

New IMB leader makes bold challenge

By Dianna L. Cagle

BR Assistant Managing Editor

The new president of the International Mission Board (IMB) says it's time to "cowboy up" to the task of reaching the nations.

Tom Elliff, unanimously (76-0) approved March 16, plans to challenge Southern Baptists at its annual convention in Phoenix in June to prayerfully and boldly reach the unreached and unengaged people groups of the world.

"I think it is a noble challenge," said Milton Hollifield, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC). "It will only be through the power of God that we will be able to accomplish this."

Hollifield said Elliff's experience as a former missionary and IMB vice president as well as his years pastoring churches will be a great help to those he will be serving. "He is a person who has a great heart for getting the gospel to the nations, and he is also a person who has great love and appreciation for the missionaries who serve as the South-



IMB photo

NEW ADVENTURE — IMB president Tom Elliff, center, celebrates with IMB trustee chairman Jimmy Pritchard, right, and Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee president Frank Page following the appointment of 67 new missionaries March 16 at First Baptist Church in Dallas. See story, page 6.

ern Baptist force," Hollifield said. "I believe he will do all he can to provide the missionaries with the resources they need to get the gospel to the nations."

Elliff was initially not a candidate for IMB's top spot. He actually had made

recommendations but the search committee "did not have peace as a committee," on any of the prospects, said Robert Jackson, pastor of Peninsula Baptist Church in Mooresville.

"Throughout our search process we talked to some mighty fine people," Jackson said, but none seemed to unify the group.

One of the committee members suggested Elliff's name later in the process.

Jackson, who is on his second term as an IMB board member, said his confirmation came when the committee wanted to pray for the Elliffs.

"They both knelt down," Jackson said.

"It was very clear that they were not strangers to that form of prayer."

Jackson was one of three North Car-

olina Baptists to serve on the 15-person search committee.

Jimmy Prichard, chairman of the board and search committee as well as pastor of First Baptist Church in Forney, Texas, said the search committee received about 80 names of candidates from about 300 individuals. Four men were interviewed more than once.

But on a Dec. 13 conference call one member mentioned Elliff's name and within the next five minutes, Prichard said there was a sense that God spoke.

"At that moment there was a peace that came over every one of us," Prichard said.

Elliff claims the board ruined his Christmas with their call asking him to consider, but he and his wife, Jean, approached the matter prayerfully.

"We prayed about whether to pray about it," Elliff said.

Elliff met with the search committee Jan. 14 but even with a unanimous secret ballot vote, he and Jean had questions about whether God was calling them to serve.

(See New Page 11)

Disaster pushes Japanese beyond secular thinking

By Susie Rain

Baptist Press

Thousands of the little wooden prayer tablets rattle softly in the cold, spring breeze, a symphony of soft clattering that drifts out from the Shinto shrine.

Images and characters burned on one side of the tablet symbolize hope. On the other side, carefully handwritten prayers and wishes are written to the deities of the Meiji Jingu Shrine.

Not surprisingly, the "prayer wall" focuses on Japan's triple disaster — a 9.0-magnitude earthquake, a tsunami and nuclear crisis.

"My sister is missing. Please bring her back."

"Prayers for the victims."

"These disasters will not destroy us. Be strong."

One young Japanese woman spends 15 minutes writing her request in perfect characters. She stuffs her prayer, "... protect my family from nuclear radiation ...," in a waist-high box. Don't try to estimate the number of these requests — people just keep stuffing whether there is room or not.

"I do not normally come here to pray," the young woman explains, "but given the disasters, I am not sure what else to do."

Proud of their secular society, most Japanese are not religious.

But in a time of crisis, International Mission Board (IMB) missionary Gary Fujino says they tend to fall back on an old Japanese expression, "The god that you depend on in times of crisis."

"What that means is when things are bad, you will go to the temple and shrine because nothing you've



BP photo by Susie Rain

SEEKING ANSWERS — A young Japanese woman prays at Meiji Jingu, a Shinto shrine in Tokyo, a few days after the March 11 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis that has greatly stymied relief efforts. North Carolina Baptist Men and Baptist Global Response were among first responders from the United States.

tried thus far worked," Fujino explains. He notes that, once the crisis is over, no one goes back to the temple or shrine.

Thousands of prayer tablets hung in one day testify that the crisis in Japan continues to grow and people are trying to find ways to cope.

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear site has been rated a 5 on a 7-point international scale for atomic incidents, just two levels lower than the Ukraine's 1986 Chernobyl disaster. The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog warns that stabilizing the plant is a race against time.

While most Westerners often are preoccupied with causes of disaster — for example, the questions of why God would allow an earthquake — Eastern traditions like Buddhism and Shinto focus on behavior in reaction to tragedy.

It is very important in Japanese life to react in a positive way, to be persistent and to clean up in the face of adversity.

Fujino says it's always been like this. His elderly Japanese neighbor assures him this is just like World

(See Disaster Page 11)

Themes begin to emerge in Vision Fulfillment Forums

By Traci DeVette Griggs
BSC Communications

North Carolina Baptists need to work to reclaim the younger generation; churches need encouragement and training to reach out to internationals; and while church planting is arguably a priority for North Carolina Baptists, there is concern that not enough emphasis is being placed on shoring up existing churches. So far, in the first five of 14 Vision Fulfillment forums, these are the main themes emerging. However as expected, a different set of priorities surface each week as the committee moves from region to region.

The Vision Fulfillment (VF) forums are designed to allow the VF Committee and Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) staff to hear the heart and desires of North Carolina Baptists. During the meetings, the committee makes a brief introduction and asks a few questions to get the conversation going, but the goal is to hear from pastors and church leaders about how the Convention is doing in its job of serving churches.

Younger generations

The forums have been a good source of education for people who might not know what the BSC can offer churches. Tadd Grandstaff, pastor of Pine Ridge Church in Haw River and member of the VF Committee, is a younger generation pastor who has seen value in these sessions. "I think it's important to be part of these forums because I have been someone that has felt disengaged from the (Convention) in the past."

Grandstaff said he's learned more in the last few weeks than he has in the last few years about how things operate in the Convention.

"I really believe in the changes that the (Convention) is willing to make for the future," Grandstaff said. "They realize that there has been a disconnect for a lot of people and they're proactively trying to bridge that gap."

Speaking at the Forum in Elizabeth City, Mark Purdy with Fellowship Baptist Church said reaching younger Baptists may require that both sides work to find common ground. "It's a change in mindset in a younger generation and how we get them to come back to where we're at, or us change to go with them. They don't want to sit in meetings and listen to committee reports. They want to go out and put their hands on something and see results."

Reaching internationals

The importance of reaching out to internationals is a topic that often emerges in the forums. Corinth Baptist Church in Elizabeth City received assistance from the Convention to launch an outreach to an Asian population in their community. Lee Johnson with Corinth said the outreach is yielding fruit.

"Six or seven months ago, we started an Asian outreach and we contacted the State Convention. Ralph Garay has been a big help. He hooked us up with some folks that helped us get it started. And we've had one person actually surrender his life to Jesus Christ, and they found three believers, and we look at a baptism in May here of these Chinese believers."

Greg Barefoot, pastor of Oakdale Baptist Church in Statesville, shared his congregation's efforts to establish ministry to Hispanics, not as a separate



BSC photo by Traci DeVette Griggs

SEEKING VISION — Rick Speas, left, pastor of Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, Phil Ortego, pastor of Scotts Hill Baptist Church in Wilmington, and Bobby Blanton, pastor of Lake Norman Baptist Church, Huntersville, and president of the Board of Directors for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, chat at the first Vision Fulfillment Forum Feb. 10.

ministry but as part of the congregation's existing ministries. He would like to see the Convention assisting other churches in these kinds of efforts. "We spend a lot of time and effort planting churches to reach other people groups, and I'm not against that, but we need to invest more in incorporating other people groups into existing churches."

Phil Addison, pastor of Stony Point Baptist Church, spoke at the forum in Winston-Salem and suggested that some current Convention ministries seem to compete with one another.

