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ALABAMA REELING AFTER devastating tornado

By **CARRIE BROWN MCWHORTER** | *The Alabama Baptist*

As volunteers and donations poured into Lee County following a deadly tornado outbreak on March 3, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) teams joined volunteers from several agencies in the recovery effort.

“I’ve seen a tremendous number of volunteers out here helping from the community and from far away,” said Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief strategist Mark Wakefield. “That’s not uncommon after a storm, but the number of deaths has touched people deeply, and they’ve rallied from many places to help.”

North Carolina’s Baptists on Mission (also called N.C. Baptist Men; NCBM) is collecting and forwarding funds to ABDR, according to Richard Brunson, executive director.

Community devastation

Wakefield said the destruction in the Beauregard community of Lee County is “as bad as anything I’ve ever seen.” Preliminary data from the National Weather Service (NWS) indicates six tornadoes struck on March 3: the EF-4 tornado that hit Beauregard/Smiths Station with winds up to 170 mph; an EF-2 tornado in Macon/Lee counties with winds

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Volunteers at Providence Baptist Church in Opelika, Ala., sort food donations at the relief distribution center set up at the church following deadly tornadoes that struck the Beauregard community March 3. (Photo by Doug Rogers)

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Baptist Children's Homes receives flawless review

By **BLAKE RAGSDALE** | Baptist Children's Homes

Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH) has been reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Family and Children (COA). News of the accomplishment was expedited to BCH president Michael C. Blackwell due to the nonprofit's flawless evaluation results.

“COA’s program of quality improvement is designed to identify providers that have met high performance standards and have made a commitment to their stakeholders to deliver the very best quality services,” Richard Klarberg, COA president, stated in his email to Blackwell on March 7.

“COA is proud to recognize Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc. as one of these outstanding providers.”

COA is an independent, non-for-profit accrediting body accrediting more than 2,200 private and public

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3 reasons why young people leave the church

Why young adults leave the church is one of the most vexing questions facing the church today. A 2007 LifeWay Christian Resources survey indicated that 70 percent of 18-22 year-olds stop attending church for at least one year. Furthermore, Barna surveys have repeatedly shown that a majority of 20 year-olds leave church, and often never return.

Causation for young adults exiting the church has been studied for decades, yet little has been accomplished by way of reversing it. As a gospel preacher, seminary president, and father of five young children, this is more than a theoretical concern.

At risk of being overly simplistic, I want to suggest three additional factors that are often overlooked in this discussion.

1. Many young adults leave the church because they never joined it spiritually.

Many young adults leave the church because they were never truly converted to Christ in the first place. John the Apostle warned us, *"They went out from us because they were never of us; for if they had been of us, they would have no doubt continued with us."* And in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus soberly warns, *"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my father in heaven."*

In fact, this is a troubling, but recurring, theme throughout the New Testament. Jesus frequently warned of pseudo converts, most memorably in His parables of the four soils, the wheat and the tares, and the sheep and the goats. This grievous occurrence is why Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to *"examine yourselves to determine whether you be in the faith."*

This predicament is as old as the church itself, and it is no respecter of age. Young adults have not cornered the market on unregenerate church membership, but with so many other pressures and opportunities associated with their

life stage, their exit ramp is more predictable and more pronounced.

In other words, young adults are just one bloated demographic slice of an ever-present challenge within the church today: unregenerate church membership.

2. Many young adults leave the church because they never experienced it corporately.



JASON K. ALLEN
Guest Column

To their own detriment, too many churches function like a confederation of para-church ministries meeting under the same roof. For instance, many young adults traveled from children's church, to children's ministry, to the youth group, and then to college ministry.

Amazingly, many young adults spend 20-plus years in a local church with the congregation as a whole always being an ancillary group, and with their predominant religious attention focused from one of the church's subgroups to the next.

Age-graded and targeted ministries can be healthy in as much as they undergird the life of the church and facilitate strategic discipleship and family ministry. But when they displace the central and formative place of congregational worship and corporate gatherings as a whole, they prove detrimental to both the individual and the local church.

In fact, the beauty of the New Testament church is its homogeneous diversity: Jew and Gentile, young and old, rich and poor, all united by the gospel and gathered around the common ministry of the Word, the Lord's table, prayer and fellowship, together as the body of Christ.

There is a sweetness in God's people, and we rob our children of experiences of God's grace when we neglect to incorporate them into the corporate body. It is for this reason I want my children to know the saintly widow seated behind them and the contemporary adult couple seated in front of them as well as they know the children in their own classes.

When they are disconnected from the congregation, it should not sur-

prise us that young adults, who have never known the church as a whole, are disinclined to embrace it when their age-graded group has run its course. Do you want your children to participate in the church when they become adults? Then cultivate their participation as they travel life towards adulthood.

3. Many young adults leave the church because they never came to love it personally.

Though the church is not perfect, it ought to be cherished, warts and all, by every member of the congregation, including our children. As parents, we cultivate this by esteeming the church – and the individuals who comprise it – before our children. As a parent, my wife and I have long since covenanted together to guard our tongues, especially before our children, about the ministers and members of the churches we have joined.

Granted, no church is perfect, and if you ever find the perfect church, do not join it, or you will likely ruin it. At the same time, a spirit of criticism and sarcasm about the pastor and other members of the congregation mark the homes of too many church members. In

so doing, children are hearing reason after reason why they should doubt the Word of God, not value fellowship of the saints, and be indifferent toward gathering with God's people.

When this occurs, why should young adults commit their lives, time and resources to a pastor and group of people they have overheard their parents repeatedly denigrate?

Conclusion

Why do young adults leave the church? This is a pressing concern, but an often misplaced question. Instead of focusing so much on why young adults leave the church, let's focus more on how they enter the church and how they engage it along the way. And, when you show me young adults who are truly converted, have ministered and worshiped with the church as a whole, and have grown to love the people of God, I will show you young adults who are a lot less likely to depart the church anytime soon.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Jason Allen is the president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. This article first appeared at JasonKAllen.com. Used by permission.) **BR**



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Easter offers opportunity to share hope of Christ

As we approach Easter and turn our thoughts and attention to the celebration of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, let us also remember that we have an incredible opportunity during this time of the year to share the love of Jesus with those who have not yet come to know Him.

Easter provides a natural opportunity to initiate and engage in gospel conversations with individuals that have little understanding about the genuine spiritual meaning of Easter. Unchurched individuals and families seem to be more receptive and open to attending a church service at Easter. However, we must take time to invite them and encourage them to come.

J.D. Greear, Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, has challenged each of us to select one person this year that we will pray for, cultivate a relationship with and seek to lead that person to accept Christ as Savior. As we think about the "Who's Your One?" initiative, what if part of our

investment included inviting that person to join us for worship during the Easter season?

If "your one" feels uncomfortable attending worship on Easter Sunday morning, invite them to an Easter drama production that depicts the final days of Christ's earthly life, His crucifixion and resurrection.

Even an Easter egg hunt hosted by your church could be great event to introduce families to your church. Intentional conversations that follow these special events provide opportunities to share the hope we have in Christ. Studies show that many individuals will be open and receptive to attend a church service or an outreach event if you will invite them to come with you.

It is exciting to think how declining baptism numbers in North Carolina and all across the Southern Baptist Convention could be changed if members of our churches will consistently and fervently pray that God would send forth laborers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38).

What a positive difference it will make if each of us



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer



will regularly ask our Christian friends who the one person is they are praying for and attempting to reach for Christ this year.

How about you? Are you willing to make a commitment to God that you will cultivate a relationship with the person that God is impressing upon your mind and heart?

Will you share with that individual how he or she can receive God's gift of eternal life? Will you invite them to repent of sin, place their trust in Christ and accept Him as their Savior?

Will you help them grow spiritually in this new relationship with Jesus by teaching them truths from God's Word?

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'" – John 11:25 (NKJV). **BR**

GuideStone declares 'Year of the Harvest'

By **ROY HAYHURST** | GuideStone

After marking GuideStone Financial Resources' centennial anniversary in 2018 and moving to new leased office space, the ministry continues forward, focusing on 2019 and beyond, GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins told trustees during their March 4-5 meeting.

Hawkins frames each year with a verse of scripture and a theme, declaring 2019 as GuideStone's "Year of the Harvest." Hawkins spoke from Matthew 9:36-38, which says, "*When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.'*"

Hawkins told trustees that when it comes to GuideStone's potential, it must look outward and see that the harvest is plentiful. And it must look inward to see that the Southern Baptist entity is limited, and it must look upward to see the priority that it's the Lord's harvest.

"We have undertaken so many things as we seek to live out our vision to honor the Lord by being a lifelong partner with our participants in enhancing their financial security," Hawkins told trustees.

"Just like a farmer works the ground and tends to his crop," he noted, "he ultimately must harvest his crops, and we must take the products and services we've created for our participants and harvest those in the pipelines to bring in the economies of scale we need for the benefit of all of our participants."

Chief Operating Officer John R. Jones opened his presentation by

showing a video featuring two former Mission:Dignity recipients – Ed Enriquez and Caleb Goodwin, both of whom are now deceased. Jones told trustees that the two men are indicative of the thousands of retired pastors whom GuideStone has served through its relief efforts since its founding in 1918.

"Ed Enriquez literally gave the shoes off his feet to a migrant farm worker who had never owned a pair of shoes," Jones recalled from the video. "Caleb spent decades in local church ministry to Southern Baptist congregations without regard to his pay or his retirement needs. GuideStone, through Mission:Dignity, comes alongside these pastors and serves them in their declining years with a measure of financial dignity."

Mission:Dignity, Jones emphasized, remains GuideStone's heartbeat. 2018 witnessed several records in giving for the ministry: More than 8,000 individuals gave to the ministry, and more than \$8.3 million was raised in all of 2018. More than \$1 million was given each month for three consecutive months: November and December 2018 and January 2019. Hawkins' devotional and outreach book *The Christmas Code* sold more than half a million copies in 2018; all author royalties and proceeds from the Code series of books benefit Mission:Dignity.

The ministry, which provides financial assistance to retired Southern Baptist pastors and their widows near the poverty line, relies on the gifts of individuals, Sunday school classes, churches and other organizations.

Mission:Dignity receives no Cooperative Program gifts. One hundred percent of all gifts to Mission:Dignity goes to provide financial assistance. Administra-



tive costs are covered by endowments established years ago for that purpose.

Turning to pastors and churches today, Jones said the GuideStone commitment is steadfast with regard to serving today's ministry leaders.

Pointing to a prototypical bivocational pastor, Jones said that thanks to efforts in the last 12 months to lower fees in the MyDestination Funds – the Target Date Funds default investment option in GuideStone's retirement plans – as well as to offer a new, lower-cost health care plan (Secure Health 3000), those pastors are better able to provide for their families and their future needs. This allows them to be more effective in the ministries they have received from the Lord.

