," Contreras said.

"If it wasn't for the Lord using Chuy, I really don't know where I would be.

"He's like my dad.

"He's always on top of what's going on in my life, calls me up, wants to know how I am. We're like a father-son team."

Avila said Contreras is "one example of how the Lord can provide everything we need in order to accomplish our goals and the vision He gave us for Laredo."

Avila imagines Contreras — who speaks Spanish and English — as the future pastor of a bilingual church.

"The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering helps us a lot," Avila said.

"Through that and prayer, we feel the support. Every morning when I wake up and then walk to the (mission) field in the streets, I do not feel alone. I know there are hundreds of people praying for me.

"I want to encourage Baptists to keep giving because through their giving, we can do our ministry here."

Avila graduated from Frontier Baptist Seminary in Juarez, Mexico, in 1991 and from Hardin-Simmons Baptist University in Abilene, Texas, in 1998.

He has served as a pastor and missionary in Juarez, a pastor in El Paso, Hispanic church planter in Midland, Texas, and as a Hispanic church start strategist for NAMB in Brentwood, Tenn.

He and Maria, his wife of 30 years, have four children and six grandchildren.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Noah writes for the North American Mission Board. The annual Week of Prayer for North American Missions in Southern Baptist churches was March 6-13 in conjunction with the 2011 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, with a goal of \$70 million to help pay the salaries and ministry support of 5,000-plus missionaries serving in North America under the SBC's North American Mission Board. For more information, go to www.anniearmstrong.com.)

Repentant prayer first step toward change

(Continued from Page 1)

to bless, and never seek His face and never seek to discern where He is leading, they end up treating God as a “cosmic vending machine” to get what they want. “That’s some made up prosperity gospel,” Pack said.

The second component of repentant prayer is admitting rebellion. Pack described today’s culture as a “no-fault culture” where no one wants to step up and admit when a mistake has been made. “Here is authentic leadership: when we as the shepherd of the church admit our rebellion first,” he said.

No matter what has happened in a church in the past, no matter what mistakes have been made, “today, you are the shepherd,” Pack reminded pastors. “You are required to take ownership of whatever is there.”

Admitting rebellion requires believers to make their prayers specific and get to the heart of the issue. “You have not genuinely repented if you are still blaming someone else,” Pack said.

Pack pointed out how in Daniel 9:5, Daniel admits that the people have ignored God’s commands. “At some point we must evaluate the consequences of not listening to God,” he said.

Sometimes God brings into the life of a believer people who can speak truth in love and who can help bring to light sin that has remained in the darkness. “Is it possible God has placed in your life personal prophets to speak truth in your life but you’ve ignored it?” Pack asked.

The third component of repentant prayer is change. “We have made ministry so much about ourselves we are no longer doing ministry for the sake of God,”



BSC photo by Mike Creswell

EVANGELISM — Ryan Pack, pastor of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, was one of the speakers at the recent statewide evangelism conference in Greensboro.

Pack said. The prayers of the repentant will confess that and ask God to use ministry to make His name great among all people.

Ministry, in whatever capacity, is for God’s glory and for the salvation of those who are not in Christ Jesus. Ministry exists so that the eyes and hearts of believers will be opened to more fully know Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of their life.

“We can no longer continue in ministry as usual,” Pack said. “It’s going to take repentance, prayer and the power of almighty God.”

Do you see what Jesus sees?

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

GREENSBORO — Studies show that more and more churches are on the decline or have reached a plateau. Yet, studies also show that most people will respond positively to an invitation to come to church.

Perhaps the problem, then, is that believers are not doing enough inviting. “Do we care enough to extend an invitation?” asked Philip Davis, pastor of Nations Ford Community Church in Charlotte. “We are all responsible for gathering the harvest.”

Davis was one of the featured speakers for the Feb. 28-March 1 statewide evangelism conference at Friendly Avenue Baptist Church.

When believers get serious about seeing people come to know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior they will, as Davis said, reach out to others and “become the evangelistic program” of the church.

Davis said that only happens when believers begin to see people like Jesus saw people. Matthew 9:35-38 is just one example of a time when Jesus showed compassion for people.

He saw how they were “weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd.”

“Jesus did not just see a bunch of bodies,” Davis said. “He was moved with compassion; He was stirred at the deepest level.” Jesus saw all their worry, hurt and anger — He knew their hearts.

Davis challenged church leaders to ask themselves whether or not the church they serve is a place known for being compassionate. Care for others happens when the church takes time to get to know people and to really see who they are.



BSC photo by Mike Creswell

LEADING — Pat Cronin, pastor of Friendly Avenue Baptist Church in Greensboro, talks to the crowd at the statewide evangelism conference. Friendly Avenue hosted the two-day event.

“What we notice about people reveals more about us than it does them,” Davis said. If all the church is known for is being critical and judgmental, that says more about how the church is abiding in Christ than it does about the ones being judged.

“What do you see when you see your family?” Davis asked. What do believers see when they see friends, neighbors and co-workers?

“Jesus didn’t just see an adulterous woman,” Davis said. “He looked at her need for forgiveness and love. Jesus saw people and He saw their needs.”

One reason believers may be slow to offer compassion instead of judgment is because they have forgotten what it was like to be lost. They have forgotten what it was like to live in darkness without the light of life that is Jesus Christ.

The question Davis asked that must be answered, but only with humble and repentant hearts, is: “When we see someone caught in the grip of sin does it disgust us or move us to compassion?”

Davis seemed to plead with those in attendance to never allow

their hearts to grow cold to the gospel or to the Holy Spirit’s leading.

The scene in Matthew 9 is one that could just as easily describe communities throughout North Carolina and around the world: people needing direction; needing someone to heal physical sickness and spiritual sickness.