"When I was a church planter it was 'target group, target group, target group' but then I go to multicultural evangelism conferences and hear, 'everybody, everybody, everybody.' How does the Convention really want to do it?" Addison also shared concerns about church planting efforts for both ethnic church plants and Anglo church plants appearing to be driven by numbers more than by disciple making. "It's got to be healthy churches begetting healthy churches. And that is not what's taking place in the Southern Baptist Convention, much less in my community," Addison said.

Strengthening churches

During the VF Forum in Elizabeth City, Boyce Porter, pastor of Geneva Baptist Church in Camden, emphasized the importance of strengthening existing churches. "All around me, I see churches that are dying. They're churches with great histories. They're churches that support and give to missions through the Cooperative Program, and I've been placed in one of those churches. I went there four years ago. I think we had 18 people, and praise the Lord we're running 60 and 70 now. And God has seen fit to send us some children and some youth. But, I see churches all around me that are dying. And most of the pastors are bi-vocational and they don't have the time required of them. And I just wonder if there's not some way that, as a Convention, we can develop teams, similar to new church plant teams, to go to these churches, to come alongside the pastor and to work to reach out into the field around them."

Speaking at the Winston-Salem forum, John Small, a member of Parkway Baptist Church in Greensboro who also serves as Convention legal counsel said, "If we're going to talk about strengthening existing churches, the only way to do that is to strengthen the families that make up the churches." Small continued that his work puts him in contact with

individuals from numerous religious and non-religious backgrounds on a daily basis. As a result, he believes that some of these groups are actually doing more to strengthen families than we are as Southern Baptists. He concluded his remarks by saying, "These groups are doing it (strengthening families) without Jesus Christ. We can do it and should be doing it with Jesus Christ."

Miscellaneous

Those speaking at the VF Forums have had the opportunity to voice their concerns and feedback directly to those people who are in positions to make decisions on how Cooperative Program dollars are spent in North Carolina. Participating in most of the forums are the pastors who have been elected as officers of the Convention (see www.ncbaptist.org/vf for committee members) as well as top-level staff, including Milton Hollifield, executive director-treasurer and BSC executive leaders. The forums are designed to discuss how well the Convention is implementing The Seven Pillars vision statement, but discussion can take any direction.

When the forums are held in the extreme east or west of our state, there are invariably comments on a perception that these parts of the state are largely ignored by the BSC. Gerald Morris, director of missions for Tuckaseegee Association, said he feels small churches in the Convention are not given enough consideration, especially in the far Western part of the state. "North Carolina does not stop at Asheville. I think often the small churches are forgotten. In our association, we

have five to six full-time pastors out of 36 pastors in our association." The rest are bi-vocational. Morris said he feels that only large churches are considered successful churches.

VF Committee Chairman Allan Blume said, "I guarantee you that none of the staff and Convention officers here tonight think that." Blume suggested that much of the reputation of the BSC may be 10 to 15 years old.

"This is a new day — a new Convention. It's an exciting day," Blume said.

Lynn Sasser, executive leader of congregational services responded that the BSC's emphasis is on church health and discipleship and not church growth. Approximately 90 percent of North Carolina churches have fewer than 400 in attendance in Sunday School.

Rob Roberts, associational missionary at Chowan Baptist Association said, "I just wanted to say, on behalf of this association, one of the things I was told when I came here two and a half years ago, is that once you cross 95, you don't see anything from the Baptist State Convention. And I've discovered that not to be the case. I discovered that it's kind of a reciprocal thing; we make an effort, y'all make an effort. And everything that I have asked the State Convention to participate in, I mean you guys have always been there to help, and I just want to say thank you on behalf of our association for the willingness of you guys to give us the resources and to provide that expertise as well."

In response to a question at the Franklin Forum on March 24 about requirements for new church planters, Bryon Lamb, pastor at LifeSpring Community Church in Franklin said, "They do give you an assessment (before you are qualified as a church planter) and I have never been drilled like that before. I got challenged and I challenged them back. I got trained and didn't have to pay anything for it."

LifeSpring was planted in December 2010. All church planters must sign off on the Baptist Faith and Message and receive funding and oversight by a church planting consultant for two years after inception. Lamb appreciates the help. "We are forever indebted to the Cooperative Program," he said.

There are nine more Vision Fulfillment Forums on the schedule. You can find one nearest to you by going to www.ncbaptist.org/vf. If you are unable to attend a forum but would like to have an opportunity to provide feedback, please contact members of the committee or send an email to visionfulfillment@ncbaptist.org.



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Mideast's Christian workers move forward amid tumult

By Alan James
 Baptist Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Being ready at a moment's notice to board a plane and evacuate a country is a reality for many Christian workers in North Africa and the Middle East.

Trying to share the gospel in nations with unstable governments is difficult in the best of circumstances. But as refugees flee the crisis in Libya, and other nations such as Yemen, Egypt and Syria continue to struggle with political unrest, the task is increasingly challenging. Though people are turning to Jesus during this time of conflict, Christian workers say the environment is far from ideal for ministry.

"It really is challenging trying to minister in this climate," Christian worker Sam Morgan* said. He and his family have served among Shia Muslims in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf since 2005.

In recent weeks, the Morgans have seen an increase in political protests.

"There are news cameras everywhere," Morgan said. "If you go to downtown where everybody is protesting, and you're the only American, immediately people are attracted to you because they feel like you're there to stand behind their cause."

Some of the people Morgan meets with and ministers to have pleaded with him to join the protests in their country. But Morgan always declines.

"We're not here to fight for (that) cause," he said. "We're here to fight for the cause of Christ."

Morgan said his biggest concern is whether he and his family may have to evacuate and leave behind years of ministry at the ring of a telephone.

"There have been moments ... where I wonder if we're going to be on a plane tomorrow morning," he said. "One day you're in a country, the next day you're not. All those friends and that whole life you had, it's gone."

"It's hard."

While tensions in the Middle East have been front page news in recent weeks, Morgan said political protests and conflict often are a way of life among his people group.

"In our country, they burn tires every Friday, and they have since we (moved) here," he said.

"Then it's over, and Saturday goes on and everybody is with their families and we move on and do our ministry."

Avoiding awkward political conversations can, at times, be nearly impossible, said Marshall Jackson*, who has ministered to people in the Middle East for the past six years.

"Their questions are often fairly pointed and opinionated," Jackson said. "Most of the time, they're not asking you to find (an answer); they're asking you to let you know what they think."

"If you feel someone really pushing your buttons or you're getting hot under the collar, just walk away."

Amy Jones* has found that the Middle Eastern women she ministers to are open to hearing about the hope Jesus can offer them. She and her husband

Justin* have worked among Middle Eastern people for more than six years.

Jones befriended a single mother, Amal*, and her 11-year-old son. Jones met Amal in 2004 through the help of Christian volunteers from the States. Amal, who is an Arab Muslim, eventually became a believer in Christ.

But life for her has been difficult. Others often look down on single mothers in that part of the world.

"She has a horror story a mile long," Jones said. "She's been beaten by her brothers. She's been held at gunpoint by her neighbor. She had to evacuate during two separate times of war. She's been without a job, just barely making ends meet."

Though relating to Amal's challenges has been difficult, Jones said the two have remained friends through the years. The Joneses gave her a Bible; they've studied scripture with her; and they occasionally have bought her groceries. Amal, in turn, taught the Joneses how to share their faith in Arabic.

Despite times of uncertainty, people's hearts throughout North Africa and the Middle East are more open to the gospel than ever before, Jones noted.

"People are hopeless, and the things ... that they've put their faith in are kind of falling apart around them," she said.

"It makes them more prone to ask questions and to seek a deeper kind of hope."

*Names changed.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — James is a writer for the International Mission Board.)

SBC Pastors' Conference slate raises questions

LAS VEGAS (ABP) — The president of the 2011 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference defended a program he's put together for June 12-13 in Phoenix, Ariz., saying critics who find it outside the Convention's mainstream hold too narrow a worldview.