"Thanks to Secure Health 3000, which provides nationwide access to the Blue Cross Blue Shield network, this pastor and his family don't have to worry about unexpected medical bills," Jones said.

"Thanks to the efforts of our team in reducing expenses in the MyDestination Funds, his retirement investments continue to grow so that when he reaches that place of vocational retirement, he may not have to rely on assistance."

Chief Business and Marketing Officer John T. Raymond told trustees that the ministry was continuing to focus on stewardship of participants' and investors' assets, products and services.

"This is why we exist, to best help those we serve achieve their long-term financial goals," Raymond said.

"And the proof is in our surveys, which show we have about the highest client satisfaction rates in the industry. Ninety-eight percent of our clients are satisfied with the work we do on their behalf."

Raymond told trustees that GuideStone continues to make better use of data to help the organization make business decisions that benefit the participants served.

Jones reported on strong results from the move from GuideStone's home of 29 years in Dallas' Uptown neighborhood to new leased offices in Dallas' Midtown development. The move nets GuideStone savings of more than \$4 million annually, which were used to reduce the fees in the MyDestination Funds. "The thing that so many of us love about GuideStone: Our focus is on the bottom line of the pastor at the crossroads," Jones said. "It's imperative that we continue to zero in on the needs of those we serve in this Year of the Harvest."

In other business, trustees re-elected John Morris (North Carolina) chairman and Renée Treweek (New York) vice chair.

GuideStone received the Lipper Fund Award March 7 as the Best Overall Small Fund Family for 2019 by financial markets data firm Refinitiv.

Only 29 Small Fund families met the standards to be considered for the prestigious award among 222 Small Fund families with up to \$76.8 billion in assets.

The award marks the second time in less than a decade that GuideStone was honored with this recognition. GuideStone has also has been recognized in other Lipper categories in four of the last six years. **BR**

New details of former SBTs prof's resignation alleged

Baptist Press & *Biblical Recorder* staff

Nine months after The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) professor David Sills resigned for undisclosed reasons, a woman has released a statement of allegations including details of what she describes as sexual abuse by Sills, beginning while she was a Southern Seminary student.

In a release to Baptist Press (BP) and others, Jennifer Lyell, now 41 and director of the books ministry area at LifeWay Christian Resources, alleges Sills initiated sexual contact with her on a mission trip in 2004. At the time, she was a 26-year-old master of divinity student, and the alleged relationship continued until she was 38, spanning a period in which Lyell moved from Louisville, Ky., to Chicago and then to Nashville, she told BP. She graduated from Southern with a master of divinity in 2006 and enrolled in an SBTs doctoral program for one year after that.

Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. told BP he could not disclose why Sills' employment at the seminary ended. But Mohler confirmed that Lyell shared allegations with him in May 2018 and that Southern, as Lyell stated, "immediately took action."

Lyell said in her statement, "The denominational institutions, the local church, and the missions agency [Sills led] ultimately believed me, supported me, and took the action for which they were responsible."

BP reported Sills' resignation in June 2018 based on reporting by North Carolina's *Biblical Recorder* news journal, which cited an SBTs statement affirming that Mohler "received the resignation of Dr. David Sills from the Southern Seminary faculty on May 23, 2018."

It further stated, "Southern Seminary is committed to the highest standards of both principle and policy. Our policies and procedures are clear and are consis-

tently applied. Because this is a personnel matter, we cannot comment further."

Sills, former professor of missions and cultural anthropology at Southern, did not respond to request for comment. Part of Lyell's reason for being "complicit at times" and remaining silent for as long as she did, she stated, was because she "became like part of [Sills'] family" and feared "the collateral damage that telling would cause for those around him." In her statement, Lyell accused Sills of "grooming and taking advantage of his student."

Lyell first disclosed the situation to a therapist in March 2016, she said. Just over two years later, she stated the allegations to then-LifeWay Senior Vice President Eric Geiger and Mohler.

"When I shared what had happened to me with my boss at LifeWay [Geiger] and then later with SBTs President Dr. R. Albert Mohler, I was quick to also share the responsibility I bore for being complicit at times, for not telling immediately and for so idolizing the idea of a whole family that I protected it despite what was happening within it," Lyell said. "I am not a sinless victim. But I am a victim nonetheless."

Geiger, senior pastor of Mariners Church in Irvine, Calif., confirmed to BP that Lyell shared her allegations with him. Geiger told Lyell he was "responsible to share" the allegations with Southern and invited her to participate in the process, Geiger recounted to Baptist Press. The same day, Geiger and Lyell contacted Mohler, he said.

Mohler said his "encouragement from the start in any case such as this is that authorities be contacted" and that only law enforcement should judge whether laws may have been violated in such situations. Yet victims who are not minors must decide for themselves whether to contact authorities, he said. Lyell told Baptist Press she has attempted to contact the Louisville Metro Police Department's Special Victims Unit.

Mohler commended Lyell's courage in coming forward. "I stand behind her in [her public statement] and believe she is acting righteously," he told BP.

The Louisville, Ky., church where Sills was a member, Lyell said, also "took action" following Sills' resignation.

Louisville's Ninth and O Baptist Church told BP it is the congregation referenced in Lyell's statement. The church said it acted "swiftly and firmly" and that Sills is no longer a member.

Sills also served as an International Mission Board (IMB) trustee and a member of the IMB's presidential search committee. He resigned from his trustee post, and as a result from the search committee, in May 2018.

Lyell decided to make her allegations public, she said, when she "learned that Dr. Sills had been appointed as a missionary with a non-SBC missions agency."

"I now realize that despite SBTs handling the situation justly and as I asked – without stating the reason for his resignation – it led to the exact kind of scenario the SBC is now trying to prevent," she said. "If I were not to come forward with this [statement], a church or ministry who receives Dr. Sills' [resume] and does an internet search for him would have no

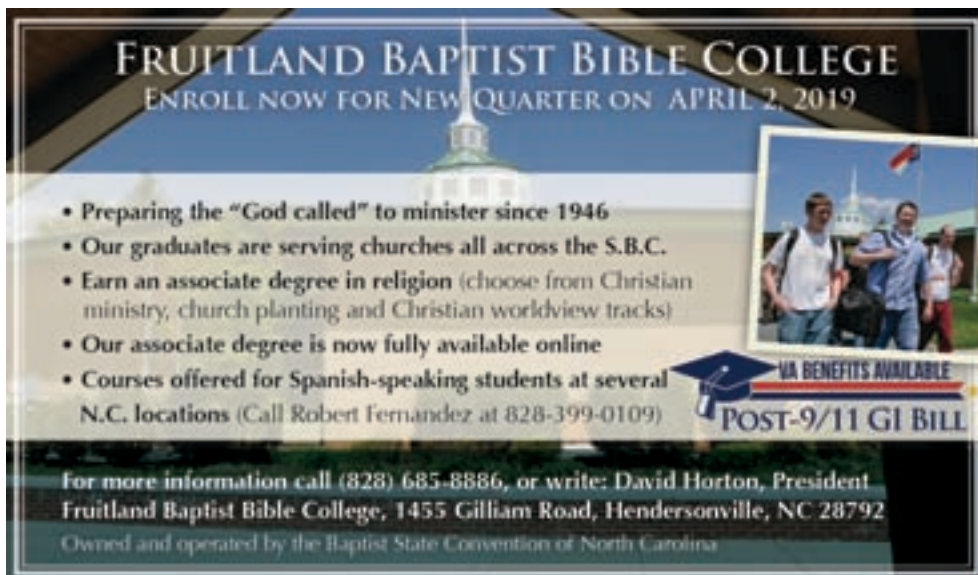
way to know the truth behind his resignation. There are plenty of reasons to stay silent in a situation such as this. But we must not be silent."

Geiger said he contacted the other missions agency – which he identified as Global Outreach International – and they removed Sills from their employment.

In June, BP reported Sills also had resigned as president of Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, a missions organization that engages in discipleship and theological education internationally. Lyell is a former Reaching and Teaching International board member.

Reaching and Teaching International told BP in a statement that they are aware of a statement by Lyell regarding her allegations and "are committed to ensuring a culture of transparency and accountability."

Lyell said, "It is my hope that my story, one in which a SBC entity and its leaders acted swiftly and justly ... but in which that same individual was also in a ministry position only months later, will also help to illustrate the need for some form of a reporting tool that can ensure that those who have victimized others from a ministry position are unable to ever do so again. **BR**"



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Georgia Baptist Mission Board rolls out restructuring plans

By SCOTT BARKLEY | *The Christian Index*

Georgia Baptist Mission Board Executive Director W. Thomas Hammond, Jr., rolled out restructuring plans March 12 during the Mission Board's executive committee meeting.

With various multi-colored maps on display, Hammond's report on the mission board's future included details on how there will be no "Baptist Building," no large collection of departments and no expectations of attending meetings that often involve a stop-and-go crawl through Atlanta traffic. Hammond also outlined a new focus for resourcing churches and pastors, the ones he calls his "heroes."

"They – you – have the most important job someone could have," he told the mission board's executive committee members. "You preach the gospel."

Anticipation of Hammond's announcement had been building since a downsizing in January indicated changes on the way. With it comes a shift in mentality, he told state missionaries in a closed-door meeting March 6 that presented the changes.

"It won't be the case of churches coming to us for help and resources. We'll be

going to them," Hammond said.

"We want to put a higher emphasis on results, not activity," he said in a call for greater efficiency of missions dollars. "Let's be sure that what we're doing makes a difference. The world is changing every day. If we're not, we're going to get lapped."

Missions and ministry center to be sold

The listening sessions Hammond has hosted throughout the state rendered a variety of answers from pastors. But some responses were uniform. One concerned the Georgia Baptist Missions and Ministry Center in Duluth, which opened in June 2006.

In response to a question on what the Mission Board needs to stop doing, "stop holding on to the building" received nearly five times the response as anything else, Hammond said.

While there are several interested buyers, ongoing talks with interested parties will continue, expressed chief operation officer Kevin Smith.

Each region will not be a "mini-convention" Hammond explained. Catalysts and region consultants will be mobile, working from home or whatever office space (such as a coffee shop or their cars)

when not visiting churches, he said. A central administration location, he noted, for approximately 50 staff is currently being sought north of Atlanta.

Core values

Traveling across the state to the listening sessions clarified Hammond's desire to streamline the Mission Board and make it an entity focused on pastors and churches, he told executive committee members. To that end, he presented three core values for the Mission Board: Pastors are our heroes; churches are our priority; and Georgia is our mission field.