Davis asked leaders to consider what Jesus meant when He called the people sheep. Sheep are not

very smart, they are not quick and “without a shepherd will wander aimlessly for days until they die.”

Without a personal relationship with Jesus, the Savior and Good Shepherd, people are just like sheep wandering through life without direction or meaning. Believers must care enough about the souls of human beings that they are obedient to sharing what it means to know the Shepherd.

“The longer we go without a shepherd the more empty life becomes,” Davis said. “Fulfillment is something you and I have now, because as Christians we know where we came from, why we are here and where we are going. Jesus gives protection and direction for life.”

In Matthew 9 Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for God to send workers into the harvest, for the harvest is abundant but the workers are few.

Davis reminded the audience that serving God and telling others about Him is a privilege. The church must step up and do what God has commanded the church to do.

Living water transforms hearts, lives

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

GREENSBORO — When Mark Harris preached during the recent statewide evangelism conference he didn’t just talk about how God transforms lives — he brought a picture of the real thing.

Harris, pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte, told the story of a Charlotte woman who got pregnant at age 18, suffered through a marriage marked by domestic violence that ended in divorce, and ended up leading the largest Internet-based prostitution ring in the country.

Sallie Saxon was eventually found guilty and charged with a two-year prison sentence. Her husband was also found guilty and sentenced to 21 months in prison. Though she faced prison, Sallie knew she was already free. She knew because one day, about a year before her sentencing, she prayed to receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

Sallie, 60, is now involved in ministry through First Baptist Church in Charlotte and in her community. She ministers to pregnant women in need and is a supporter of 40 Days for Life.

Harris didn’t tell the audience that sitting among them that night was Sallie Saxon. When he asked her and her husband to stand, they did so as a reminder that God’s grace and mercy are enough to forgive sin, heal broken hearts and forever change lives.

Harris’ message from John 4 told another story of redemption and salvation. Harris described Jesus as a sensitive Savior who planned to go through Samaria one day in order to meet a Samaritan woman who needed to know about living water.

The Samaritan woman Jesus met that day came to the well during a time when others would not be there. She did so because she was an outcast, someone not looked kindly upon by others in the town. Jesus was tired from His journey when He met the woman. Yet, “our Savior, no matter how tired He got, never let anything stop Him from meeting a person in need,” Harris said. “He was always seeking to minister.”

Harris challenged those in attendance to consider whether or not they are willing to be devoted to ministering to those who need Jesus Christ. When it comes to ministry, “there’s a price to be paid,” he said. Whether time, resources or reputation, believers must be willing to give it all for the sake of Christ.

“God expects that He can put people in your path so you can share the gospel,” Harris said. “You’ve got to be sensitive.”

The woman could not understand why Jesus, a Jew, would talk to a Samaritan, especially a Samaritan woman. Yet, Jesus overcame her national and racial prejudices when He took time to minister. When Jesus told the woman He could give her living water she was still thinking on a material level, as she did not understand who was speaking to her. Jesus had to explain to her that He is living water and that all those who trust in Him will never thirst again.

“People who try to quench their thirst with this world always get thirsty again,” Harris said. “The wells of this world never satisfy.” From prosperity to sexual gratification to filling the calendar with church activities, nothing will satisfy like the love of Christ.

Harris said believers must never lose sight of the fact that the greatest, deepest need of every person they meet is on the inside; they need Christ. “The people in your community aren’t just bodies,” he said. “They each have a soul. They will spend eternity somewhere. I fear tonight we’ve forgotten that.”

Jesus always cuts to the heart of the matter, Harris said. Jesus knew the Samaritan woman was living with a man who was not her husband. “He loved her enough to confront her with the truth,” Harris said. “No one can ever get a drink of living water until they face up to their sin.”

After her encounter with Jesus the Samaritan woman went and told others about Him, and through her testimony many in her town believed and worshipped Jesus. “Worship has never been nor will ever be about a place,” Harris said. “It’s always been about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Radical hindrances to the gospel

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — I am immensely indebted to the preaching and ministry of David Platt. David's candor in preaching has exposed the idolatrous meandering of American culture into the pit of mammon worship.

My deep sense of personal gratitude is why LifeWay has chosen to partner with David Platt to simulcast Secret Church to churches and homes all over the nation.

David's challenge to the church in America is to be radical about her faith. Being radical simply means devotion and obedience to Jesus' commands. Sadly, simple obedience to Jesus is "radical" in our culture because we have loved idols for so long.

About eight years ago I conducted research regarding the unchurched in America. In *The Unchurched Next Door* I discovered some sobering realities about the lostness of our country. From David Platt I learned about the waywardness of some of America's churches. I believe there is some overlap between these two groups.

Radical wealth

While research cannot prove a direct relationship between wealth and resistance to the gospel, the evidence seems compelling that such is the case. Not all wealthy persons are skeptics, agnostics or atheists. A person of lofty financial means can be a Christian, of course. Jesus did say of the wealthy entering the kingdom, after the disciples asked him if the rich can be saved, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

If our primary contacts are among the wealthier of society, or if our churches are located in more affluent areas, the likelihood exists that we will find greater resistance to the gospel. Perhaps the growing wealth of our own nation at least partially explains the decline in conversions over the past 50 years. Evangelism among the wealthy in our society is difficult, but they need Christ as much as any of us.

Also consider the immense despair and sense of loss our nation is feeling during this economic recession. People are losing their jobs. Retirees are increasing years of employment in order to meet goals inhibited by shrinking 401(k) plans. Amidst these terrible circumstances our ultimate allegiance is exposed. The radical wealth of our nation has too often proved too great a temptation for our malleable hearts.

Radical education

No other nation is as well educated as the United States.

Good for Brigham Young Univ.

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP) — "Adversity does not build character, it reveals it," James Lane Allen once said. The American novelist's observation is spot on. Whether it is a business, organization, institution or individual, difficult times will reveal strength or expose weakness.