"The Kingdom of God is bigger than Southern Baptists," said Vance Pitman, 2011 Pastors' Conference president and pastor of Hope Baptist Church in Las Vegas, a church plant in partnership with First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., and the North American Mission Board.

"The main intent of our conference is to communicate the big picture of the Kingdom of God," Pitman said March 18. "God is alive and at work all over the world. We as the Southern Baptist Convention are one very small part of that."

The Pastors' Conference has long been a barometer for Southern Baptist theological weather patterns and a launching pad to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) presidency for its leaders. Consequently, although it is not an official organization of the SBC, its direction is closely monitored.

Negative reaction has included place-

ment on the worship team of Jamar Jones, executive director of music and fine arts at the Potter's House Church of Dallas. That is because he is on the ministerial staff of T.D. Jakes, who critics claim holds to the heresy of "modalism." Modalism, a non-Trinitarian view that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three different aspects, or modes, of one God rather than three distinct, co-equal and co-eternal persons, was first condemned as heresy in the fourth century but is held by some Pentecostal and Apostolic churches today.

Dwight McKissic, an African-American pastor in Arlington, Texas, and former trustee of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who advocates greater inclusion of minorities in convention life, said that even though he doesn't think Jakes is a heretic that the pastor was the real target and Jones "a casualty of not so friendly fire from fellow Kingdom soldiers."

Jones, a boyhood friend of Pitman's worship arts pastor, withdrew to avoid controversy, a move that McKissic called "tragic, sinful and shameful" because Southern Baptists "missed an opportunity to bridge an obvious racial divide and to fellowship with a Kingdom saint who is not of the SBC fold."

People Pitman trusts tell him "Jakes is not a modalist."

Besides, Pitman said, his books are for sale in SBC bookstores. "How ridiculous is it that we can sell his books

but his music guy can't play piano at our meeting?" he asked.

Others have protested inclusion of speakers who are prominently recognized as Calvinists and the fact that the Pastors' Conference is heavily subsidized by the SBC operating budget.

The majority of Southern Baptists reject the "particular" nature of Calvinism that says Jesus died only for those "elected" for salvation before the dawn of creation and not the "whosoever will" that Baptists traditionally hold dear.

Included among speakers is Acts 29 Vice President Darrin Patrick. Acts 29 is a church planting network linked to the "emergent church," a movement that presents the gospel in culturally relevant ways that critics call theological compromise.

Emergent church terminology has been used interchangeably with emerging church for a number of years within church leadership circles but there has been a fairly recent effort to put distance between emerging and emergent.

People affiliated with Acts 29 said the network is emerging and that while its churches do try to be culturally relevant they put emphasis on being theologically sound.

Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Baptist Church in Seattle and Acts 29's founder and leader, was the target of eight negative motions at the 2009 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Louisville, Ky.

Also on the docket is John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, not affiliated with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist State Convention or the Southern Baptist Convention. His writings have influenced young Calvinists.

"We are wandering in a wilderness in our current SBC life," said blog writer Ron Hale. "Our leaders are hyper on Piper; LifeWay materials encourage our people to visit Mark Driscoll's website to download his sermons."

Pitman termed accusations that he has put together a "Calvinist" conference "beyond my wildest imagination."

He pointed out the lineup includes well-known non-Calvinist preachers like former SBC President Johnny Hunt and nationally prominent pastor Rick Warren.

"The vein that unites all of them is that they are all practitioners," Pitman said. "They are all engaging nations and planting churches."

Other questions have been raised related to conference expenses. While the public image is that the independent organization pays its own way, and offerings are collected each session to "cover" conference expenses, in fact the SBC heavily subsidizes the meeting, first held in 1935.

The Pastors' Conference reimburses the SBC \$38,000 — as it has since 1992 — to reimburse expenses for additional use of the meeting hall, shuttle buses, audio visual expenses and security. In 2012 that amount will increase to \$50,000.

SBC Executive Committee records show that the SBC operating budget covered \$141,549 of Pastors' Conference related expenses in 2010, in addition to the \$38,000 reimbursement received from the conference participants.

Pitman says in a series of video presentations at www.sbcpc.net that this year's "expenses" already are covered by sponsors. All offerings received at the meeting will be dedicated to translate the "Jesus" film for evangelistic use in the Arabian Peninsula and to start pastor's conferences on two other continents, reaching and training pastors in as many as 20 countries.

"Diamond level sponsorships" costing \$10,000 each are listed at the site. They include through March 21 the North American Mission Board, Crossway and LifeWay, three SBC entities. Others are LOGOS Bible Software, Maranatha Tours, Dayspring International, Ministry Partners Investment Co., CCL Associates real estate development and investment, Life Action Ministries ConnectionPower.com, Institute for Creation Research and ImpactStewardship Resources.

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Obituary

JAMES PAUL "JIM" COGDILL JR., 55, of Cape Girardeau, Mo., formerly of Vienna, died March 17 in Southeast Missouri Medical Center in Cape Girardeau.

Cogdill was pastor of several churches in Missouri as well as a church in Kentucky and Wake Cross Roads Baptist Church, Raleigh.

He was also an associate professor at Southeastern Seminary and worked at Midwestern and New Orleans seminaries.

He is survived by his wife Debbie C. Cogdill.

Memorials: Art Murrie Resource Center, c/o Simpson Baptist Church, P.O. Box 102, Simpson, IL 62985; or to Straight Way of Grace Ministry, P.O. Box 244, Venice, FL 34284-0244.



Staff changes

VERNON WILKERSON has been called as pastor of Sharon Baptist Church, Oxford. Retired from Progress Energy, Wilkerson is a student at Southeastern Seminary.

Dobson First Baptist Church, Dobson, has called **CORY HONEYCUTT** as pastor and **TYLER WILMOTH** as youth director. Honeycutt formerly worked for Mud Creek Baptist Church, Hendersonville, and this is Wilmoth's first church staff position.

RICK CRUZ has been called by Front Street Baptist Church, Statesville, as worship pastor. Cruz was the worship pastor of The Lighthouse, Rincon, Ga.

Hospital names change

WINSTON-SALEM — Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center announced a change March 17 in the names of its integrated clinical structure, educational and research enterprises, and a new visual identity (logo).

The new name of the integrated clinical operation is Wake Forest Baptist Health, which includes N.C. Baptist Hospital, Brenner Children's Hospital, and other affiliated entities. This name honors the hospital's Baptist heritage of quality and compassionate care, leverages the powerful academic reputation of Wake Forest, and captures the Medical Center's health-focused mission.

The institution's educational and research enterprises will be known as Wake Forest School of Medicine. Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center is the

Around the state

Shady Grove Baptist Church, Reidsville, has called **TERRY M. LARSEN** as pastor. Previously Larsen was pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, McLeansville.

JOSHUA GREENE has been called by Green Meadows Baptist Church, Mocksville, as pastor. Greene was the senior pastor of Social Plains Baptist Church, Zebulon, and he is currently serving on the Convention's Board of Directors.

Austin Grove Baptist Church, Marshville, has called **LEON WHITLEY** as pastor and **ROCKY RUSHING** as youth director. Whitley was the interim pastor, and Rushing was the youth director at another church before moving to AGBC.

JEREMY EVANS has been called by Wendell Baptist Church, Wendell, as pastor. Evans is a Christian philosophy professor at Southeastern Seminary, and was the interim pastor for Bogue Banks Baptist Church in Atlantic Beach.



Ordination

VERNON WILKERSON was ordained March 6 by Clement Baptist Church, Hurdle Mills, where Lewis Wall Sr. is pastor.



Contributed photo



Contributed photo

► **Adaville Baptist Church, Spindale**, dedicated its education building Feb. 27. Above, building committee member Ron Mayse cuts the ribbon. Other committee members: from left: Karen Long-More, Wayne Hutchins and Loretta Walker; from right, Jon Ward and James Roberson. The church also celebrates Connie H. Cuthbertson's 25th anniversary as the church's minister of music. A stained glass window was installed in her honor. Calvin R. Sayles is pastor.