"The passion of an entity is seeing what they do. The character is found in what they decide to stop doing," Hammond said. "It's hard to stop doing things, especially when they used to work. But truthfully, we're not unlimited in our resources."

Being efficient with resources and mission dollars calls for a focus on goals, he added.

"We exist to encourage, resource, train, and bless pastors and churches," he said. "If we cease to do that, then we need to cease to exist."

Hammond addressed anticipated questions about the final core value. Yes, he said, Georgia Baptists are called to go into all the world. However, that starts with healthy churches in Georgia.

"We're going to partner with others in reaching Georgia [such as] through our associations and focus on specific areas of lostness," he said.

Partnerships through the North American Mission Board (NAMB) or International Mission Board could help healthier Georgia Baptist churches reach one of NAMB's Send cities or an unreached people group, he explained.

"It's not that Georgia is going to be all that we do; my prayer is we'll end up

doing more than we've ever done," Hammond said. "But we want to make sure the light is shone in Georgia like never before so we can shine it elsewhere."

Six regions, five teams

Instead of a perspective where the Georgia Baptist Mission Board is headquartered northeast of Atlanta, six regions will serve to make the Board closer in accessibility to churches. Five teams, each with a lead strategist (basically a vice presidential position), will address key areas of ministry in:

- Church strengthening – "All the activities we'll be doing as a mission board will point toward this," Hammond said.

- Pastor wellness – "This is the other 'significant rail' on which this train is going to run," he said. "It'll be for the whole family."

- Research and development – "Communications, resources, Cooperative Program development, designing logos, [etc.]," he said. "We want to respond to what churches say they need."

- Georgia Baptist women – "We'll work to equip women to reach women," he said. "Georgia WMU will be in this team."

- Strategic church planting – "We use the word strategic because ... we want to see where the population trends and growth are," he said. "See where we're under-churched."

The church strengthening lead strategist will work directly with five catalyst leaders, each assigned to an area: evangelism, missions, discipleship, next-gen, and music and worship.

Those catalysts will focus on their area of engagement through the state through a consultant assigned to that region.

Church strengthening will be one "rail" on which the restructuring will run, with church pastoral wellness serving as the other, Hammond stated. The latter, he added, will address the health of pastors in spiritual, physical, vocational, relational and financial areas.

Chief Strategist Steve Parr explained that the restructuring process will begin on June 1, with a rollout at the Georgia Baptist Convention Nov. 11-12. Full implementation of the restructuring is expected to be complete on Jan. 1, 2020. **BR**

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Survival of community newspapers is ‘critical,’ says Abernathy

By MARGARET COLSON | *Arkansas Baptist News*

Members of the Association of State Baptist Publications (ASBP) learned from university professor and author Penelope Muse Abernathy during their annual meeting in Charleston, S.C.

The ASBP meeting “gives those who lead state Baptist newspapers and other publications the opportunity to discuss opportunities and challenges faced in today’s ever-changing publishing environment,” said Tim Yarbrough, editor/executive director of the *Arkansas Baptist News* and 2018-19 president of ASBP, an organization founded in 1895. With the theme, “Press On,” ASBP members also heard a number of reports from denominational leaders during their four-day meeting.

Community journalism

Abernathy, who holds the Knight chair in journalism and digital media economics at the University of North Carolina, led three sessions: “How the World Has Changed/What We Know So Far,” “A New Model for Nurturing Community” and “What I’ve Learned and What I’ll Do Differently.” Abernathy, who has done extensive research on community newspapers, is author of the book *Saving Community Journalism*.

“It is critical that community newspapers survive,” she said, explaining that she uses the term “community newspaper” in a broad sense to include magazines, podcasts and “everything you have to tell your story.”

“It was refreshing to hear from researcher Penelope Abernathy, who states, ‘[W]hat is important is not the size of a paper’s print circulation, but rather the mission of the paper,’” Yarbrough said.

“Abernathy offered leaders of Baptist newspapers and publications strategies for improving their reach as they seek to compete during the digital age and inform, inspire and involve Southern Baptists in our ‘community’ of Kingdom work.”

In recent years, Yarbrough stated, “we have seen the mainstream media cast aside their responsibility of objective journalism, many times opting to bend the news to fit their own secular, humanist worldview. Baptist journalists have the responsibility to inform Southern Baptists about the work of their denomination so they can make informed decisions regarding funding, governance and missionary deployment.”

Denominational leaders

Throughout their Feb. 11-14 sessions, participants



University professor Penelope Abernathy discusses community newspapers at the Association of State Baptist Publications annual meeting in Charleston, S.C. (Arkansas Baptist News photo)

heard from Southern Baptist entity leaders, including Paul Chitwood, newly elected president of the International Mission Board (IMB).

Chitwood said he is taking time to “ask, listen and learn” as he settles into his new role. He acknowledged that in recent years the IMB has been challenged, because of downsizing and other factors, in its task of communicating God’s work in the world.

He committed to “beef up” communications at the IMB and stated that he has hired Roger Alford from the Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC) as IMB communications vice president.

In answer to a question, Chitwood said the KBC decision to merge the historic Baptist paper, the *Western Recorder*, with the state convention’s communications office was largely a cost-saving measure as well as a move intended to expand the KBC’s ability to communicate with a larger audience.

North American Mission Board (NAMB) President Kevin Ezell spoke to the group, stating, “Everything we do is about the gospel.”

Ezell outlined NAMB’S church planter assessment process, saying that the mission board needs 4,000 church planter applications to send 1,200 church planters annually.

He described NAMB’S organizational leadership with four vice presidents, before introducing Johnny Hunt, the new vice president of evangelism and leadership.

Hunt introduced the new evangelism initiative, – “Who’s Your One?” – describing how one person who led him to salvation made an enormous impact worldwide.

The Who’s Your One? initiative is customizable by

churches, associations and state conventions, Ezell said. As a part of the evangelism focus, leaders from NAMB plan to visit seven or eight states for evangelism rallies. “Evangelism rallies need to be evangelistic,” Hunt said.

Ezell noted that NAMB leadership had “underestimated the need to encourage and beg pastors to be evangelistic.”

J.D. Greear, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., spent about 40 minutes with the editors.

He recounted the six areas he is championing during his tenure as SBC president and also spoke to the sexual abuse issue in the denomination today, stating, “Now is not the time to defend ourselves,” but rather now is the time to “lament and mourn.” He further noted, “The safety of victims is priority over reputation of churches.”

Participants also heard reports from O.S. Hawkins, president/chief executive officer of GuideStone Financial Resources; Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director-treasurer of Woman’s Missionary Union, SBC; Carol Pipes, director of corporate communications for LifeWay Christian Resources; Shawn Hendricks, editor of Baptist Press; and Randy Adams, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention. Devotionals were led by Yarbrough; David Williams, editor of the *Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist*; and Kevin Parker, editor of the *Baptist New Mexican*.

Participants also heard a synopsis report on a recent state Baptist paper survey that revealed great diversity in how the papers accomplish their mission but a common commitment to the mission of communicating with Southern Baptists.

Business session

In the ASBP business session, members honored K. Allan Blume, who is retiring May 31 as editor of North Carolina Baptists’ *Biblical Recorder*.

The group also remembered Jack Harwell, former editor of *The Christian Index* of Georgia and former ASBP president, who died in January.

In closing, Yarbrough passed the ASBP gavel to Williams, who will serve as the organization’s 2019-2020 president. Jennifer Rash, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, was elected ASBP president-elect, to serve in 2020-2021. ASBP’s next annual meeting will be Feb. 10-13 in Tucson, Ariz.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Margaret Colson is a writer for the Arkansas Baptist News, arkansasbaptist.org.) **B3**

Facebook considers whether Gateway Seminary is ‘hate group’

By DIANA CHANDLER | Baptist Press

Gateway Seminary is cooperating with Facebook to show the school is not a “hate group” in efforts to boost a post describing the Bible as the ultimate authority.

Facebook refused to boost a post linking Gateway President Jeff Iorg’s March 5 blog entry entitled “Logical Progression,” which mentioned abortion, gender issues and polygamy in asserting the domino effect of unbiblical decisions. “Holding the line on positions based on timeless biblical standards as an ultimate

authority has been and always will be important,” is the focus of the post Iorg sought to boost. Facebook refused.

“My understanding is Facebook has requested, and we have provided, additional information about me and the seminary,” Iorg told Baptist Press (BP). “They are seeking to establish we are a valid company, not a hate group or a foreign entity.”

Facebook requires pages, according to the message the platform sent in refusing the boost, “to be authorized to run ads related to politics and issues of national importance.... To continue,” Facebook

told Gateway, “please complete the one-time authorization process.”

“So far, we have had a cooperative relationship in trying to resolve these issues,” Iorg told BP. “We understand their ‘flags’ but at the same time will not compromise our message. They have not asked us to do that, only to provide documentation to prove our legitimacy.”

In Iorg’s blog at gs.edu/presidents-blog, he wrote a March 11 entry following Facebook’s response to his initial request.

“The phrase ‘timeless biblical’ sets off warning bells for many people,” Iorg wrote. “They prefer standards based on

their perception – ‘my truth’ or ‘my reality’ – rather than anything field-tested by centuries of best practices.

“And biblical?” Iorg wrote March 11. “Who cares about ancient texts? Not many people today seem interested in discovering answers from the ground-source for the Judeo-Christian worldview. And more than that, doing so earns you the label ‘intolerant.’”

Iorg’s original blog entry was not about abortion, gender issues or polygamy, he explained, but were only logical examples. He still expects a positive outcome from Facebook, he told BP. **B3**

LifeWay Research looks for new faces in the pews

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

Many churches are not seeing new faces in the pews, according to a new study from Exponential conducted by LifeWay Research.

Six in 10 Protestant churches are plateaued or declining in attendance, according to data released March 6. More than half saw fewer than 10 people become new Christians in the past 12 months.

Exponential is a Virginia-based organization focusing on resources for church planting and multiplication.

“Growth is not absent from American churches,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “But rapid growth through conversions is uncommon.”

The research gives a clear picture of the state of Protestant churches in America today. Most have fewer than 100 people attending services each Sunday (57 percent), including 21 percent who average less than 50. Around 1 in 10 churches (11 percent) average 250 or more in worship.

Three in 5 (61 percent) pastors say their churches faced a decline in worship attendance or growth of 5 percent or less in the last three years. Almost half (46 percent) say their giving decreased or stayed the same from 2017 to 2018.

More than 2 in 5 churches (44 percent) only have one or fewer full-time staff members. Nearly 9 in 10 pastors (87 percent) say their church had the same or fewer number of full-time staff in 2018 as they had in 2017, including 7 percent who cut staff.

In 2018, 32 percent of churches were involved in some form of planting a new church; 3 percent added new multi-site campuses.