Brigham Young University (BYU) and Brandon Davies, one of BYU's star basketball players, are currently navigating the revealing reality of adversity. While it will take time for depth of character to be assessed, there are glimpses of principle that can even now be seen in both school and player. BYU announced Mar. 1 that Davies was being suspended from the Cougar basketball team for the remainder of the season because he had violated the university's Honor Code.

Without their leading rebounder in the lineup, many sports pundits believe BYU's time in the postseason will be short.

"The school essentially tossed away its opportunity to go to the Final Four for the first time in school history," wrote Jeff Goodman, a senior college basketball writer for *FoxSports.com* who applauded BYU for following its rules.

Reports indicate that Davies was suspended because he engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage. How the incident came to the attention of BYU officials is unclear. What is certain is that Davies confessed to the violation.

It cannot be stressed enough that BYU is a Mormon institution. As a result, it unapologetically upholds the teaching of its religion. Some 35,000 students attend the school located in Provo, Utah. Nine principles make up the BYU Honor Code: be honest; live a chaste and virtuous life; obey the law and all campus policies; use clean language; respect others; abstain from alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea, coffee and substance abuse; participate regularly in church ser-

Americans are afforded access to educational opportunities; internationals move halfway around the world to matriculate.

While wealth seems to be one major obstacle to receiving Christ, advanced education may be another. More than 39 percent of the most hostile skeptics, agnostics and atheists have a master's or doctoral degree, compared to 14 percent of the total unchurched population.

Mark J. from Maryland is a typical highly educated unbeliever. He claims to be an agnostic, but sounds more like an atheist. Mark received his Ph.D. in economics some 20 years ago. Like many highly educated unbelievers, Mark attributes his denial of the reality of God as a natural consequence of his advanced learning. He told me, "The more education you receive, the more you realize that religious beliefs just don't make any sense."

GUEST COLUMN



Thom Rainer

Radical cynicism

It's a sad, but true axiom that cynics are celebrated in our culture. This posture of radical cynicism corrodes the heart at a staggering rate.

During my research for *The Unchurched Next Door* we found that unbelievers over 50 years of age were twice as likely to be unchurched as all of those under age 50. Cynicism grows like a cancer over time and eventually will take over one's life. A cynic doesn't want to receive the gospel because it is foolishness to him or her (1 Cor. 1:18).

But this isn't just a problem with the unchurched. Cynicism leads to the sort of discontentment that divides churches. In this area in particular, the world and the church often share a great deal in common.

A common denominator

All of these hindrances have one common denominator: pride. Wealth can lead to pride in power and thereby control. Education can lead to a mindset of intellectual superiority. Cynicism is an overall prideful attitude. The cynic places himself above all his peers — the epitome of pride. All of these radical hindrances to the gospel share the belief that people do not need anyone else. Their lack of need directly opposes the foundation of the gospel. The neediness of the sinner is the cornerstone of repentance.

Radical humility is required to overcome these stumbling blocks in our culture.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources. This column first appeared at his blog, *ThomRainer.com*. To learn more about the Secret Church simulcast, visit *LifeWay.com/SecretChurch*.)

GUEST COLUMN



Kelly Boggs

vices; observe the Dress and Grooming Standards (which includes being "modest, neat and clean"); encourage others in their commitment to comply with the Honor Code.

"There is no bait and switch here," BYU alumnus and NFL great Steve Young told "The Dennis and Callahan Morning Show" — a sports talk program that broadcasts from Boston via radio station WEEL. "I mean these guys recruit off of the Honor Code."

I find it fascinating to hear sports commentators lecturing a religious private school on how it should conduct its business. I have heard BYU called everything from hypocritical and heavy-handed to cruel and cold-hearted. It is very revealing that a commitment to principle is viewed with such negativity. I have nothing but respect for the BYU Honor Code. I could not abide by it because I do not abstain from tea and coffee. So, knowing I would have to sign the Honor Code — and do so every semester that I wanted to attend — I would simply choose to go elsewhere.

BYU does not care what you, me or some sarcastic sports radio guy thinks about its decision to suspend Davies. BYU is going to stick by its principles. Good for them. As for Davies, his character is beginning to surface and will be on display in the days to come. Reports indicate that he confessed to the violation of the Honor Code. He did so probably knowing he would be suspended. That takes courage. True character puts principle before performance. While winning is preferable to losing, it is not everything and certainly not worth compromising one's character.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Boggs is a weekly columnist for *Baptist Press* and editor of the *Baptist Message*, newsjournal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. This is a shortened version of his column.)

It's time to draw near

By Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

BSC Executive Director-Treasurer

A few weeks ago an article was published on the Convention web site and in the *Biblical Recorder* about the congregation of Lake Norman Baptist Church in Huntersville reading through the Bible together in one year.



I am always encouraged when I hear stories of how local churches are serious about growing in their knowledge of the Lord and in their relationship with Him.

As you know, our Find it Here emphasis this year is discipleship. I do not believe we can talk about discipleship apart from considering our personal time alone with God.

We can have excellent mentors and great Bible study leaders. We can enjoy praying with family and friends. We can listen to wonderful preaching every week — but we cannot use any of that as a substitute for our own personal time alone with God.

Spending time with God is a priority in my life and it should be a part of a daily routine for each of us.

But please, never consider time with God as something that is just part of a routine. Your time with God is so much more than that.

When you take time to fellowship with God on a regular basis you grow in your understanding about His heart and His character. It is the time when God can speak to you, give you wisdom and teach you timeless truths.

Reading the scriptures is also a priority for me.

The Bible is inspired (God breathed) truth without any mixture of error.

It is rich with treasures that God wants to root firmly and deeply within our hearts. With an open Bible before you, pause and meditate on the words you read.