► **Westview Baptist Church, Charlotte**, recognized its pastor March 13 for his service. James Ralph Ellis has been at the church 34 years.



Contributed photo

► **Cleveland First Baptist Church** celebrated its 125th anniversary March 13. From left: Arnold Bell, Glen Dancy III, Kenneth Hyde and Bobby Seagroves, interim pastor. Bell, Dancy and Hyde are all former pastors.



Opportunity Corner

BSC plans fellowship retreat for blind

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) is holding its annual fellowship retreat for the blind and visually impaired April 29-May 1 at Caraway Conference Center in Ashboro.

Donnie Wiltshire will be the speaker, and the theme for the retreat is "You'll Never Walk Alone." The cost is \$75 per

person for a shared room or \$110 for a single room, and details about Caraway Center accommodations can be found at www.caraway.org. Registration ends April 15.

Visit www.ncbaptist.org. Contact Maria Luoni for assistance: (800) 395-5102, ext. 5629, or mluoni@ncbaptist.org.

N.C. Baptist Men hosts golf tourney

The N.C. Baptist Men (NCBM) will hold its 2011 Annual Golf Tournament May 14 at Oak Hollow Golf Course in High Point. Dinner and awards will be after the tournament.

The cost is \$55, and there is no deadline for registration. This is a best ball

tournament for men, women and youth golfers.

The NCBM encourages golfers to sign up with their friends. Contact Tom Beam: (800) 395-5102, ext. 5626, or tbeam@ncbaptist.org. Visit www.baptistsonmission.org.

Church News



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Or, send to *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 18808, Raleigh, NC 27619.

Moldovan pastor continues grandfather's legacy

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

CHISINAU, MOLDOVA — There they sat, the people he loved most in the world, staring at him with no idea who he was or why he knocked on the door and wanted to come into their home.

It's hard to blame them for not recognizing him. Ten years had gone by since they last saw or heard from him. Ten years ago he sent a friend racing to his home to give his family his Bible and to warn the family that they must hide the Bible and any other books or literature that talked about God. They had to act quickly because soldiers were on the way.

The soldiers did come and they found everything — except the Bible. That Bible is the very one he bought at age 20 and used as he preached the gospel among villages in Ukraine.

The police eventually put an end to his village preaching and sentenced him to 10 years in a Serbian prison. This was during the time when Ukraine was part of the former Soviet Union and such preaching was not allowed.

While in prison he became physically weak and unable to work. One day he found himself on death row, literally in a line of men about to meet death. He cried out, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you can save me!" He's not sure exactly how it happened, or how it was even possible that it could happen, but as he walked in that line of men he felt someone grab his hand and pull him out of line.

The man was a doctor who took care of him and hid him for one month until he was ready to work again. God saved



BSC photo

ANCESTRY — Alexander Gonciaruc holds the Bible his grandfather used 110 years ago. Gonciaruc's family has protected it through much political upheaval and religious persecution.

him and brought him out of that prison alive.

None of the letters he wrote from prison ever made it back home. His family assumed he was dead.

He looked around the room and there was his wife, his two sons, his daughter born shortly after he went to prison, and his mother. "Don't you recognize me?" he asked again. The lump in his throat now prevented him from saying much else, and he told them who he was.

"She shouted, 'Children, your father is here,'" Alexander said as he told the story to the team from North Carolina gathered around the lunch table.

Alexander couldn't hide his excitement as he told the story of how God saved his grandfather's life and reunited him with his family: the daughter his

grandfather had never met — Alexander's mother.

The Bible his grandfather so desperately wanted to keep safe — it's now 110 years old and Alexander held it in his hands as he told his grandfather's story.

Alexander Gonciaruc is pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church in Chisinau and vice president of the Baptist Union of Moldova. His grandfather's story is really his story, and the story of his children and will be the story of his grandchildren. His grandfather's example of faith, and God's protective, redeeming work in his life, is making it possible for more generations to know about God.

Using that Bible, Alexander's grandfather taught his children and grandchildren about God. Alexander remembers as his grandfather got older that his hands shook as he tried to hold the Bible. The day came when he needed help from a magnifying glass to read the print. His grandfather eventually had to let someone else do the reading. Alexander read scripture as his siblings listened.

"Now, I can teach," Alexander said as he pointed to his baby grandson.

Alexander is not only bringing his family up in the ways of God, but he is pastoring other Moldovan believers. In 1992, Alexander helped start Gethsemane Baptist Church where he still pastors today. The church is a plant of Bethel Baptist Church.

Alexander served as a deacon in Bethel before coming to Gethsemane and had no intention of leaving Bethel. "I was comfortable," he said. Yet, the church leadership kept insisting, and Alexander knew he had to be obedient.

One of Alexander's friends knew the principal of a Russian public elementary school who agreed to let the church meet in the school building. Before

long the Communists in that area began meeting at the school and wanted nothing to do with the church. The Baptists and the Communists even came and went through different entrances in the school.

Week after week Communists tore down the poster on the building advertising information about the church and when the church met.

Finally, the church moved the poster inside a window and the Communists left it alone. "It's still there," Alexander said as he pointed at the window. On this Sunday morning Alexander took a few minutes before worship started to share about the church.

Alexander said the congregation never backed down. They committed to serve the school and the community. On the church's fifth anniversary the assistant principal, who had not wanted the church meeting at the school, got up on stage and said he wanted the church to stay. He had seen the difference the church made in peoples' lives.

The worship service that morning lasted nearly three hours, but it did not feel as though that much time had passed.

From singing to prayer to preaching, this Russian-speaking congregation truly worshiped God.

This congregation, and its pastor, remembers the day when such public worship was not allowed. And it seems they will not soon forget.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — This article is the first in a series about the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's new partnership with the Baptist Union of Moldova. The Convention recently sent a team to Moldova to kick off the partnership and to lead in conferences for pastors, women and youth. Stories and pictures will be available soon at the BSC website, www.ncbaptist.org, and in the Biblical Recorder.)

Baptists respond to Food Roundup

BCH Communications

Seeing boxes of nonperishable food filling up the back rooms and other storage areas of statewide Baptist association offices is a common sight during the month of April. The large amounts of collected items can make it difficult for staff members and visitors to move about. Association directors, however, don't seem to mind the inconvenience as they encourage their churches collect more for Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) annual "Food Roundup."

"It is our desire that through meaningful projects like the Food Roundup, we can help each child know they are loved, regardless of their circumstances or situation," said John Pond, West Chowan Association director of missions. West Chowan Association in Ahoskie is one of the food drive's top participating associations. Just as in years' past, Pond leads his churches to collect and give the needed items that will care for the daily needs of BCH's residents.

"Historically, BCH has been a vital part of the DNA of West Chowan churches," Pond said. "Our support of the food drive is a part of who we are."

The Food Roundup is a true partnership between associations and Baptist Children's Homes. Through help of associations and their participating churches, BCH is able to serve more than 700,000 meals and snacks to its residents.

Kay Parker, the youth consultant for the association, is encouraging youth leaders to involve their young people with food collections.

"When you give it's often more of a blessing for the giver, and I think it's important for our youth to experience that," Parker said. "I also believe it's important children at BCH see that people their own age care about them."

West Chowan's participation becomes even more personal this year as BCH's new group home in Ahoskie, Britton Ministries, prepares to open its doors. Since they are located in the same community, the association plans to deliver some of the donated items directly to the new home.

"Everybody's excited about the new home," Parker said. "We hope it will make participation in the food drive even greater."

BCH president Michael C. Blackwell says the Food Roundup has a tremendous impact on the children both physically and spiritually.

"Many of our boys and girls come from situations where their needs did not come first," he says. "The food drive shows our residents there are adults who truly care for them. It is the love of Christ put into action."

For more information, visit www.bchfamily.org/foodroundup. Collection pick-up dates are from April 25 to May 6. For additional information contact Alan Williams at (800) 369-3669, ext. 1277.