Around 1 in 10 (12 percent) say they were directly or substantially involved in opening a new church in 2018, including 7 percent who were a primary financial sponsor or provided ongoing financial support to a church plant.

“The primary purpose of this study was to obtain a set of objective measures on churches’ reproduction and multiplication behaviors today as well as to understand their core context of growth,” said Todd Wilson, chief executive officer of Exponential.

“By combining these measures, we can help churches think about multiplication.”

Declining, plateaued or growing?

Twenty-eight percent of Protestant pastors say their church has seen worship attendance shrink by 6 percent or more compared to three years ago.

Another 33 percent say their church has remained within 5 percent, while 39 percent say their congregation has grown by at least 6 percent since the first quarter of 2016.

More than half of 18- to 44-year old pastors (55 percent) say their church is growing, while 33 percent of pastors 45 and older say the same.

Evangelical churches are more likely to be growing (42 percent) than their mainline counterparts (34 percent).

Less than a quarter (23 percent) of churches with an average worship attendance of fewer than 50 say they are growing, while most churches with 250 or more in attendance (59 percent) are growing.

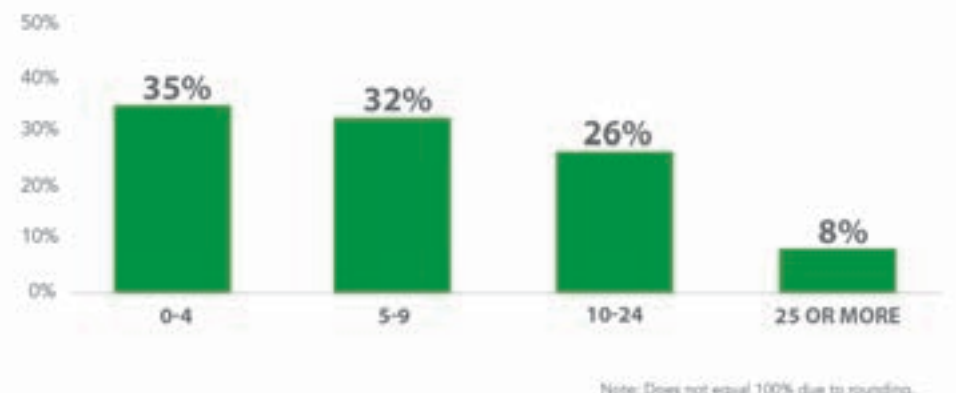
Among denominations, Holiness (56 percent) and Baptist (45 percent) pastors are more likely to say their churches are growing than Methodists (33 percent) and Lutherans (25 percent).

Church conversions

The lack of growth in worship attendance in most churches is matched by a lack of new commitments to Christ last year.

New commitments to Jesus Christ as Savior per 100 attendees

According to Protestant pastors:



Fifty-four percent of pastors say fewer than 10 people indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior in 2018, including 8 percent who had none.

In some ways, however, those numbers mask deeper evangelistic concerns. When evaluating churches based on the number of conversions per 100 attendees, 67 percent had fewer than 10 per 100 people attending their church. Around a third (35 percent) had fewer than five new commitments for every 100 people attending their worship services.

Among churches of 250 and above, 18 percent say they had 10 conversions or more for every 100 in attendance.

While there are no major differences between evangelical and mainline churches in terms of new converts, de-

nominal differences do exist.

A majority of Pentecostal pastors (57 percent) say they saw 10 or more new commitments to Christ in their church last year per 100 attendees. The next closest denominations are Lutherans (39 percent), Holiness (38 percent) and Baptists (35 percent).

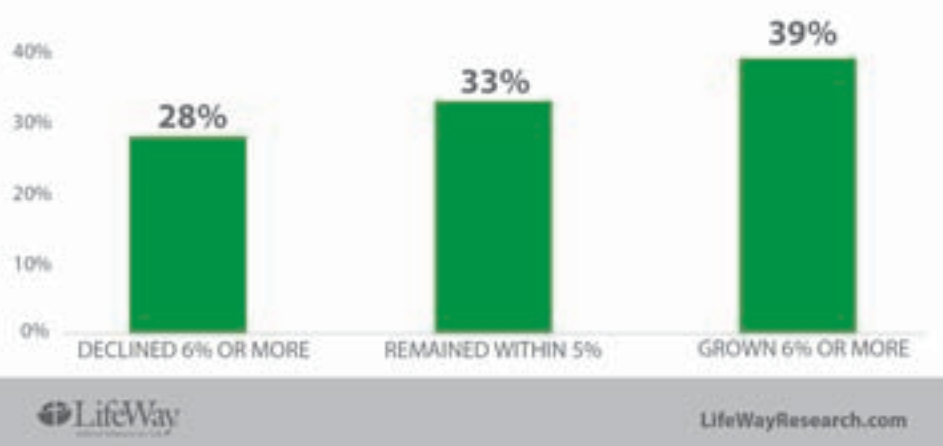
A quarter of Methodist (25 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed pastors (23 percent) say they had 10 or more new commitments to Jesus in 2018 per 100 attendees. Half of Methodist pastors (50 percent) had fewer than five new commitments last year.

“Much work has been done to go deeper on measuring church health,” said McConnell. “But it is still helpful to look at the observable factors of ‘noses, nickels and new commitments.’ Strategies, programs and rules-of-thumb work differently depending on the trajectory of a church.”

Methodology: A phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted by LifeWay Research Jan. 14-30, 2019. The calling list used a random sample stratified by church size, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used to maintain the correct proportion of each church size. Responses were weighted by region to more accurately reflect the population. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. **BR**

Change in U.S. church attendance over the last three years

According to Protestant pastors:



Equality Act said to endanger morality, liberty

Baptist Press

New legislation that bans discrimination against gay and transgender people would cripple Americans’ freedom of conscience rights, Christian and conservative leaders say.

On March 13, Democrats in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives introduced the Equality Act, a proposal that would add “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to the classifications protected in federal civil rights law. “Sexual orientation” includes homosexuality and bisexuality, while “gender identity” refers to the

way a person perceives himself regardless of his biology at birth. Opponents say they oppose unjust discrimination, but contend the measure would denigrate Christian morality and coerce behavior in violation of religious beliefs. Both versions of the act eliminate the use of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). **BR**

20,000 homes: Crossover's goal for SBC June outreach

By TOBIN PERRY | NAMB

As Southern Baptists from across the country make plans for the SBC annual meeting in June, they're also preparing to engage more than 20,000 homes with the gospel through Crossover activities.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) and Alabama State Board of Missions will mobilize 400 teams of volunteers to knock on 20,000 doors in the metro Birmingham area on Saturday, June 8, the weekend before the SBC annual meeting.

"This year we have a really simplified approach that will help us make as big of a concentrated push as we can make in one day," said Joel Southerland of NAMB's evangelism team. "We already have student pastors bringing students, and pastors who are bringing van loads of volunteers, because it can all be done in one day."

Teams interested in participating can arrive on Friday night, get trained on Saturday morning, and then go out on the streets to share the gospel that day, Southerland said.

Johnny Hunt, NAMB vice president of evangelism and a former SBC president, and Bill Fay, author of *Share Jesus without Fear*, will train volunteers on Wednesday, June 5, in how to have gospel conversations. The training rally, simulcast at other local Alabama Baptist churches, will be held at the Church at Brook Hills.

That same training will be available via video at seven "hub churches" throughout the metro Birmingham area on the morning of June 8.

A hub church in each of seven associations in and around Birmingham will serve as a base of operations on June 8, said Sammy Gilbreath, Alabama Baptists' state director of evangelism.

Gilbreath noted that Birmingham has a metropolitan population of 1 million people, with 2 million living within 30 minutes of the city.



Several teams of Crossover volunteers gather for final preparations before venturing out across Phoenix to share the gospel prior to the 2017 SBC annual meeting. This year's Crossover outreach is slated for June 8 in Birmingham, Ala. (BP file photo)

"I think it's a great way to do a mission project, even for a one-day project," Gilbreath said. "They can come in on a Saturday and impact a major metropolitan area that is changing demographically. It gives us the opportunity to present the gospel to an area that is very unchurched."

"While we have a lot of churches – 3,280 in Alabama Baptist life – there are a lot of people, a huge population in metro Birmingham, that are not connected to any church."

Gilbreath believes the Crossover activities will be a catalyst for future evangelistic engagement throughout the state as churches get trained in personal evangelism.

"Events offer us opportunities to train," Gilbreath said. "Not only are we getting the opportunity to knock on 20,000 doors, it's giving us an event that

provides an opportunity to train our own people in the state of Alabama to do this in their own communities."

Although Gilbreath said they'll knock on 20,000 doors, he acknowledges that some people won't be home. When volunteers come to homes where they don't have an opportunity to share the gospel, they will drop off a bag with an invitation from the local association to their local churches along with brochures and some kind of gospel tract.

Crossover also will include a major evangelistic push into the inner city of Birmingham.

A NAMB Send Relief mobile health clinic and mobile dental clinic will be set up outside of an inner-city church in a high-poverty area of the city. Evangelistic teams will be at the clinics sharing the gospel with participants.

As in previous Crossover events,

Southern Baptist seminary students will partner with local churches for door-to-door evangelism in Birmingham throughout the week prior to the main outreach and will be a part of the 400 teams blanketing metro Birmingham on June 8.

For three decades in Crossover initiatives, NAMB has partnered with state Baptist conventions and Baptist associations to engage the communities hosting the annual SBC meeting. Last year, a record 4,229 people made professions of faith in Christ through Crossover events in Dallas.

"It's a really good opportunity," Southerland reiterated from Gilbreath, "for a pastor or a student pastor to train their church how to witness in their own community."

To register for Crossover Birmingham or for more information, visit the Crossover Birmingham website at NAMB.net. **BR**

New Zealand mosque massacre condemned, prayer pledged

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

"Evil" and "horrific" are among the ways Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders described a shooting rampage at two Islamic mosques in New Zealand that left at least 50 people dead.

"Religious liberty means freedom to worship according to one's conscience without fear," SBC President J.D. Greear tweeted. "It is one of our most precious freedoms and should be enjoyed by all everywhere. We grieve with our Muslim neighbors, weep with them, and stand unequivocally against this evil act."

The shootings occurred March 15 in the city of

Christchurch as Muslim worshipers gathered at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Mosque, according to media reports. Brenton Harrison Tarrant, a 28-year-old man from Australia, appeared in court but entered no plea to the murder charge. Officials expected more charges at his next court appearance in April.

In addition to the dead, at least 50 other victims were injured.

The shooter allegedly livestreamed the attacks from a helmet camera and posted an online document stating he had been planning the attack for two years on behalf of white Europeans as a battle against immigrants, according to media reports. A weapon used in the shoot-

ing allegedly was covered in white-supremacist graffiti.