Reflect on the goodness, grace and power of God. Praise Him for all that He is and thank Him for all that He does. You will discover that it is both interesting and delightful when the Holy Spirit enlightens your understanding of a scripture passage in a special way when you are alone with Him.

Are you aware that God can speak to us when we listen in the place of prayer? But always remember that His spoken word will never contradict His written word!

How generous of our Father to allow us to draw near to Him at any moment, day or night, through prayer. Prayer really is a privilege with benefits.

It should come as no surprise when we discover that the evil one will use every tool he can to keep us from spending time alone with our Father in heaven. He recognizes that great spiritual power is available when we consistently spend time with God through Bible study and prayer.

Don't miss out on the abundance of blessings that are yours when you seek after God.

Draw near to Him today.

"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." Psalm 145:18

Young, Southern Baptist ... and irrelevant?

I'm not "young, restless and reformed." I guess you'd say that I'm young, Southern Baptist and, it seems, increasingly irrelevant. You see, I'm just a pastor's son who grew up with a love for my denomination — a Southern Baptist boy by birth and conviction.

I received my B.A. from Union University, a Tennessee Baptist university, my master's from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary (not supported by the Cooperative Program, but supportive of the Cooperative Program) and a D.Min. from Southeastern.

Moreover, I have never wanted to be anything but a Southern Baptist. Being a Presbyterian has never appealed to me like it seems to some leaders in our convention and their protégés.

As I travel around the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), I can see that I'm in the majority; nonetheless, I can't get away from the overwhelming feeling that in our current denominational world, I am presented as the dinosaur — albeit only a 37-year-old one.

It's obvious when I see who is lifted up as the future of our convention — the hip and cool up-and-comers with whom I have little in common — that my breed is in danger of becoming extinct.

I don't mind wearing a coat and tie when I preach (at least on Sunday mornings), and I still love to hear a powerful or dynamic choir special. I believe in giving an invitation at the end of every service.

Public invitations are still effective. The church where I serve baptized more than 100 people just last year.

I like for the auditorium lights to be on so that I can read my Bible.

Also, I don't get so tired from preaching on Sundays that I need a stool, and I still preach from a pulpit (or, technically, a podium).

While the current batch of "young leaders" so many reference these days appear to be weaned on non-Southern Baptists like Tim Keller and C.J. Mahaney and are taught to give rock-star status to John Piper and R.C. Sproul, I grew up loving men like Adrian Rogers and Jerry Vines.

Both men invested their lives in and among Southern Baptists.

I have pastored a new work in Tennessee, served as a (North American Mission Board) church planter in Ohio and have served as the pastor of a nearly 100-year-old church in South Carolina for the past nine years.

I've been honored to serve on committees or as an officer at the associational, state and national levels.

Unlike the hipsters and their mentors, I've led the churches where I've served — sometimes at the expense of hiring another staff member or building a new playground or expanding facilities — to give sacrificially through the Cooperative Program as well as to the Lottie Moon Christmas and Annie Armstrong Easter offerings.

At the same time, our churches were personally involved in mission projects here and abroad.

I am not ashamed of being a Southern Baptist, and I am proud and passionate about my SBC involvement.

I have benefited personally from the coopera-

tion among Southern Baptists, and I don't believe that there is a more effective and efficient way for churches of all sizes to make an eternal impact on this world for Jesus.

It's not that we can't and shouldn't make changes. But everything being proposed now is presented in such a way as to sweep in this new breed that has, at best, "soft" Southern Baptist convictions and commitments.

I'm constantly counseled to "forget about it" — to pastor my church, preach and reach people for Jesus, and let the convention do what it's going to do.

At times, I think my counselors are right.

There doesn't seem to be much of a desire to include the majority view and membership in the future of the SBC.

Just look at most of the personalities who headline our conferences and conventions.

And it isn't that I haven't tried to understand what this new in-charge minority thinks — I read their books, listen to their messages, and peek at their blogs and tweets.

It's just that they don't have anything in common with the context in which I minister.

Their theology is different from that which I read in the Bible, and their methodology about how best to reach the world for Jesus is foreign to me as well.

I support international missions, but the hard work God has prepared me mainly to do is reach my neighbors.

I believe God planted Southern Baptists where we are to reach our immediate spheres of influence first, and then by expanding outward we are to reach the world.

And I believe that we can only reach as far around the world as we are strong at home.

It gets so frustrating that it would be easy to succumb to the refrains I hear ("just forget about it"), but the thing is, I really don't want to forget about it.

I determined when Jesus called me into the ministry that I would be a Southern Baptist pastor and that I would do my best to serve my church and reach this world for Jesus through the ministries and institutions that our spiritual forefathers had the insight and wisdom to put in place.

Do those ministries and institutions need to be fixed or tweaked from time to time? Absolutely.

Do we need to make sure that we're just as effective and efficient with our personnel and funds as we can be?

I don't believe Jesus would have it any other way. After all, when you get right down to it, our entire ministry is funded through the tithes and offerings of believers in our local churches.

I love being a Southern Baptist, and I believe that our historic method of cooperation is the most effective means of helping churches of all sizes, from all parts of the country, with all sorts of different structures and styles, to reach the world for Jesus. It's not always easy, and sometimes hard decisions have to be made when it comes to cooperating together for the gospel.

But what would happen to the mission and ministry efforts of our convention if pastors like me supported the work of the convention in the same fashion of the "young, restless and reformed," or their fathers in the ministry?

GUEST COLUMN



Brad Whitt

What if we treated the convention with the same disregard or disdain some entity leaders seem to treat us?

The bottom line is that not everything in Southern Baptist life is broken. It appears to me that the larger issue is that much of that which has been, and continues to be, good about the SBC is simply out of favor with many of those who have managed to rise to positions of leadership within our convention.

They have gained possession of the microphone, and they have determined that we've got to do things "radically" different — whatever the facts might be.