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The gospel according to John — three Johns

By Billy Haselton
Special to the Recorder

It's a rare thing to see three generations of preachers speaking together at one service. And when they're all named John, what would you call the event? "The Gospel According to John."

And their texts? First John, Second John and Third John.

On March 6, Pastor Johnny Tiller, along with his son John David Tiller and grandson John Matthew Tiller, preached to a packed crowd at Liberty Baptist Church in Ellenboro. Great-grandson J.D. Tiller was also on hand to quote John 3:16 in English and Spanish. It was the first time the three preachers in the Tiller family had ever spoken together in the same service.

"It was like living a legacy," remarked David Tiller, "like the culmination of a lifetime of influence."

That influence began in the heart of a 13-year-old boy named Johnny Tiller back in 1939, who felt the Lord calling him to preach. Since he started to preach at age 13, Johnny, now 84, has never quit. In his seven decades of ministry, Johnny has followed God's call in pastoring several churches in western North Carolina and now teaching at Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute in Hendersonville. He estimates that he has taught 1,500 students over the years, and countless others have been influenced for Christ through his church ministry. But, the greatest influence has been on his family.

His son David comments that he had a drug problem growing up. "I was always 'drug' to revival meetings," David remarked.

Johnny's grandson Matt had a different kind of drug problem.



ALL IN THE FAMILY — Four generations of Tiller men recently took part in a special event at Liberty Baptist Church in Ellenboro. Matt Tiller, from left, J.D. Tiller, Johnny Tiller and David Tiller were part of "The Gospel According to John."

"Matt was on drugs and in jail — he lived a wild life," observed Johnny.

Young Matt had struggled with Tourette's syndrome, a disease of the neurological system that causes a person to make involuntary movements or sounds called tics. Being teased by his peers, Matt began to rebel. That led him to turn to alcohol and drugs, and he wound up in jail. The prayers and godly influence of his father and grandfather were not lost on Matt during that time.

"I was paying attention to their example," Matt said, "even though they didn't think so." Later, at a candlelight service at church, he had "an amazing encounter with God."

That began a new chapter in Matt's life, which ultimately led him to surrender to preach — in Spanish. As a freshman at Gardner-Webb University, sitting in Spanish 101 class, Matt sensed that God was telling him he

would preach in Spanish one day.

A few years later, he felt a definite call to that ministry. Matt now serves as the Hispanic pastor at Liberty Baptist Church, with his wife, Adriana, who is from Costa Rica, by his side. He also teaches Spanish at East Rutherford High School.

Because Matt has only been in the ministry since 2009, Grandpa Johnny had never heard him preach before.

"I was surprised to hear Matt preach," said Johnny. "He preached a powerful message, like someone who had been preaching for many years."

Johnny was also amazed to see how far God had brought him in such a short time, considering Matt's checkered past. For Matt, who came up with the idea for the event, it was a humbling experience.

"It was a great honor to preach with such men of God," reflected Matt, "especially when it was my father and grandfather."

Although Johnny's son David surrendered to the call to preach at age 25, he and his father had also never preached together at the same event — until March 6. While he was pastoring, David had his father Johnny to speak at churches where he served, but they had never preached during the same service. Currently, David teaches in the College of Education at Tennessee State University.

God's hand was obviously at work in putting together the messages preached by all three pastors.

"We prepared our messages separately," commented Matt, "but you could see a woven pattern. All the messages just fit together."

Matt preached the first sermon, based on 1 John 4. He emphasized the love of God, explaining that if God's love has touched your heart, you'll touch someone else. David preached a message from 2 John 8 entitled "Lost and Found."

He warned against losing your influence, your integrity, or your joy because of doing things your way instead of God's way. Finally, the elder John Tiller capped off the service with a stirring challenge from 3 John entitled "Three Portraits of Today's Church Members."

He used the examples of Gaius (who was easy to love), Diotrephes (who loved to be first), and Demetrius (a man of love) to highlight types of people we find in churches today.

All three pastors were amazed at how God led them to make similar applications. Then again, since their sermons were based on the writings of John, the Apostle of Love, that would seem fitting.

The "Gospel According to John" event was not primarily about the John Tiller family, they contend.

"It's not about us, but about bringing glory to God."

A DVD of this event is available for a suggested donation of \$7 through T-E-A-M Ministries (Tiller Evangelism and Missions Ministries), led by Mark and Ann Tiller.

For more information, contact P.O. Box 6616, Asheville, NC 28816.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Haselton is a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and teaches English as a Second Language at Wake Technical Community College.)

IMB appoints 67 new missionaries

By Don Graham
Baptist Press

RICHMOND, Va. — It was a secret Ishaq* held close for 13 years — one that caught journeyman missionary Craig Evans* by surprise when the young man revealed it.

In 2007, Evans began visiting a quaint Central Asian village where he befriended Ishaq.

One day while Ishaq's family answered the local mosque's call to prayer, Evans was able to talk with his Muslim friend alone for the first time. Glancing around nervously, Ishaq leaned closer and whispered, "My one desire in life is to be near to God."

He explained that he had happened upon a Bible 13 days earlier and began reading it.

But when the Bible was discovered by Ishaq's parents, both devout Muslims, they took it and harshly discouraged any further interest in Christianity.

What his parents couldn't take, though, was the seed that already had been planted in Ishaq's heart. And so, without any other gospel witness, Ishaq waited for the day when God would send someone who could tell him about Jesus.

Ishaq's story was one of dozens of testimonies at an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary appointment service March 16 hosted by First Baptist Church in Dallas.

Evans and his wife Katie* were among 67 new missionaries sent forth on Tom Elliff's first day as IMB president. "I immediately recognized (Ishaq's words) as something divine, something God had orchestrated," Evans said.

"This is an area that is very much unreached by the gospel, to the point that an average guy, from the time he's born to the time he dies, without God's grace will probably never even rub shoulders with someone who understands the gospel."



APPOINTMENT — Fourth-generation church planter Sebastian Vazquez and his wife Erin speak about God's call during IMB's March 16 missionary appointment service at First Baptist Church in Dallas. More than 100 years ago, a Southern Baptist missionary to Argentina led Vazquez's great-grandfather to Christ, started a missions legacy.

Indeed, Evans was the first Christian Ishaq had encountered, and the pair soon began meeting discreetly to talk about the Bible. But after months of conversations, Ishaq wasn't yet ready to make a commitment to Jesus, and Evans' two-year term as a missionary

journeyman was ending. "I left the country without him having professed faith," Evans said.

"I don't know where God has led him. I would love it if we could run into each other someday and I could see how God's been working in him since."

Evans just might get that chance. Energized by short-term mission trips and divinely appointed encounters like his meeting with Ishaq, Evans is returning with his family to minister full time in the same area where he formerly served.

"Knowing that we serve a God who is drawing people like Ishaq — people who have not humanly had any chance to hear — but have been given by God that hunger and longing to know Him ... that is the kind of stuff that encourages you to go back," Evans said.

Fifteen of the 67 appointees are bound for service in North Africa and the Middle East — a region that's experienced an unprecedented season of unrest since the beginning of 2011.

Those missionaries include Hank and Ruby Greene*, who have the unique challenge of sharing Jesus with deaf Muslims. "If governments that have previously opposed the gospel are toppling, this is a pretty good opportunity to go in," he said. "We may as well take advantage while the foundations are cracked and let the gospel fill the gaps."

The Greenes were among six missionaries specifically appointed to reach the deaf, the largest number in a single appointment service. More than 250 deaf attended the service, including several deaf pastors and Jim Dermon, president of the Southern Baptist Convention of the Deaf.

The appointment service brings IMB's global missionary force to 5,014.

The next IMB appointment service will be Sunday, May 22, at Mandarin Baptist Church in Los Angeles.

*Name changed.