Several arrests have been made in the investigation. At least one has already been released without a charge.

New Zealand's 4.5 million residents are 44 percent Christian and 1 percent Muslim, according to the CIA's World Factbook. Thirty-nine percent of New Zealanders claim no religion. According to the Joshua Project, an online resource that estimates the religious breakdown of world nations, 19 percent of New Zealanders are evangelical Christians.

The number of victims in the shootings exceeded New Zealand's total number of murder victims for 2017: 35, *USA Today* reported. **BR**

Couple prays for God's glory in secular city

By BRANDON ELROD | NAMB

Home of a population described by some reports as less religious than Los Angeles, Madison, Wis., has become a hub of secularism in the United States. In the middle of the city lies the University of Wisconsin where 40,000 college students navigate a campus intertwined with the state's capital.

Rob and Lisa Warren recently uprooted their family's lives and moved to Madison to start a church and reach the community in and around the university. They represent a growing church planting movement designed to send the hope of the gospel to under-reached university and college towns in North America.

"We want to be a church that's both for the city and the campus, to reach college students and to be around families, pointing them to Jesus," said Rob.

Rob and Lisa, 2019 Week of Prayer missionaries for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, are ministering in a context filled with college students, many of whom are experiencing new ideas for the first time. These students live in a season of questioning everything and are often open to discussing and hearing the gospel, which is why Rob and Lisa love spending time with students. "When we think about Madison," Rob said, "we think about a place that, like so many other places, just needs the hope that only Jesus can bring. Not only that, but a city that is so strategic in reaching more and more people for Jesus beyond Madison."

Together with their launch team, the Warrens are planting Doxa Church. The word "doxa" is a Greek word used in the New Testament that means "glory."

"This is all about the glory, 'doxa,' of Jesus," said Lisa. "I think if we get one thing right, that's what we have to stay focused on, and we have to stay grounded in."

Before Rob grounded his life in the glory of God, however, he dedicated himself to football.

"My senior year in high school, my father committed suicide, and that sent my life into a tailspin," he recalled. "Feeling a huge void and a massive amount of pain and shame, I gave my entire self to the game of football."

Rob excelled at the sport and went on to play at Bowling Green State University in Ohio when his best friend, Andy, became a Christian. As Andy's life began to change, he quit drinking, using drugs and "chasing girls." Rob took notice of the change in lifestyle.

"From that moment, Andy started to share the gospel with me, and over the next three years, I began to feel God working in my life as I learned about Jesus," said Rob.



Rob Warren, an Annie Armstrong Easter Offering 2019 Week of Prayer missionary, prays with students and volunteers ahead of a preview for Doxa Church's college ministry, The Salt Company, on the University of Wisconsin campus. Warren launched Doxa Church and The Salt Company in the fall of 2018 in Madison, Wisc., one of the most secular cities in the United States. (NAMB photos by Daniel McCullough)

Over those three years, the lessons Rob learned about Jesus were sinking in, and after one particularly rough night of partying, he sensed conviction of sin for the first time.

"Waking up after a terrible night, I felt so bad but couldn't explain it," Rob remembered. "Not knowing what to do, I decided to go to church for the first time."

"That night, I gave my life to Jesus, and God began a fast and radical transformation of my life, desires and passions, which landed me in full-time ministry."

The transformation that took place in Rob's life is one the Warren's hope to see duplicated in the lives of countless college students.

"We're super-passionate about seeing young people meet Jesus and have that change the entire trajectory of their life and take it into their towns, new states and new countries," said Lisa. "I can't think of a more strategic group of people than college students to share Jesus with."

The road to Madison took them through Ames, Iowa, where they trained with Cornerstone Church and became a part of The Salt Network, a group of like-minded Southern Baptist churches with a mission to see churches planted near college campuses across the Midwest.

The North American Mission Board helps resource this movement through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO). New church plants minister to both college students and the wider community in those cities that play a strategic role in

shaping young adults.

"When people give to North American missions," said Rob, "they're literally giving to the future of reaching the next generation of North America."



Rob Warren, his wife Lisa, daughter Lilly and son Titus moved to Madison, Wisc., to plant Doxa Church near the University of Wisconsin. Lisa helps lead worship and disciple women in the church and college ministry. The church seeks to reach both the college campus and the city, which is one of the most secular in the United States.

The Warrens have a passion and a plan for sending the hope of the gospel to their community.

"I think it's important for us to love the city of Madison well and to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to go into the places that maybe some people wouldn't normally [go] and love them and share the gospel with them," said Lisa.

The story of Doxa Church is just one among dozens of collegiate church plants that are flourishing. Gifts to the AAEO help to make that movement possible. To learn more, visit anniearmstrong.com. **BR**



Missionary nurse leaves legacy of caring

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

While Ellen Tabor served faithfully in Korea for 20 years as a medical missionary beside her husband, some of her most recognizable impact came after the couple returned to North Carolina.

Myrtle Ellen Dennis Tabor, 90, died March 10 at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem after suffering a heart attack and stroke.

"I knew Charles and Ellen Tabor soon after their return from missionary service in South Korea," said Delores Thomas, former Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) president, on a tribute wall for Tabor. "They often joined our WMU-NC Executive Board for devotionals and updates. We were so thrilled when she began the Baptist Nursing Fellowship in N.C. and then saw its establishment nationally. Ellen was a humble servant, and much loved."

A native of Albemarle, N.C., Tabor received her first degree at Mars Hill College (now university) and started nursing at North Carolina Baptist Hospital (now Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center). After she married Dr. Charles Gordon Tabor, the couple served at Wallace Memorial Baptist Hospital in Pusan, South Korea, for 20 years through the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board). The couple also served Macau.

After returning to America, she pursued education and service as a nursing professional. She earned a doctorate in education.

She helped found Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF), an organization that started Feb. 12, 1983. She became BNF's first president at the national meeting in Oklahoma that year.

BNF provides continuing education, missions opportunities and fellowship for Baptist nurses serving in the U.S. and on mission fields around the world. Tabor served on the board of the WMU Foundation.

In 2012, Tabor was honored as WMU-NC's recipient of the N.C. Baptist Heritage Award at a ceremony in Greensboro.

"You are being recognized today because of things that you have done for the good of humanity, and because of your love for God and for the advancement of the work for his kingdom," said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive-treasurer director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), at the ceremony in Greensboro, sponsored by the BSC and the N.C. Baptist Foundation (NCBF).

Tabor attended the September 2018 meeting of BNF in Talladega, Ala. She was among 50 participants from 16 states celebrating BNF's 35 years of ministry.

In an interview with a WMU corre-

spondent, Tabor said her initial dream for BNF, "which we have kept the whole time, was that we would invite nurses who have a calling from God to use their nursing skills to advance His work whether in America or on the mission field. My approach is see wherever you're working with your health skills, see

where you can help that person's life be better in managing their health and being able to live healthy lives. Also, if they do not have the dimension of spiritual health, that they will want to be connected to the salvation experience of knowing Christ."

One of Tabor's bankers, Katrina Love, a vice president at SunTrust Bank, had this to say: "I had the honor of serving as one of her bankers since 2010, and I just spoke with her (March 7). She has always shown extreme kindness and concern for her family, and for others. She ensured that everything was in order, and that each person she met was well. She always asked about my family, and my mother, who is 93 years old. Though I have served many clients during my 31 years in banking, she is one that has felt like family to me. I miss her already!"



ELLEN TABOR

On his Facebook page, one of Tabor's grandchildren posted about his grandmother on March 11.

"My wonderful grandmother passed away yesterday," David Tabor wrote.

"She was an amazing woman, accomplished in so many aspects. Never shy of hard work and always kind. She helped raise a wonderful set of grandchildren, contributed so much to the world of nursing, her church, her community, local schools, too many charities to count, and so much more.

"She was a dedicated wife and gave so much to everyone in her life. Miss you and love you Meemaw."

Tabor was a member of First Baptist Church on Fifth in Winston-Salem.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 69 years, Charles Gordon Tabor, who died Feb. 21, 2017.

She is survived by her sons Charles David Tabor and Dennis Gordon Tabor; five grandchildren; and one great-grandson.

Memorials can be sent to the N.C. BNF Endowment Fund through NCBF at 201 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511-4257; put account number 089495 on memo line of your check; or the Ellen D. Tabor Endowment at BNF, c/o WMU, 100 Missionary Ridge, Birmingham, AL 35242. **BR**

Georgia pastor repents; church fires accused staff member

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

A Georgia pastor has confirmed the termination of a church staff member who allegedly "admitted to assaulting several young people years ago." The pastor also apologized to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and SBC President J.D. Greear for having "failed my duty as a pastor in not taking action sooner."

"My greatest failure during this time has been to the God I serve who gave His Son for me," Pastor Rodney Brown of Trinity Baptist Church in Ashburn, Ga., said March 7 in a statement to Georgia Baptists' *Christian Index* news journal. "This situation has greatly changed my thinking as pastor. I realize that friendship can never override the duties God has given me to protect those we serve in His name."

Trinity Baptist was among 10 churches named by Greear in a Feb. 18 report on sexual abuse to the SBC Executive Committee. Following Greear's report, Brown told Baptist Press (BP) he felt "shock" and "disappointment" because Greear

had not contacted the church before naming it publicly.

Brown also told BP following Greear's report the church's minister of music allegedly confessed in 2013 or 2014 he had molested a "young teen" decades earlier and had repented.

In response, Brown "fired him right there on the spot." The man continued to attend the church, Brown said, though he was never allowed to be alone with children.

At church leaders' request, the church reinstated the man as minister of music, Brown said, adding the church felt the man was gifted for ministry.

Brown also said following Greear's report that Trinity performed background checks on volunteers and staff and was "doing everything we can" to protect children. Brown confirmed the termination in his March 7 statement and said the former staff member "was also asked to immediately resign his church membership, which he did. He has been directed not to return to Trinity."

"I cannot apologize enough for my actions," Brown said. **BR**

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Vance Pitman: 4 ways to reach post-Christian America

By MAINA MWAURA | Special to the Recorder

On the surface, Hope Church looks like any other mega-church in America, with two campuses, a diverse lineup of talented staff, coveted creativity and a 2,000-plus membership led by a well-known senior pastor. Yet, Hope Church is different.

What makes the congregation distinctive is its location far outside the “Bible Belt” – Las Vegas, Nev. Ninety-two percent of Las Vegas residents are non-churchgoers, according to Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church.

Pitman started the church in 2001. When asked what led him to leave his home state of Alabama in 2001 to launch a new ministry in Las Vegas, he said it was clearly God’s calling. In an interview with the *Biblical Recorder*, Pitman said there are four strategies that Christians must explore when doing ministry in post-Christian cultures.