Definitely, some things need to be fixed and some just need to be tweaked, but changes should come from within by committed Southern Baptists who have invested themselves in the cooperative missions and ministries of Southern Baptists ... and the Cooperative Program.

Right now, too many "outsiders from within" have influence, and they resent who we are, what we do and how we do it.

The fact is that, despite my being dismissed by those in vogue, I'm not irrelevant.

The opposite is true.

If the Southern Baptist Convention is to grow and thrive, it won't happen from the actions and attitudes of those who view our cooperative missions and ministries as outmoded and ineffective, or who see stateside ministry as "bloated" compared to missions overseas. It will take a greater emphasis from me, and others like me, on cooperation for the sake of the gospel if we are to succeed in our combined efforts to win the lost.

There is no limit to what Southern Baptists could accomplish for the kingdom if we didn't care who received the credit.

I'm not irrelevant.

My kind of commitment to Southern Baptists' cooperative missions and ministries just happens to be out of style with some at the moment.

But styles change, and so does possession of the microphone.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Whitt is pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Simpsonville and immediate past president of the South Carolina Baptist Pastors' Conference. This column originally appeared in The Baptist Courier March 3.)

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Lesson for March 27

Formations

Lesson for April 3

The Servant of All

Focal Passage: Matthew 20:20-28

As I am writing this, we are in the midst of the Thanksgiving/Christmas holidays. With this season comes a flood of commercials aimed at enticing us to assert our self-esteem and self-fulfillment by purchasing their “unique” products. One particular commercial came on the other evening. A wife had worked hard and saved to purchase her husband a new car.

With a pretty bow on it the grateful husband is almost in tears with joy, gratitude and pride for this sacrificial gift on the part of his wife, until ... a rival manufacturer’s car drives by and the present suddenly becomes meaningless and hollow.

The implication is that his wife’s gift is just not good enough, regardless of its newness or efficiency. Today’s text deals with the attitude that wants more at any cost.

A mother comes to Jesus asking for the promotion of her sons; promotion to the right and left side of the Messiah in His kingdom.

Can they do what must be done; suffer whatever must be suffered, etc? “Of course,” they respond. And they will, but, positions are given by the Father, not the Son. Then, the others hear the discussion, and they are resentfully indignant.

It has been observed by one writer that “Today the first and greatest commandment is ‘Thou shalt love thyself.’” Any problem, any personal difficulty or relational disagreement comes not from

sin, but low self-esteem or the prevention of affirming one’s self-esteem. Marriages dissolve because one of the partners feels squelched or restricted by the other.

Sadly, this is not a recent development.

Augustine writes in his *City of God*: “Two cities have been formed by two



John Pond
missionary, West
Chowan Baptist
Association

loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself. The latter in the Lord.”

A very troubling movement in today’s church has been the promotion of the minister as sole authority and ruler of the congregation.

Many churches have suffered because its pastor stands as lord and leader.

Rather than model the Lord’s ministry in terms of

servanthood and pastoral shepherd, this minister redefines ministry as authoritarian (his sole authority) and vengeful (the Word becomes a savage blade against any who oppose).

Yet, hear Jesus’ response to His disciples’ indignation towards the sons of Zebedee: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles *Lord* it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. *It shall not be so among you!* (emphasis mine). Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave” (20:25-27).

Oh that we would hear the word of the Lord!

Rescued from Darkness

Focal Passage: Colossians 1:9-14

Once had the experience of going “caving.” Some call it spelunking. Some also call it “fun.” I didn’t.

For a few hours that day my wife and I spent time underground with nothing but a hard hat and a flashlight. I’m a fairly thin guy, so navigating through the cracks and crevices of the rock was not overly difficult. At least I didn’t get stuck.

But I did notice that if I strayed from some of the group, and cut my flashlight off, it was complete darkness. Not the darkness one experiences at 10 p.m. outdoors, but “absolute” darkness.

I once heard that darkness is best defined as the “absence of light.”

And that is true not only for caving 20 feet underground, but being in spiritual darkness.

The key verses for us are 13-14. These are verses that describe salvation.

All of us lived at one time in the domain or dominion of darkness, and there we would have remained except for the amazing gift of God, Jesus Christ, in “whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

In this passage, and elsewhere in the New Testament, we have a comparison of light and darkness.

Jesus is the “light of the world.” Apart from Him, we live in spiritual

darkness. We cannot know God unless we come to know Jesus, the Son.

The context of the passage, verses 9-14, is a prayer for spiritual growth.

A pastor by the name of Epaphras (v. 7) had guided the church most recently. His testimony was that the Colossians excelled in their “love” for others (v. 8).

But they, like us, needed continual prayer and Paul had been consistent in his prayer for them.

Paul identified three major focuses of those prayers:

(1) that they might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will for their lives,

(2) that they might walk worthy of being Christ’s followers, bearing spiritual fruit,

(3) and that they might be strengthened with God’s power, a strength that endures and perseveres with joy.

This is a beautiful passage. It describes the life of grace.

It also describes a life filled with light where the presence of spiritual darkness and gloom has disappeared for good. That is the world Christians will know one day. It is also the world we

can experience in limited degree at present.

But let us not fool our-

selves. Satan is still alive, and we have to be on guard every day in our battle against him. We are not so strong. We cannot win this battle without Christ. He is our conquering hero.



Wayne Proctor
pastor, Eure
Baptist Church

‘He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son’

— Colossians 1:13

Lesson for March 27

Bible Studies for Life

Lesson for April 3

Stay the Course

Focal Passages: 1 Peter 4:1-2, 7-19

His name is Shoaib Assadullah. Shoaib is a Muslim convert to Christianity who lives in Afghanistan where leaving the Muslim faith is a capital offense.