Soccer pulls church into community ministry

By Norman Jameson
Associated Baptist Press

The famous towel producer Charles Cannon built First Baptist Church in Kannapolis when Cannon Mills provided both engine and fuel for the aging textile town 27 miles north of Charlotte. He wanted a good church for his workers, so he had First Baptist constructed on the edge of the mill property.

First Baptist celebrated its centennial in 2008 and has enjoyed its current red brick, columned building for 75 years. It is imposing and regal, but because of how Cannon provided the building, the church doesn't own an inch of land outside the building's footprint; not a single parking space.

The textile industry has fled North Carolina like water falls over Niagara, and in the past few years Cannon's massive mills were converted to Pillowtex, then that company and 2,400 local jobs were erased as if they never existed.

Billionaire buyer David Murdock rubbed out whole blocks of Kannapolis and on that clean sheet is building a futuristic research facility of Georgian-style red brick buildings. The buildings and the international workforce that is beginning to occupy them are changing the face of this small southern town.

Tom Cabaniss, with 14 years in the pulpit of First

Baptist Church, wanted to change the public face of his church, too. The church owns 11.5 acres of land a half mile away, on a main drag in town, and had architectural drawings in hand for a \$20 million complex to be built in phases, including a new sanctuary.

Then, at a staff retreat in the midst of an expository journey through the book of Romans, Cabaniss asked: "What if we became the place that people thought of when they thought of ministry in Kannapolis?"

That question began to drive deacon meetings, staff prayer time, small groups and committee meetings within the church.

It also ate like a boll weevil through the extravagant plans for a new facility and instead, prompted the church to ask the local Christian community ministries organization what it would build for its ministry to the area's homeless and hungry.

First Baptist has always sent money and people to distant lands, but they began to ask, "What if our mission field is Midway?" — that 11.5 acres of sports fields and bare ground the church bought in 2002. "What if God actually wanted us to 'burst through the bricks' and

make a difference here?" said Haven Parrott, minister of spiritual formation.

When they considered ways to engage the community, everything seemed to start with Midway. The fields are surrounded by easy access highway and a transitional neighborhood of modest houses once occupied by mill workers.

The church bought the land strictly on the basis of opportunity and potential. They paid it off quickly and gathered their plans to build. Then the economy hit a brick wall and the answer to their prayers was, "Wait."

But "wait" didn't mean "stand still," and the compelling question of ministry continued to motivate the church. For several years they had sponsored a soccer league that developed into a comfortable, friendly, weekly get together at the soccer field for about 85 Christian children and their families.

"That's not outreach," said Cabaniss. When the coordinator had to drop out the church went a different direction. They passed out flyers in each elementary school — all of which are Title 1 schools with a high percentage of poor students. The church "charged" just \$5 but easily overlooked even that "dignity fee," and 200 rambunctious, excited children flooded the field.

About three dozen church members volunteered as coaches and organizers, and other members came as cheerleaders for whatever team needed some that day.

Long after the church had decided to scholarship the entire program if necessary the Cannon Foundation responded with a \$15,000 grant because the six-week effort would contribute to healthy habits of children and their families.

Participants 4 years old through fourth grade had one practice during the week and games on Saturdays. Families received information about the church and church members led devotions for the families. Coaches led devotions for their teams.

A big season-ending carnival followed a recognition service in the sanctuary. Parrott said families had to attend the service to participate in the carnival, but the purpose was to break the barrier of intimidation that often keeps strangers from braving entry into a large, imposing, traditional church building.

Cabaniss said the soccer ministry gave his members a chance to do something bigger than themselves. It connected them with people different from themselves, gave them a chance to serve their community and helped them grow in their own faith as they saw God at work and prayers answered in a neglected part of town. They saw seeds planted that they intend to nurture and to see God harvest "in His time."

"What we do is relational," Parrott said. "We didn't go into it thinking we're doing this to get new members. We did it to be a presence in that community, whatever that meant, but we knew it meant getting in their back yard."

Now Parrott is the "soccer lady" in the local grocery store and the church gets calls all the time about a new soccer season. The church is holding three Saturday skills and devotion clinics in April.

If things progress on their current track, future soccer teams will play in the shadow of an 11,000-square-foot, \$1.6 million ministries building that will serve the homeless and hungry in Kannapolis. It will be the simple, functional building First Baptist Church builds for others rather than the new complex for itself it was considering. It will have a basketball court, kitchen, a sleeping area and space for feeding and a clothes closet.

First Baptist will hold Bible school there and have activities, "but it is such a far cry from the really pretty building we were going to build," Parrott said. "We will build it for others, not for ourselves."

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Jameson is reporting and coordinating special projects for ABP on an interim basis. He is former editor of the North Carolina Biblical Recorder.)



ABP photos by Norman Jameson

FAMILY — Chris and Jennifer Roman started attending First Baptist Church in Kannapolis after one of their son's soccer league season ended. The church runs the league on land originally purchased for a new building.

League opens church door for family

By Norman Jameson
Associated Baptist Press

KANNAPOLIS — When the soccer season sponsored and funded by First Baptist Church in Kannapolis began to wind down, Chris and Jennifer Roman realized they were going to miss the new friends they found while mingling with church families at the soccer field.

So they agreed to start visiting the church. They had talked often about their desire to find a church home during their five years of marriage. Both were what they call "God conscious" but not professed Christians.

Within a month they joined the church by baptism. Jennifer said it "felt right" from the first. "We're supposed to be here," she said. "If not for the soccer ministry I don't think we'd be born-again Christians."

Before what discipleship minister Haven Parrott calls a "kairos" moment turning the church toward community outreach, the Romans might not have felt immediate acceptance there.

Both sport piercings in their face and Chris' arms are heavily tattooed with designs and the names of his sons.

But Chris said First Baptist, which already enjoyed a "really good" reputation in town, has been like family. He found instant camaraderie among people who

"will do anything for you. They will give you the shirt off their backs."

"Our family told us Chris would probably scare people at First Baptist with his tattoos," Jennifer said. "But nobody here judges him. It's so nice."

Chris played some high school soccer, and — despite working two jobs so Jennifer can be a stay-at-home mom — he jumped in and helped his son Aidan's soccer coach, deacon chair Patti Miller.

It was Aidan's first organized activity, and the family learned about it through a flyer he brought home in his book bag from a special school where he receives help for a speech disability.

It was when Parrott showed up to sit with her during a surgical procedure for Aidan that Jennifer first thought: "Wow. This stranger who doesn't even know us wants to be there for us."

Life is getting better for the Romans. Chris is working two jobs after being laid off as an auto mechanic and almost losing their house.

"I have a new attitude toward life," he said, sitting in the church parlor with a red knit cap pulled over his ears. "You look at things different. You appreciate the little things. It's the whole package. I have a new appreciation for things I didn't see before."

"God has opened our eyes," Jennifer said.

All because an old church tried a new game — and scored.

Questions (& answers) about tithing

Baptist Press

Over the years I have gotten (and had myself) questions about whether or not the tithe (giving the first 10 percent of our income back to God as prescribed by the law) was biblical. Let me give you brief answers to some of those questions that demonstrate how I have learned to approach them.

1. Isn't tithing Old Testament law? Aren't we free of that?

Yes and no.

A. Tithing is a part of the law, and Jesus has definitely fulfilled it all in our place so that we are free from its bondage. However, the purposes of the law were (generally speaking) three-fold:

- to show us what God was like.
- to reveal how far short we fall of God's character.
- to show us how to thrive in the creation God has placed us in.

None of those three purposes faded with the death of Jesus. If anything, Jesus' coming intensified them. We saw more of what God was like, what holiness was like, and what a man acting in perfect harmony with creation was like. As it relates to the tithe, the law reveals the unchanging character of God and how He expects us to view the money *He* has provided for us. A minimum of 10 percent that He has given to us, whether we are rich or poor, is to go back into His work. This is how He set up the world order.

This is why the "tithe" principle (the first 10 percent of income going into God's work) is taught pre-law (Abraham), law (Moses), post-exile (Malachi), and even affirmed under Jesus (Matt. 23:23). God's purposes for creation haven't changed. We are no longer under the theocratic nation state of Israel, but how God has set up His economy for His people has not changed.