1) Intimacy with God

The primary motivation that drove Pitman to Las Vegas was intimacy with God, he said. “Where I’m from,” Pitman explained, “people don’t go to Las Vegas, and if they do, they don’t tell anybody.”

He vividly recalls spending time with God one morning, reading Luke

4. “I can remember telling God, I don’t know where you’re calling me to, but the answer is yes,” he said. Pitman believes everything Christians do should start with intimacy with God.

2) Vision

After two weeks of feeling convicted about reaching cities, Pitman received a phone call from Johnny Hunt, then-pastor of First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Ga. Hunt said the church wanted to launch a new church plant in Las Vegas.

At that time in Pitman’s life, he had never been west of the Mississippi River. In fact, he said it wasn’t until he and his family moved to Nevada – literally exiting the airplane – that he had ever stepped foot in Las Vegas.

Pitman recalls seeing slot machines in the airport, then going to a hotel and realizing that he and his wife were official residents of Las Vegas. He said in that moment they were overcome with emotion, crying out to God and questioning whether they made a mistake.



VANCE PITMAN

“I can still remember going to this pizza restaurant ... looking at the people come and go, when Las Vegas became to us a city that God had called us to reach,” Pitman said.

Life hasn’t been easy over the past 20 years, he added. But Pitman believes God gave him a vision to minister in Las Vegas and beyond. He wants to see 300 new churches across the nation that each multiply 10 times, to reach 1 percent of the American population.

3) Service

Pitman said he believes God calls Christians to reach cities, not just develop church programs. “Too many church planters are starting worship services,” he said, “which is not church planting.”

Church planting begins with the question, “How are we going to serve the city?” he said. “Jesus never said anything in the Bible about planting a church. He said, ‘Go and make disciples.’”

Pitman said focusing on the city, beyond mere church development, helps a church planter focus on how to reach that city.

4) Diversity

Pitman is passionate about ethnic diversity. He believes that reaching post-Christian cities with the gospel requires loving all people.

“A multi-ethnic church is not a new way of doing church,” he said. “A multi-ethnic church is a New Testament church.”

On a typical Sunday, 55 different languages are spoken at Hope Church.

“Every church planter needs to know that its mission is global, not just local,” Pitman said. “The mission is the Kingdom expanded to the nations.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Maina Mwaura is a freelance journalist who lives in Atlanta, Ga., with his wife and daughter. They attend Johnson Ferry Baptist Church.) **BR**

Greensboro LifeWay store to close

BR staff

LifeWay’s Greensboro retail location will be among the stores closed in the organization’s effort toward “a smaller footprint in brick-and-mortar stores,” a spokeswoman said via email to the *Greensboro News & Record*.

The story first appeared in the *News & Record* March 7. LifeWay president Thom Rainer announced in January during a board meeting that LifeWay would be closing some stores due to a revenue loss.

LifeWay is the publishing agency of the Southern Baptist Convention and is based in Nashville, Tenn.

“As LifeWay expands its digital channels, the organization anticipates a smaller footprint in brick-and-mortar stores,” a LifeWay spokesperson said by email.

The Greensboro store is expected to close by early summer. More than 170 LifeWay stores are located across the country.

LifeWay has not yet released information about other potential closures. **BR**



May 6-7

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Tornado

Continued from page 1

up to 115 mph; two EF-2 tornado touch-downs in Barbour County; and EF-0 tornadoes that touched down briefly in Autauga and Bullock counties.

Twenty-three people were killed in Beauregard, and 91 were injured, according to the NWS report. Alabama Power reported on March 6 that crews had restored power to all homes that could receive it, but an official estimated that at least 116 homes were destroyed or so severely damaged that crews cannot restore power until they are repaired or replaced.

Disaster relief teams from the local area worked throughout the week, Wakefield said. Chainsaw units cleared trees and covered roofs with tarps in Lee and Barbour counties, and volunteers assisted March 4-5 with feeding units set up by the Salvation Army.

Chaplains were embedded with various teams and at the family reunification center and temporary morgue. And when local emergency management officials realized the great need for laundry services, ABDR set up laundry units and got to work washing clothes.

“This community is like most in Alabama,” Wakefield said. “Everyone has rallied to help each other.”

Wakefield praised the efforts of Providence Baptist Church, where ABDR set up headquarters for the week.

‘Phenomenal job’

“[Pastor] Rusty Sowell and that church have done a phenomenal job of supporting the community through the receiving and giving of donations, providing meals and getting other recovery agents in,” Wakefield said.

Sowell noted the professional expertise of many in his congregation and how they were already equipped to help in a crisis.

“We moved quickly to get organized and then I got out of the way to let everyone take care of their assignments,” he said. “We have a committed group of people here at Providence. I’m very proud of all their hard work.”

President Donald Trump visited Providence Baptist on March 8 to pay his respects to the victims and their fami-

lies and thank those involved in disaster relief work.

Because of the multiple-agency disaster response in the area, a statewide callout of disaster relief teams was not necessary, but Wakefield said he was grateful for the willingness of volunteers throughout the state to come to the area.

He also noted that some associational teams were being asked to aid Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association in mud-out and flood recovery work following heavy rains throughout North Alabama that led to flooding in neighborhoods in Tuscumbia and Muscle Shoals.

As the immediate disaster relief response in Lee County winds down, Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association director of missions Bill King said the next phase is uncertain. “Honestly, we’ve not been able to think that far down the road,” he said at press time.

King said donations to the associa-

tion have allowed them to help displaced families, including the family of A.J. Hernandez, the youngest victim of the tornado.

How to help

Gift cards are especially helpful in disaster relief situations because they allow families to buy for their specific needs. Gift cards for Lee County disaster relief may be sent to Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association, 2110 Gateway Drive, Opelika, Alabama 36801.

Other donations for disaster relief efforts in Alabama may be given online at baptistsonmission.org or sent to NCBM, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512.

Visit baptistsonmission.org/training to learn more about disaster relief training through NCBM.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – This article was originally published by The Alabama Baptist. Used by permission.) **BR**

Review

Continued from page 1

organizations serving more than seven million children, individuals and families in the USA and Canada.

COA representatives visited BCH’s statewide locations Feb. 18-20, including Mills Home in Thomasville, conducting detailed examinations of the nonprofit’s services to children and families throughout North Carolina.

The three members of the COA peer review team scored BCH on 1,084 different standards.

“This is the highest form of affirmation BCH can receive,” Blackwell said. “To meet the requirements for nearly 1,100 separate standards is validation that we are offering the highest quality of services in a culture that is defined by excellence.”

It traditionally takes more time for an organization to receive its results from COA. Representatives must evaluate their findings and prepare a written review citing any issues discovered during the process. In BCH’s case, as explained in Klarberg’s email, there were no faults to cite.

“(Reaccreditation) was expedited through the Pre-Commission Review Report process as a result of not receiving any out of compliance ratings in any of the fundamental practice standards,” Klarberg stated. “Congratulations on this amazing achievement.”

At the closing meeting on Feb. 20, COA lead reviewer Frank McFadden shared a number of positive insights and observations from the three-day review.

“I saw communities and families. I saw two cottage parents with two girls in care – talking and joking around the table. I saw a teacher sitting with a crying child,” McFadden recalled.

“There are a lot of services where you don’t feel that sense of community or caring.”

The accreditation process occurs every four years.

BCH received its first accreditation in 1987. The organization has been accredited ever since.

“I am both humbled by this incredible outcome and thankful to our dedicated staff members across the state,” Blackwell said.

“We undertake our daily mission of ‘sharing hope...changing lives’ with passion and pride and are grateful that children and families can trust BCH to provide them the compassionate care they need.”

Since 1885, Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina has helped children and families. BCH began with one campus, Mills Home in Thomasville, but now provides services in 21 communities across the state plus its affiliate orphanage in Guatemala. **BR**

7 REASONS WHY CHURCHES NEED A TRAINED INTERIM PASTOR

A church without a pastor finds itself in a crucial, uncomfortable time. The church can either come together or fall apart. That is where a good, trained interim pastor can make all the difference. Here are a few reasons why I believe you need a trained interim pastor.

1. He is a consistent presence in the pulpit.

People want to know what to expect when they come to worship on Sunday. If the pulpit is filled by a variety of speakers, the church may find the quality of the preaching to be unsteady and messages inconsistent.

2. He can help the church deal with inevitable changes that come with a new pastor.

Change is often the biggest issue when a church is without a pastor. A trained interim pastor can help.

3. He can help members deal with the loss of the last pastor.

The presence of an interim pastor helps people know someone is at the helm. He can help people work through their personal issues or grief as they miss the former pastor.

4. He can be a great resource for the search committee and other church leaders.

Many times pastor search committees need help getting started and are unsure about the process. A trained interim can help the church work through five focus points: heritage, mission, leadership, connections and the future.

5. He can lead staff and help them in a time of uncertainty.

Having an interim pastor enables the other staff to continue working in their assigned area and not have to fill in the gaps.

6. He can analyze church structure and help develop a new structure if needed. Sometimes a church’s structure has become a problem. Bylaws need to be updated or rewritten so new leaders can make sense of them.

7. He can prepare the church for a new pastor.

If a church has had the same pastor for many years, some members will have a hard time imagining another pastor in the pulpit. The presence of an interim pastor helps the church get used to a different style or leadership approach.



EDDIE THOMPSON

EDITOR’S NOTE – Eddie Thompson is senior consultant for pastoral ministries for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact (800) 395-5102, ext. 5644, or ethompson@ncbaptist.org.

AROUND THE STATE

Obituary

STEPHANIE MICHELLE MASH-BURN SANTOS, 50, died March 6.

A Kentucky native, Santos had a bachelor's degree in Spanish and speech communications from Western Kentucky University and a master's degree in international relations from the University of Kentucky.

It was while on a mission trip assisting church leaders in the Dominican Republic that she met her husband, Amaury Santos, Hispanic strategy coordinator for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. After they were married, the couple served Hispanic congregations in South and Central Florida. She taught at Palm Beach State College and worked in campus ministries at Palm Beach Atlantic University. She also directed children's ministries while serving local churches.

After moving to N.C., she became actively involved in homeschooling and was a director of the Classical Conversation homeschool network in Wake County.

She is survived by her husband, Amaury A. Santos, sons: Nathan, Anthony and Noah; mother, Flo Mashburn of Litchfield, Ky.; sisters, Debbie Higdon of Litchfield, Ky., and Pam Lippe of Elizabethtown, Ky.; and brother, Gary Mashburn of Litchfield, Ky.

A GoFundMe page has been established to help with the boys' educational and extracurricular activities: [gofundme.com/the-santos-family-in-memory-of-stephanie](https://www.gofundme.com/the-santos-family-in-memory-of-stephanie).