According to *Voice of the Martyrs*, Shoaib was arrested on Oct. 21, 2010, for giving another man a Bible (see story at www.persecution.com).

The judge told Shoaib on Jan. 3 that he had one week to renounce Christ, or he would face up to 20 years in prison, and possibly even death.

Shoaib’s choice is not uncommon in the history of Christian persecution:

- deny Christ and he will be set free;
- refuse and he could lose his life.

He worries about what the authorities will do to his family, and he prays that he can remain strong in his faith.

He recently told *Voice of the Martyrs* contacts in Afghanistan:

“Please pray that I can stand well. I am not afraid of death.”

Estimates declare that over 170,000 Christians are martyred for their faith every year.

These are our brothers and our sisters in Christ.

By the time you finish reading this article someone will be arrested and will face the death penalty because of their Christian faith.

Has God abandoned them? Of course not!

He is glorified through their perseverance in the midst of suffering.

Persecution is not punishment, it is an indication that we are living as Christ would have us to live.



Joel Stephens
pastor, Westfield
Baptist Church

“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12, NKJV).

Why do they suffer while we in America continue unharmed?

Perhaps the answer is found in another question:

When was the last time we shared our faith publicly with a lost person as Shoaib did?

After all, why should the evil one bother us if our spiritual mediocrity poses no threat to his dominion?

Pray for our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted right now.

Pray for our nation, that we might remain free to worship as the Bible teaches.

Pray for one another, that when persecution does come, that we will stand strong.

Oh sovereign Lord, grant that we may live lives that glorify You and ravage the enemy.

And when his fiery darts are hurled our way, may we stand strong in Your strength.

May every breath including our last valiantly declare that You alone are our King!

Balance Grief with Hope

Focal Passage: John 11:1-44

Grief all too easily blinds us. Jesus in John 11:1-44 addresses those “blinded” by grief.

In this passage we see various expressions of grief.

Martha exhibits an intellectual grief.

This grief accepts the inevitability and universality of death, yet shuns any overtly emotional expression of it.

This is the grief espoused by our culture today. Mary displays emotion, but she chooses to make Jesus its focus; her grief is real and demonstrative, yet she determines with whom she will share it. Those Jews who came to console and mourn with the family expressed an extroverted emotion; an out-of-control, indiscriminate grief which often makes others feel uncomfortable.

Let’s review the major events of this story. On learning of Lazarus’ sickness, Jesus announces Lazarus’ illness will not bring death but glory to the Father and Son (v. 4).

He then states they are returning to Judea, which elicits concern over His well-being by His disciples.

Jesus replies there is no stumbling when one “sees the light of this world” — a clear reminder to His teaching that He is “the Light of the world” (John 9:5).

After leading His disciples to the proverbial water, Thomas in v. 16 thinks

they are going with Him to die; demonstrating their lack of understanding of His words in v. 8.

Our human tendency is to focus on the people in the story rather than who Christ is.

Face it; all of us are “people.” We live with people, and since we are

people, we think like them. Grief is not evil or wrong.

Grief is the natural by-product of having someone’s presence ripped from our lives. Besides the amazing consolation available to us through a relationship with the Father through the Son, God also grants us the gift of memory. And “memories,” someone once wrote, “are like fresh cut roses in winter-time.”

Jesus is not angered over expressed grief.

He is not weeping over the death of a friend.

He is angered by grief powered by fear and devoid of hope.

He weeps because even though He is present, those with Him still do not grasp His mission, His purpose. Fear, as He later teaches in John 14, is incompatible with the peace He brings.

Our protection against overwhelming grief is a deep, abiding relationship with the One who is resurrection and life. We, unlike Christ’s disciples, need to remember that we cannot stumble when walking “during the day” (v. 9).

Let’s strive to put the “Light of the World” in the center of our lives.

Boys, girls pedal to change other children's lives

BCH Communications

The autumn temperatures were nearly perfect as boys and girls on bicycles, and some even on tri-cycles, whizzed around a quarter-mile track this past October. Jay Westmoreland, longtime member of First Baptist Church in Charlotte, and a team of volunteers clapped and cheered for the children as they completed another lap for the event known as "Bike for Change."

The group of dedicated children collectively rode over 200 miles that morning and later presented a check to Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) for \$25,737.47.

Created in 2003, Bike for Change was conceptualized by Jay Westmoreland as an outreach of First Baptist Church of Charlotte (FBC) to provide a tangible mission opportunity for the children of FBC. Each year, the participating children learn of the needs of Baptist Children's Homes' residents, pray for them, and promote Bike for Change as a way to provide financial assistance.

"Bike for Change is a terrific way to teach our church's children about the importance of missions outreach and helping others in the name of Jesus," Westmoreland explained. "When our church's children learn of the situations Baptist Children's Homes' residents have endured they realize how blessed they really are. They want to roll up their sleeves and help."

For FBC's event, the church's children ride their bicycles in a designated area for a predetermined amount of time.

Church members support the children's efforts by participating in a special offering. At the end of morning worship, children stand at the sanctuary exits and collect the offering in their bicycle helmets as members leave.

"It has brought great awareness to our church about the tremendous needs of Baptist Children's Homes' residents," Westmoreland said. "Our children have ignited a passion within our church, and the church members have responded accordingly."

Mark Harris, senior pastor at First Baptist Church, says Bike for Change has increased interaction between the children and other age groups at the church.

"I have known few other events that have created more intergenerational ministry impact than Bike for Change," Harris explains. "First Baptist is making a greater impact because of Bike for Change."

As the successful results of Bike for Change spread, other Baptist churches in North Carolina decided to participate. In 2009, Elizabeth Baptist Church of Shelby joined with First Baptist's event. Children



from Corinth Baptist in Ellenboro and Providence Baptist in Charlotte came aboard to help in 2010.