God doesn't lay the financial weight of the entire world on any of our shoulders, but He has given His people a plan whereby they do their part. The law was given to help people live in the shalom of God. That's what gives the law (principles like taking a Sabbath and the tithe) an enduring effect. Thus, the idea that 10 percent of all that God gives to you is given for you to give back to Him remains, I believe, as a good guide to our giving.

Now, let me be clear — Jesus left us under NO PART of the law, not the tithe or anything else. But the law, in that it reflects God's character and His ordering of creation, is still good, and still functions as a guide to how we are to live under God in this world. Men and women of God throughout the Bible, including Abraham and Jesus, seemed to recognize that.

B. If anything, the gospel raises the level of our response to God's laws. True obedience, Jesus says, goes much deeper than the behavior standards the law required. For example, the law said "don't murder," yet Jesus said the gospel demanded we love our brother always and not hate him, not even our enemies.

The law said "don't commit adultery," yet Jesus said that the gospel demanded people not even "look on another woman with lust in our heart." So, if the law says "give 10 percent," what kind of generosity does the gospel call for? Would it not be greater generosity than 10 percent, just as the other commands were also intensified in Christ? In other words, if the people who saw God's generosity in the

Exodus responded with giving 10 percent, how much more should people who have seen the cross? This is why you see the early church giving far beyond 10 percent. So overwhelmed by the generosity of Christ, they wanted to pour out their possessions for those in need (2 Cor. 8:9).

For gospel-touched people, tithing should never be the ceiling of their giving, but it should be the floor.

Tithing, in and of itself, is not an iron-clad rule for Christians as it was for Israelites under the law. That said, "giving our firstfruits to God" most definitely is a biblical principle, true of God's people in all places and at all times. And 10 percent is a great place to start with that.

2. Should I give the tithe "pre-tax" or "post-tax"?

In the Old Testament, God called the tithe a "firstfruit" (also in 1 Cor. 16:2). This meant their giving to God came first before anything else. That teaches pretty clearly that our giving to God comes before Uncle Sam takes his share. God gets the firstfruits, not the second ones.

3. When during the month should I give?

The principle of "firstfruits" also shows you, in my opinion, that the tithe check should be written first, and not at the end of the month when you see how much left over you have. If you do the latter, you will inevitably never have enough to give God 10 percent. You're giving Him your scraps. But if you do the former, you will inevitably adjust your lifestyle around what you have left. And, God also will find a way to multiply His blessings to you. I've seen that happen in my own life multiple times. It's pretty exciting.

4. Should we give to the church, or other things?

In the Old Testament system, the tithe went to the work of God's institution, the temple. Caring for the poor beyond what the temple did, or funding an itinerant rabbi, etc., all came out beyond the tithe.

I believe the implication is that tithing should go to God's new institution, the local church. Hopefully you have a church that you feel good about how they spend their money (not all on buildings, entitlement perks for members and pastors, etc.) and you see them working in the streets and unreached parts of the world. Give some grace here, of course ... it's always easy to play armchair quarterback and talk about how you'd do it differently.

I'd say if you trust your pastor, however, you honor God by giving to the institution He ordained. Then, give like a gospel-touched fool beyond that to all the things God has put in your heart.

5. How does this work out for your family, J.D.?

When my wife Veronica and I first got married, we had to stretch ourselves unbelievably thin to tithe. As God has increased our income over the years, we have yearly increased the percentage of what we give.

We now give way above the tithe to our church, and then beyond that to ministries blessing the poor, carrying the gospel to the world, and some to our church's expansion project, Believe.

We love it. Veronica recently said, "This is so fun... giving." It really is more blessed to give than to receive. God really has multiplied what we have given to Him and given it back to us "in every way" — financially, in joy, in perspective, etc. (2 Cor. 8-9). We love it.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Greear is lead pastor at the Summit Church in Durham. This column first appeared on his blog, JDGreear.com.)

GUEST COLUMN



J.D. Greear

Find It Here

By Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

BSC Executive Director-Treasurer

As Baptists, we know that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ gives meaning to this life and hope for eternity. Sharing this love and hope is what our three-year Find it Here emphasis is all about.

As you know, our 2010 Find it Here focus was evangelism. This year the primary focus is discipleship, and next year we will emphasize missions mobilization.

As part of our discipleship emphasis in 2011 we are also asking churches to

make the weeks leading up to the Easter season a time of intentional evangelistic outreach. If we are going to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission, we must intentionally and strategically make disciples of those who follow Christ, but we cannot do that until people first receive Christ as Savior.

Many of our North Carolina Baptist churches experienced outstanding results when they incorporated the Easter season evangelism thrust we encouraged last year. Worship attendance increased with new people attending, individuals made professions of faith and baptisms increased. I hope you read some of the celebrative testimonies that pastors shared with us about how they saw God do a great work when their church members prayed for specific spiritual needs of family members and friends and then invited them to worship on Easter Sunday.

We say we believe that a salvation relationship with Christ is the most important decision in a person's life. We say we believe that those who never accept Christ as Savior will spend eternity in a place the Bible calls hell. We say we believe that Christ transforms people and makes them a much better person. We say we believe that an individual becomes a new person when they trust in Christ as Lord.

We say that people who know Christ can experience joy and make a difference in their environment through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. If we really believe all these things, why are we not doing more in our efforts to help people discover this life-changing relationship with Jesus?

Would you like to be used by God in helping others discover this life-transforming relationship with Christ?

Here are some things you can do immediately:

- You can pray for people you know who need to accept Christ as Savior.
- You can invite them to church on Easter Sunday.

Hopefully, pastors will preach an evangelistic sermon on Easter Sunday, invite people to accept Christ and have a baptism service either on Easter Sunday or the Sunday following.

Easter is only a few weeks away — but there's still time. Who do you know who needs to hear the gospel of Jesus? Please do not miss the wonderful opportunity to lead your children or grandchildren to Christ. Who is the Holy Spirit prompting you to befriend so you can begin helping him or her learn about spiritual realities?

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17 NKJV



Tar Heel Voices

Honest assessment

Brad Whitt, in the *Baptist Courier* of (South Carolina), writes an honest assessment of being a young pastor and feeling irrelevant to the current trends of the (Southern Baptist Convention). (Whitt's column appeared in the March 19 issue of the *Biblical Recorder*.)

Simpsonville, where he pastors, is a growing suburb of Greenville and Spartanburg. He seems to have a growing church, and he knows from his lifetime of being a preacher's kid how things have been.

I sympathize with him. I felt this way in 1969 as I returned from Houston to Bishopville, S.C., where I was in

my first senior minister step up from two associate pastor positions at Easley and Hartsville, S.C.

He sees the dangers of the current trends and is still trying to cope with remaining Southern Baptist.

Good luck, buddy, I don't think you will be happy in the future if you are not happy now. Some of us know what autonomy meant. We know how we got along despite our local differences and supported missions with joy. Now the situation is one of mistrust/not giving as we did to wider mission efforts/focusing so much on local church growth that little is left for much else.

Gene Scarborough
Bath

REACT: Tar Heel Voices is your forum to share opinions

- Letters are limited to 300 words and may be edited for style, length and clarity.

- Name may be withheld only for sufficient reason.

E-mail: editor@biblicalrecorder.org, or Mail: Editor, P.O. Box 18808, Raleigh, NC 27619



Creating a disciple-making culture

Several years God spoke to me clearly about the great need for the church in America to return to a focus on biblical discipleship. Among other things, He used George Barna's book, *Growing True Disciples* to awaken my heart to the great gap between our current cultural (and church) understanding of being "Christian" and Jesus' example of making disciples.

I was challenged by these words from that same book: "What would happen for God's Kingdom if we did not consider our job complete when people confess their sins and say a prayer inviting Jesus to be their Redeemer, but would use their new commitments to Christ as a launching pad for a lifelong quest to become individuals who are completely sold out — emotionally, intellectually, physically, spiritually — to the Son of God"? What if we began reflecting in fresh ways and with a laser focus on the examples that Jesus gave us through His life and ministry as He called disciples?