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

The annual N.C. Campers On Mission Spring Rally will be held April 11-14 at Denton Farm Park, 1072 Cranford Road, Denton, NC 27239.

Campers On Mission (COM) is sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and is a part of a national fellowship of Christian campers of all

The North Carolina Baptist Secretaries Association (NCBSA) is planning its 2019 Conference – An Anchor For the Soul – Nov. 4-6 at Fort Caswell. A \$50 deposit, along with the completed registration form, reserves your spot. Total cost will be \$225 per person and includes membership and conference fee, double occupancy room, and all meals.

Private rooms will be an additional \$85. Commuters will pay \$160 (includes membership, conference fee and six meals (Monday dinner; Tuesday break-

Texas bill would shield churches that report sex abuse

By **DIANA CHANDLER** | Baptist Press

Southern Baptist pastors and leaders have initiated a Texas bill to allow nonprofits including churches to disclose credible but unproven sexual abuse allegations with no fear of civil liability.

Texas House Bill 4345, introduced in the legislature March 8, would protect charitable organizations and their volunteers when disclosing such information to prospective employers, even when no criminal charges have been filed against the accused.

Those who spread allegations with “malicious purpose” or “in bad faith” would remain open to civil liability, according to the bill.

The bill can strengthen churches and other charitable organizations in hindering repeat offenders, said pastor Ben Wright who helped initiate the bill.

“I don’t think that it solves all of the problems related to abuse and sexual misconduct,” Wright, pastor of Cedar Pointe Baptist Church in Cedar Park, Texas, told Baptist Press (BP) March 15. “But it does help churches and organizations know that if they pass on information that they believe to be true, that they have good reason to believe is true, it helps them know that they will be shielded from potential lawsuits.”

Admissions bribery scam ‘missed the point of college’

By **DAVID ROACH** | Baptist Press

A high-profile college admissions cheating scam, evangelical pastors and educators say, should remind students and parents to trust God for their future rather than attempting to manipulate circumstances.

“It’s really an idol” to equate success in life with admission to an elite college, said Mark Coppenger, a professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who has done campus ministry at Northwestern University and earned a doctor of philosophy from Vanderbilt University.

“It’s nice when you can carry a certain prestigious [label] around,” Coppenger told Baptist Press. “But if you think it’s a go/no-go in life, then you’re sadly mistaken. In fact, I think it’s becoming increasingly clear that with the cost and the ideology of a lot of these prestigious schools, you may come out more damaged and frustrated than if you had gone to a smaller, less prestigious school and had great people to invest in your life.”

Fifty people were charged with federal crimes March 12 for allegedly paying

some \$25 million in bribes to get their children into colleges like Stanford, Yale, Georgetown, Wake Forest and the University of Southern California, according to media reports. The scheme allegedly involved cheating on standardized tests and paying coaches of low-profile sports like crew and water polo to falsely identify high school students as recruits.

At least nine athletic coaches and 33 parents have been charged, according to The Associated Press, including attorneys and Hollywood actresses. **BR**

Committee extends deadline to make nominations

By **CHAD AUSTIN** | BSC Communications

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) Committee on Nominations voted to extend the deadline to submit recommendations for individuals to serve in various leadership roles with the state convention.

Recommendations will now be accepted until March 25 for terms of service that will begin in 2020. Recommendations may be made for individuals to serve on the BSC Board of Directors, other convention committees and boards of the convention’s institutions and agencies, which include the Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina, the *Biblical Recorder*, N.C. Baptist Hospital and the N.C. Baptist Foundation.

To learn more or make a nomination, visit ncbaptist.org/recommend.

“Recommendations of North Carolina Baptists for places of service and leadership in denominational work are

essential for ongoing missions, ministries and evangelistic endeavors,” said Brian Davis, BSC associate executive director-treasurer.

Convention officials desire to see a broad representation of N.C. Baptists nominated to serve in various capacities. Recommendations are sought from churches of all sizes and geographic locations.

Convention officials also desire a diverse pool of nominees, which includes pastors, laity, men, women and individuals from different ethnicities.

Individuals may only occupy one place of service per term, and no more than six members of any one church may collectively serve at any one time on all boards and committees.

Only one individual from an N.C. Baptist church may serve on the BSC Board of Directors. Questions may be directed to Cynthia King at (800) 395-5102 or cking@ncbaptist.org. **BR**

March 31

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

April 7

The Problem with Wealth

Focal passages: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

At 8 years old I received my first \$20 bill. Most candy at the neighborhood store cost a quarter or less, making me feel like the richest kid alive.

I bought a Double Bubble bubblegum for a nickel and decided I would use the rest of my money sparingly, so it would last. When the lady behind the counter handed me my change, I thought she'd made a mistake. I gave her one piece of paper and she gave me back 19 pieces of paper and a bunch of coins.

My 8-year-old mind wondered if I'd actually gotten richer by purchasing something, which seemed like the greatest deal of all time.

These days I get excited if I can fill my car up with fuel for \$20.

In Ecclesiastes 5:10-20, Solomon reveals wealth's inability to satisfy humankind. "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

The New Testament puts it this way,

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (Timothy 6:10).

Often, the appeal of wealth is its perception of security, but King Solomon also compares wealth to the wind.

From where we came, we will return, and there is no wealth from this life that we can take into eternity (Ecclesiastes 13-16).

This chapter of Ecclesiastes closes by reminding us that God provides all we need, and we can find contentment in Him. Paul also puts it this way in Philippians 4:12-13, "I know both how to make do with little, and... with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content – whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me."

In what ways can we put Christ before money?



DANIELA SANCHEZ
Member, The Summit Church, Durham

Focal passages: Ecclesiastes 11:7-10; 12:12-14

I remember the day I surrendered my life to Christ as clearly as if it had happened today. When everything of this world failed me, I was desperate to find purpose and joy.

I didn't know where else to turn except to a church at the top of the hill, near my college campus.

I wandered inside its doors, fearful that those within would see me as a phony, or worse, as someone who didn't belong there.

The first time I heard the gospel, it pierced my heart and soul.

God's love, grace and mercy over me were beyond anything I'd ever heard of or experienced. I knew I was a sinner, but I didn't know that I had hope despite it.

There was no way I could walk away from something so wonderful, my debt

paid in full by Jesus. The contentment and joy that filled me that day could not have been replaced by all the world had to offer.

Nothing else mattered, but Jesus.

As our good Father, God gives good gifts, but His desire is that we enjoy them in the right ways and for the right reasons.

"For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 11:8).

We can enjoy God's gifts by submitting to Him in obedience.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."

This truth is also expressed in John 14:21, 23, "The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:21,23).

March 31

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

April 7

Sends

Focal passage: Mark 6:7-13, 30-32

George Liele, an African-American missionary, is known for sending and being sent to share the gospel with those who had never heard the Good News.

Originally from Virginia, the freed slave and his family made their way to Georgia, where he started two churches in Yamacraw and Savannah.

Eventually, he was forced to leave for Jamaica, but he turned the unfortunate scenario into a missions opportunity.

The *Baptist Quarterly* noted in 1964 that due to Liele's efforts, his converts were sent to Sierra Leone, other parts of Jamaica, Nova Scotia and even back to Georgia.

In Mark 6:7, Jesus sent out 12 disciples. The following verses reveal they were to have both a sense of readiness and faith in God's providence, not unlike what the Israelites experienced on their journey to the promised land.

The missionary task is strenuous and difficult, but it can be described as a new exodus, one whose purpose is to carry the gospel into uncharted territory.

Danny Akin, president of Southeastern

Baptist Theological Seminary, said in his book *10 Who Changed the World*, that Liele "raised up courageous servants of the Lord to lead His people into their Promised Land of freedom."

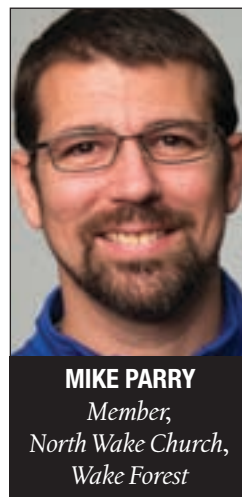
The description of John the Baptist's fate indicates what may lie ahead for faithful Christians bearing witness in the public sphere.

Likewise, Liele was wrongfully imprisoned on multiple occasions.

He experienced several instances of persecution both within the American colonies and the British colony of Jamaica.

The act of shaking off the dust in verse 11 brought a sense of judgment upon the towns that would not hear the gospel. The return of Christ is paired with the idea of rest in Mark 6:31, calling believers to be diligent but spiritually focused as they await His return.

Are you ready for Christ's return? Will you commit to making disciples among all the nations, despite whatever hardships and trials may come?



MIKE PARRY
Member, North Wake Church, Wake Forest

Focal passage: Mark 7:25-37

Adoption is a wonderful picture of the gospel. An outsider is welcomed into a family without partiality. The message of the narratives found in Mark 7:25-37 is the inclusion of Gentiles into God's salvation plan.

There is a Greek woman born in Syrian Phoenicia (v. 26) and a crowd with the deaf/mute man from the region of the Decapolis (v. 31). Mark shows his readers that Jesus' love has no bias or prejudices.

At the beginning of the book of Mark, Jesus brings salvation to the Jews. Now, we see the same is happening for the Gentiles. Thoughts of "... to the Jew first, then the Gentile" come to mind (Romans 1:16; 2:10; Acts 1:8).

The narratives about the Syrophenician woman and the man without hearing or speech have similarities. Both demonstrate healing.

Both have individuals advocating on behalf of someone else being healed. Both stories, in connection to verse 15, illus-

Includes

trate the condition of sin within every person (Romans 3:23) and the person of Jesus Christ who makes us clean (Hebrews 10:22).

By comparing the Gentiles (vv. 25-37) to the Pharisees and the scribes (vv. 1-13), we can see a stark difference in their beliefs. With a subtle connection to the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14), we see those who are either included or excluded is determined by the hearer's response. On the other hand, the Pharisees nullify their faith (v. 13), while the woman (v. 26) and crowd (v. 28, 32) show their faith.

Verses 14-23 find a parallel in Acts 10, where the Apostle Peter received instructions in a vision from above about how God made clean what was unclean. Following Peter's dream, Cornelius and his household (all Gentiles) heard the gospel and were welcomed into the family of faith (Acts 10:34-36).

The message of scripture is clear and demonstrated in these passages: the Good News of salvation is for people of every tongue, tribe and nation.

Who can you invite to repent and believe in Him to be included in this loving family?