Additionally, other churches were encouraged to create Bike for Change events at their own locations. Mt. Moriah Baptist in Raleigh held its first event on October 2, 2010, and multiple churches from the South Mountain Association in Vale came together in August.

"It has been a blessing to see other churches participate," Westmoreland said. "It's my desire to see more North Carolina Baptist churches duplicate Bike for Change."

In order to help Bike for Change expand, Westmoreland is providing guidance to any church wanting to begin its own event. A new web resource, www.bikeforchange.org, was created last year in partnership with Baptist Children's Homes.

"It's been exciting to witness the growth of Bike for Change and to see churches come on board," says Baptist Children's Homes president Michael C. Blackwell. "When the children in our care see other boys and girls their age go out of their way to help, it makes an unbelievable impact."

Blackwell says Bike for Change produces results that go beyond making a difference financially.

"Nearly 70 percent of the children that come into Baptist Children's Homes' care have no faith base whatsoever," he said.

"The children who participate in Bike for Change are Christ's hands and feet in action. They are a powerful witness to boys and girls who desperately need to know God's love."

Since the beginning of Bike for Change in 2003, elementary age bikers have logged an estimated 1,600 miles and have raised more than \$118,000. Those proceeds provide warm beds, hot meals, clothing, and a home where the children are safe. Most importantly, it empowers Christian houseparents to introduce the residents to the love of Christ.

Savanna, age 15, became a believer after moving to BCH and is thankful for Bike for Change.

"Every prayer that you have prayed and every dime that you have given to this ministry makes a difference," Savanna stated in a "thank you" letter she wrote last year to Bike for Change participants.

"I should know. I am a life that has been forever changed because of your actions."

As spring approaches, Westmoreland hopes even more churches will organize Bike for Change events this year.

"It's hard to beat the blessing of seeing children reaching out to help other children," Westmoreland said.

"I believe Bike for Change is the perfect initiative for church leaders who want to involve their children in a heart-changing ministry."

More information about Bike for Change is available at www.bikeforchange.org or by contacting Jay Westmoreland at bikeforchange@bchfamily.org.

Court rejects challenge to 'In God We Trust'

WASHINGTON (RNS) — Atheist Michael Newdow plans to continue his fight to get "In God We Trust" off U.S. currency after the Supreme Court denied a hearing in his case March 7.

"I plan on bringing the lawsuit again on behalf of other Americans who believe they are injured when the government lends its power to one side of the controversy over whether or not God exists," he said.

Newdow, a doctor in Sacramento, Calif., has filed numerous First Amendment suits concerning government endorsement of religion. He filed the challenge to the national motto in 2005.

A year ago, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals

ruled against him, citing a 1970 decision that said the use of the motto on U.S. coins and bills is "of a patriotic or ceremonial character and bears no true resemblance to a governmental sponsorship of a religious exercise."

Newdow sought a rehearing of the case last April, but was denied in October. Two months after he asked the Supreme Court to review the decision, the case was dismissed without comment.

The Obama administration and the Pacific Justice Institute, a Sacramento-based legal defense organization, argued against Newdow, saying court precedent called for the case to be dismissed.

Classified Advertisements

Denominational

South Mountain Baptist Association, Vale, NC, currently seeking a **part-time Associational Missionary**. Send resumes to SMBA, 3639 NC Hwy. 18, Vale, NC 28168. Job description available upon request at smba@ncwireless.net.

Pastor

Grace Baptist Church, Asheville, seeks **Senior Pastor**. Friendly, diverse, mission minded congregation in growing West Asheville area. Transition process and self study complete. Master's degree from accredited seminary and five years experience preferred. Must be an effective preacher, leader, administrator, responsive to congregations' needs, encouraging spiritual growth, eager to cultivate teamwork, fellowship and missions. Visit www.gbcbvl.org. Deadline April 30, 2011. Send resume to pastorsearchavl@live.com or Pastor Search, 718 Haywood Road, Asheville, NC 28806.

Full-time pastor for Oak Grove Baptist Church in Boone, NC. We are looking for the Spirit-filled man that God has called to be the pastor and to preach the word for our congregation, looking to grow our congregation and God's kingdom. Send resumes and/or audio-video files to Oak Grove Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Committee, 306 Oak Grove Rd., Boone, NC 28607; or e-mail at ogbcb Boone@gmail.com. Please submit by April 1, 2011.

Church Staff

Summer Youth Director. 15-20 hours per week working with grades 6 thru 12. Send resume to: Personnel Committee, Stallings Memorial Baptist Church, 817 South Main Street, Salisbury, NC 28144.

MINISTER TO YOUTH AND CHILDREN. Exciting opportunity leading growing youth and children's ministries. Relevant education and progressively responsible successful experience in the field required. Send cover letter and resume to Personnel Chair, The Memorial Baptist Church, 1510 Greenville Blvd., Greenville, NC 27858 by April 11, 2011.

Youth Director, part-time, seminary degree with discipline in youth ministry, Christian education, or theology desirable but not required. Salary commensurate with experience and education. Send resume to Pastor Richard Sheriff at FBC Chocowinity, 230 NC Hwy 33 West, Chocowinity, NC 27817 or rjsheff@embarqmail.com.

Conservative Southern Baptist church seeks **full-time Associate Pastor of Family Discipleship**. Experience and ordination preferred. This ministry will focus on children, youth and young families. Send resumes to: Enon Baptist Church, Attention Pastor Mark, 6321 Old U.S. 421, East Bend NC 27018.

Minister to Students. Church with a Christian school seeking minister called to evangelize and disciple middle and high school students in a challenging academic environment. College and graduate degree required along with ministry experience to students. First Baptist Church of Charleston: email resume to lori@fbcharleston.org.