ADVERTISE in the Biblical Recorder – (919) 459-5691

LifeWay's Brad Waggoner named acting president, CEO

By CAROL PIPES | LifeWay Christian Resources

LifeWay Christian Resources Executive Vice President Brad Waggoner has been named acting president and CEO of the Southern Baptist entity until a new president is named.

Waggoner will serve in the role previously held by Thom S. Rainer, who announced his retirement in August 2018, a LifeWay news release announced March 4.

LifeWay trustee board chairman Jimmy Scroggins shared his appreciation for Rainer and his faithfulness to serve the Lord. "In recent weeks, Dr. Rainer expressed a desire to move forward with his retirement effective February 28, 2019," Scroggins said.

Since 2010 Waggoner has served as LifeWay's executive vice president and COO, overseeing daily operations and helping provide strategic leadership of the organization.

"It is an honor and privilege to take this role, even for a short season," Waggoner said. "I'm thankful for the opportunity to have served alongside Dr. Rainer these past several years. The courage he has displayed to make difficult decisions during his tenure and do the right thing for this organization has been a source of encouragement to me. LifeWay is in an incredible time of transition but also a time of great opportunity." **BR**



BRAD WAGGONER

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denominational

Seeking **part-time Director of Missions** for the Tennessee River Baptist Association, Bryson City, NC. Please send résumé to PO Box 1503, Bryson City, NC 28713, or call (828) 269-2847.

Pastor

Antioch Baptist Church, Morganton, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative, mission-minded Southern Baptist church searching for the man God has chosen to shepherd our church. Applicants should be SBC ordained with a seminary education and affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. Applicants should have four years' ministry experience. Please submit résumés to 2441 Antioch Road, Morganton, NC 28655; Attn: PSC. DVD or sermon links can be forwarded to levifirstborn@yahoo.com.

Stallings Memorial Baptist Church, Salisbury, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Being a mission-minded Southern Baptist church, we are searching for the man God desires to lead His church into the future with an emphasis on evangelism and missions. Applicants should be SBC ordained with a seminary education from one of the SBC seminaries and affirms the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. Send résumés to: smbcpastorsearchcommittee@gmail.com, or PO Box 438, Rockwell, NC 28138.

Providence Baptist Church in Shawboro, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. Due to the retirement of our pastor after 16 years, we are searching for a man of God to lead our congregation of believers into the future. Providence Baptist Church has an average attendance of 130 and is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Please send résumés to providencebaptist@centurylink.net or P.O. Box 140 Shawboro, NC 27973, c/o Pastor Search Committee.

First Baptist Church, Maxton, NC, is seeking a **pastor** to lead in proclaiming the true gospel written in God's Word; reaching individuals for Christ and fostering spiritual growth; driven to be engaged with surrounding community; adding unto the membership is paramount; bi-vocational preferable. Send résumés to firstbaptist@ncrrbiz.com. Deadline March 31, 2019.

Beverly Hills Baptist Church, 110 Kemberly St., Rockingham, NC 28379, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send résumé to the above address or to secretarybhbc@carolina.rr.com. Résumé deadline: March 31, 2019.

Church Staff

Crossroads Baptist Church of Hickory, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor of youth and children**. Responsibilities include discipleship, evangelism and administration. Interested candidates may send résumés to chrishuffman7@gmail.com.

Enterprise Baptist Church is currently receiving résumés for the position of **Associate Pastor of Children and Youth**. We are a conservative, mission-minded congregation filled with people from all walks of life. We are situated near beautiful Lake Gaston, which is conveniently located an hour and a half above Raleigh and a little over an hour above Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The associate pastor of children and youth's primary responsibilities will be to work directly with our youth weekly as well as participate and provide leadership in our ministry to children. Compensation will be commensurate with education and experience. Any interested candidate should submit his résumé by email to pastordarren1@gmail.com or by regular mail to Enterprise Baptist Church, 404 Enterprise Rd., Littleton, NC 27850, (attn: Pastor). Please include references and links to any preaching/teaching resources you have available.

Eastside Baptist Church of Shelby, NC, is seeking a **Music Minister**. We are seeking the candidate that God calls to our church either full or part-time. Full-time position would include associate pastor duties. College degree in music and/or discipleship is required. Send résumés to officeebc@carolina.rr.com.

White Level Baptist Church, Louisburg, NC, is prayerfully seeking an **Associate/Youth Pastor** to minister and develop a close relationship with the youth of White Level. Duties include, but are not limited to plan, coordinate, supervise a comprehensive and active youth ministry. Please contact 919-495-3391 or ricky.r.batton@centurylink.com for more info.

Millers Creek Baptist Church, a conservative SBC church near Wilkesboro, NC, is prayerfully seeking God's man for **Children's/Discipleship Pastor** (Preschool-Grade 6 and adult discipleship). It is a full-time position focused on leading kids and their families in evangelism, discipleship and missions. Various pastoral roles of visitation and outreach are also included in the job description. Experience and a college/seminary degree is preferred, but not required. Send cover letter and résumé to Millers Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 559, Millers Creek, NC 28651, or by email to shannon.critcher@millerscreekbaptist.org. Résumés will be received through March 30.

Associate Pastor. Gate City Baptist Church in Jamestown, NC, is seeking to fill the position of associate pastor of students, discipleship and reaching. A bachelor's degree is required and seminary/divinity school training is preferred. Applicants should send résumés to info@gatecitybaptist.org no later than March 31. A job description is available on our website under the "About Us" page, www.gatecitybaptist.org.

First Baptist Church of Mauldin, SC, is seeking to hire a **full-time Student Pastor**. Primary duties include overseeing the ministries of our students and their families from 6th grade through college. Applicants must possess a bachelor's degree and 3 years of experience is preferred. Please submit résumés and/or questions to wleonard@fbcmauldin.org.

Position Needed: Children & Youth Director. Seeking a part-time director with a vision for spiritual growth and development for children and youth. New Hope Baptist Church Inc., 532 North Little Egypt Road, Denver, NC 28037.

Rocky Hock Baptist Church, Edenton, NC, is seeking a **Minister of Music & Education**. We are a conservative, mission-minded Southern Baptist church searching for the man God has chosen to lead our music and education programs. A seminary, divinity school or Bible college degree with formal music training preferred, but not required. Send cover letter and résumé to rockyhock.smith65@yahoo.com.

Concord Baptist Church (Granite Falls, NC) is seeking a **full-time Children's and Family minister**. Growing church with approx. 750 members. Three other full-time staff. Experience is required and affirm the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. Please send cover letter and résumé to: tomcdonald@charter.net or mail to church at: Concord Baptist Church, Attn Pastor, PO Box 127, Granite Falls NC 28630.

First Baptist Church, Galax, VA, a 350-member congregation in the Virginia Baptist General Association, is seeking a **full-time Youth/Family Life Minister** to oversee the life cycle of youth education from pre-K through high school. The goal is to foster Christian community through building relationships with families and young people that strengthen their commitment to the church and growth in faith in Jesus Christ. The prospective minister needs outstanding social skills, evangelistic ideas, coaching/mentoring skills, and knowledge for biblical based teaching to young people and their families. Minimally, applicants should have an associate degree from an accredited institution with relevant coursework. If you feel God leading you to this calling, send résumé to: Minister Search Team FBC Galax, 1024 E. Stuart Drive, Galax, VA 24333, or email FBCsearch19@gmail.com. Visit our website: www.fbcgalax.org.

Miscellaneous

Advertise your ministry or business? The **Biblical Recorder** offers competitive denominational and nondenominational rates for media outlets our size. Contact alison@BRnow.org for information or visit BRnow.org/Advertise.

Placing a classified ad in the *Biblical Recorder*

Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: alison@BRnow.org.
- Purchase ads at BRnow.org/Advertise.
- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

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

Cost for Baptist churches/organizations is \$1.25 per word, number and stand-alone initial (\$1.45 for commercial and non-Baptist entities) with a minimum charge of \$35. Classifieds also are carried online.

IMB website to better serve Southern Baptists

By JULIE MCGOWAN | IMB

The International Mission Board's (IMB) website – *IMB.org* – has launched a new home page and renovation of other online pages to make it easier for Southern Baptists to partner with the IMB in global mission praying, giving, going and sending.

“Our very task as Southern Baptists’ International Mission Board depends on a cooperative effort to strategically pray, give, go and send on mission,” IMB President Paul Chitwood said of the mission board’s improved online presence.

“Successful cooperation,” he noted, “is dependent on successful communication, and improving our communication with you – Southern Baptist churches and individuals – is a primary, immediate goal at the IMB. We’ve redesigned *IMB.org* to better connect churches with the IMB, and with global missions as a whole.

“Pastors and other leaders will find ways to support Southern Baptist missionaries through praying and giving, as well as easy access to hundreds of opportunities to serve on the field, from student endeavors to other short-term trips to full-time missionary roles,” Chitwood said.

Visitors to the site are met with aesthetic changes – streamlined design, simplified navigation and stunning images. Top navigation to the home page quickly leads users to ways they can:

● Pray

Each day, prayer requests representing the peoples of the world, sent from Southern Baptist workers on the mission field, appear on the site. A print option for the

requests makes it easy to share the full day’s requests with your church members or others. You’ll also find a link to the IMB Pray app, available for both iOS and Android.

● Give

For more than a century, gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering have empowered IMB missionaries to evangelize, make disciples and multiply churches among unreached peoples and places.

By giving, you join this legacy of critical support. You’ll also find a link to multiple specific giving opportunities.

● Go

At this link, users can learn more about the options, as well as the process and timelines, for becoming a missionary. Scrolling down, you’ll find more details about short-term missions (one to eight weeks); mid-term missions (two months to three years); or long-term missions (three-plus years).

Students and student leaders interested in missions can take a short-cut to *IMB.org/students* to find opportunities especially for them.

Scrolling down the new home page, users also will find:

- Featured projects for engaging in missions through your prayers and gifts.
- Latest articles by the IMB content team and guest writers about missions.
- Missionary profiles that introduce you to fellow Southern Baptists living and working around the globe.
- Featured trips for going to the mission field for a few weeks, a semester or more.



The International Mission Board recently redesigned its main site, *IMB.org*, with streamlined design, simplified navigation and stunning images.

- An opportunity to subscribe to an IMB e-newsletter to receive mission updates directly to your inbox.

The changes are the result of work between a team of designers, contractors and other creative professionals involving multiple IMB teams over several months. *IMB.org* launched a new web presence in late 2016 with a new editorial strategy in place, providing a place for Southern Baptists to engage in conversation around missions. The site served as version 1.0, the first of versions to come as IMB communicators continue to evaluate and respond to Southern Baptists’ many and varied needs. The IMB web team said the current design update is the first step of a process to redesign the entire site and develop efficient and effective tools for deepening relationships and partnerships with Southern Baptist churches and church members. **BR**

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