SBC in Weaverville seeks experienced **Youth/Associate Pastor**. Forty in youth group, Sunday School attendance 300. Missions oriented. Growing community. Housing available. Send resume: Locust Grove Baptist Church, 305 Locust Grove Road, Weaverville, NC 28787. Or call (828) 645-4977.

Youth Pastor. Mount Vernon Baptist of Vale, NC, is seeking part-time youth pastor. Please send resumes to 6751 Lackey Rd., Vale, NC 28168, or email to jbm5510@yahoo.com.

First Baptist Church, Blountville seeks **Minister of Worship and Education**. Blountville is the county seat of Kingsport and Bristol. Church currently has two blended morning worship services. Duties include coordination of all musical presentations, leading some groups and planning special events such as our Spirit of Christmas dinner theater. Other responsibilities include working with team to coordinate Bible study, VBS, camps and adult education opportunities. Submit resume to Minister Search Team, PO Box 587, Blountville, Tennessee 37617, or fbcbtn@embarqmail.com.

Part Time Minister of Music. Nashville Baptist Church, Nashville, NC, is seeking a part time minister of music for a traditional/blended setting. If interested please contact Ray Sykes, chair of search committee at 2529049148.

FULL-TIME STUDENT MINISTER. Covenant Baptist seeks minister of students for comprehensive ministry grades 6-12. Multi-staff, sixteen-year-old growing church located in metro Charlotte. BA and five years church experience required. E-mail resume to StudentMinister@cbclancaster.org or PO Box 578, Lancaster, SC 29721.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP. Growing Southern Baptist church near the NC Research Campus is seeking a full-time minister of music & worship with experience in leading both a contemporary and a more blended style of worship. Interested candidates must have three or more years experience leading music/worship in the local church. A bachelor's degree is required (graduate degree preferred). If you have a passion for planning, conducting and directing a comprehensive music/worship ministry in the local church, send your resume to the Search Committee c/o Memorial Baptist Church, 1785 Dale Earnhardt Blvd., Kannapolis, NC 28083 or to worship@mbchurch.org.

Miscellaneous

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Cardinals pitcher's blog helps N.C. player

By Tim Ellsworth
Baptist Press

GREENSBORO — Eric Chiz couldn't wait to get back on the baseball field.

A junior at North Carolina A&T State University and a catcher on the baseball team, Chiz sat out all of last season after undergoing shoulder surgery. He had spent weeks working hard and rehabbing so he could get back to playing the game he loves.

But in January, prior to the season's start, Chiz got hurt again — this time a torn ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) in his elbow that will keep him out of action for about a year.

Another season gone for the baseball-loving Chiz.

"It felt like my whole world crashed down," Chiz said about the injury. "It took every bit of my power not to be angry with God. It was something I didn't understand, and I still don't understand."

A member of Burkemont Baptist Church in Morgantown, Chiz attends Life Community Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Greensboro, while at college.

A men's ministry at Life Community has helped Chiz work through the "Why?" questions that have dogged him.

He also found encouragement from another source: St. Louis Cardinals starting pitcher Adam Wainwright.

Wainwright, the ace of the St. Louis pitching staff, got his own disturbing news recently when tests confirmed that he had torn his UCL, just like Chiz.

Wainwright underwent a surgical



SEEKING — Eric Chiz of North Carolina A&T State University's baseball team found encouragement in how St. Louis Cardinals ace Adam Wainwright blogged about his faith after a season-ending injury.

procedure (known as "Tommy John surgery") to repair the ligament, but he'll miss all of the 2011 season.

That news was a significant blow to Wainwright, who finished second in Cy Young Award balloting last year. But in a blog posting, Wainwright wrote about how his identity is first and foremost tied up in who he is as a Christian, and

not as a baseball player.

"This injury, the one that makes me miss an entire year of baseball, has allowed me to stop missing what is right in front of me," Wainwright wrote Feb. 24.

"I am blessed with an amazing God. A God who continues to teach me lessons in mysterious ways. I'm blessed with an amazing family. I'm blessed with friends who really care for me, and I have felt it this week.

"And I'm blessed with teammates that started out as friends and have become family," he continued. "I believe this to be a test from God, and it has opened my eyes. I believe I can still greatly impact God's Kingdom from this disabled list."

Though Wainwright and Chiz have never met, Wainwright's testimony lifted the injured Chiz, who left a comment in response to Wainwright's posting.

"When I saw that you had also injured your elbow I thought to myself that if he can stay positive then so can I," Chiz wrote.

"I believe that God uses times like these to test our faith. So thank you for being a brother in Christ and staying positive."

Chiz, who underwent his own Tommy John surgery March 10, continues to wrestle with the reasons for the injury. But he has come to an important conclusion.

"It's not our plans that matter," he said. "It's the plans that God has for us that matter the most."

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Ellsworth is editor of BP Sports, and director of news and media relations at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.)

Roberts marks 10 years at MBTS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — During 10 years as president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS), R. Philip Roberts has guided the seminary to record enrollment, establishing a notable conservative faculty, implementing several new degree programs and overseeing significant additions to and improvements of campus facilities.

"It's utterly amazing to see what the Lord has done at Midwestern over the past 10 years," Roberts, an Ohio native, said in reflecting on the milestone as Midwestern's fourth president. "Anja, Naomi, Mark and I were excited about the opportunity when the Lord called us here, and we love Midwestern and look forward to all the wonderful things He'll do here in the future. We've done our best to keep Jesus as our focal point, and in doing so, I believe He's blessed our efforts here. To God be the glory for the great things He has done."

Roberts has witnessed steady growth in the student population: Upon his arrival in 2001, the seminary averaged roughly 550 students each semester; since then, enrollment has nearly doubled. More than 1,050 students were educated by the seminary through on-campus and online classes last fall.

The most recent undertaking is the seminary's largest project in its history — construction of a 1,000-seat chapel complex that will include worship space as well as conference facilities and seven additional classrooms.

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