We see Jesus calling the first disciples in Matthew 4:18-22. When Jesus told Peter and Andrew to "Follow me," they immediately left their nets and followed Him. In the same way, when Jesus called for Matthew to follow Him (9:9) he got up, left everything and followed Him. One by one, Jesus called and these early disciples gave their lives to Him in complete abandon. And we would be greatly mistaken to believe that these early disciples were super-human. As John MacArthur notes in his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, "It was not because they had extraordinary talents, unusual intellectual abilities, powerful political influence, or some special social status. They turned the world upside down because God worked in them to do it. God chooses to use the meek and the weak so that there's never any question about the source of power when their lives change the world." They were completely sold out to Jesus!

Just a few weeks ago I heard Gary Chapman, senior associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, define discipleship as "taking people where they are and helping them become more like Jesus." Rick Hughes, senior consultant for discipleship at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), uses this simple definition of a disciple: "One who abides in Christ and does the things that Jesus did."

So, what is a disciple? How do you make one? These two questions, posed by Randy Millwood in his book, *To Love and To Cherish from this Day Forward: A Portrait of a Healthy Church*, are questions that are being echoed through the halls of many North Carolina Baptist churches. They are good questions because they are the right questions. Over the last several decades church leaders have sought "silver bullet" answers to questions about church growth and church health. Evangelism leaders seek to address the challenge of declining baptism numbers. Leaders of mission organizations lament that they cannot seem to motivate people to support reaching the nations as they once did. Youth leaders and parents fret over the staggering church dropout rate in college and beyond. Sunday School leaders and other organizational leaders cry out for a return to fundamental strategies for growth in groups. While these challenges in evangelism, missions, church attrition, and programmatic struggles are real issues that require attention and energy, perhaps they are not the primary issue. Perhaps each of the challenges noted above — and a host of other concerns facing the church — is merely a symptom of a greater malady. The struggles the church is facing in these areas of concern flow from a greater challenge: the challenge of discipleship. Millwood rightly declares that the church "has but one identity:

disciples of Jesus. And flowing from that identity, one task: disciple making."

Historically, the church in North America has developed mechanisms within church to focus on missions, evangelism, worship, and Bible study groups separately. While this has led to programmatic ease and enabled churches to develop efficient organizations, the unintended consequence of this segmentation has been a failure to acknowledge the holistic nature of discipleship. The Bible makes no distinction between evangelism and discipleship, or missions and discipleship, or worship and discipleship, or biblical community and discipleship. In fact, Jesus gave one commission: to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Rather than making a distinction, the assumption of scripture is that disciples will evangelize, disciples will be on mission, and disciples will worship.

The church of the 21st century is awakening to this biblical mandate for holistic discipleship. In the congregational services group of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina we have intentionally defined our purpose as "to lead North Carolina Baptists to create a disciple-making culture in which lives are changed by the power of God." The

word "culture" is important. The culture is what is natural and normal in one's environment. We hope to see discipleship become natural and normal in homes, churches, and communities across North Carolina. This kind of cultural transformation only occurs by the power of God. As churches and leaders respond to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, discipleship will infuse the culture. It is our desire to partner with North Carolina to elevate the conversation about disciple-making and be more strategic about how we can help see this cultural change come about. Two initiatives in particular are encouraging.

First, North Carolina Baptists are in the second of a three-year initiative called "Find It Here." In 2011, partnering churches are emphasizing the importance of discipleship through the Find It Here: Embracing Christ emphasis. It is appropriate for this three-year emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, and missions mobilization to have discipleship at its center because discipleship is the umbrella under which evangelism and missions take place. It is through discipleship that those who have come to Christ through evangelism in turn become those who go on mission to tell others about Christ. The hope of North Carolina Baptists is that churches will focus on discipleship multiplication. In some of His final words to His disciples, Jesus declared, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (Jn. 15:8). The implication of the words of our Lord is that fruitfulness as a disciple brings glory to God. No distinction is made in the Bible between being a Christian and being a disciple. All believers are disciples. What is of concern is whether one is an obedient or disobedient disciple. To put it simply, obedient disciples make disciples.

By participating in Find It Here: Embracing Christ any church can jump-start a focus on discipleship among the Body of Christ. Suggested sermon outlines, Bible study lessons, and devotionals written by North Carolina pastors, associate pastors, and lay leaders are designed to give churches a track to run on for a period of time to elevate the conversation about discipleship. Nonetheless, the emphasis is no silver bullet. Apart from seeking God for spiritual awakening and revival, discipleship will not take place. No programmatic emphasis will create a disciple-making culture in your church. Discipleship is relational in nature. Jesus did not call His disciples to go to a formal school for growth. Rather, Jesus called the 12 to be with Him and

to be sent out (Mk. 3:14-15). For this reason, the Find It Here website (www.findithere.org) contains additional resources for helping pastors and other leaders design small discipleship mentoring groups of three. These discipleship "triads" allow the pastor to invest relationally with two or three others in an environment of transparency and mutual accountability in which God's Word can be studied and applied with the purpose of seeing these groups multiply throughout the life of the church.

A second initiative also shows great promise in helping North Carolina Baptists create a disciple-making culture through which lives are changed by the power of God. For more than a year the congregational services group has focused on understanding and creating a framework for healthy church systems. Systems are the functional programs and environments that contribute to church health. We believe discipleship is the main system for healthy churches. Discipleship is actually comprised of other systems including worship, community, and evangelistic mission. Simply put, people grow in Christ as they live out these systems. Discipleship happens as people are led to worship both corporately and individually, engage in biblical community, and proclaim the gospel through missional activity across the street and around the globe.

Because of this focus on healthy church systems, we have adopted the Transformational Church Assessment Tool as a part of our strategy to see the bar raised on disciple-making among North Carolina Baptists. In *Transformational Church*, Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer emphasize that churches that truly see transformation have a process in place to help people take the next step in discipleship. The evidence we have from hundreds of conversations and a few formal assessments is that many North Carolina Baptist churches do not have such a process in place. Our cadre of trained consultants is available to enter into a relationship with your church to help you create such a process. This consultation process is available at no charge to cooperating North Carolina Baptist churches because of your Cooperative Program support. The Transformational Church assessment will help you understand how your church perceives herself based on seven elements discovered in the research project: missionary mindset, prayerful dependence, relational intentionality, vibrant leadership, worship, community, and mission. The conversations that take place within the church reveal a great deal about the values of the congregation. How much of the conversation in your church today is centered in deeply important spiritual issues such as these? The Transformational Church assessment is one effective way to begin changing the conversation in your church and ultimately the values. Although this may be a discussion for another day (or article), it is vitally important to understand the critical role that values serve in your church. It is ultimately values that either support or fail to support structure and initiatives. One of the primary reasons that many changes implemented in church life today don't stick is that they are not supported by the congregation's values. The Transformational Church assessment, coupled with the healthy church systems framework will set the stage for your church to customize a process for making disciples based on the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the life of your church.

If you are interested in learning more about the Transformational Church assessment process, please contact me at lsasser@ncbaptist.org. If you choose to purchase the assessment from LifeWay, please use the following link in order to gain maximum benefit from our staff: www.ncbaptist.org/transformationalchurch.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Sasser is executive leader in the congregational services group for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.)

GUEST COLUMN



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Lesson for April 10

Formations

Lesson for April 17

Reconciled Through Christ's Death

Focal Passage: Colossians 1:21-23

One of the joys of ministry is meeting people who live long, productive lives.

I once knew a woman who was 105. I also knew a couple who had been married more than 75 years.

They had married at about age 20 and lived past age 95.

They were "happily" married, yet I'm sure they would agree that even their marriage wasn't perfect.

They had 5 children — children tend to have their own kind of problems. They, like all the rest of us, had times where they had disagreements and needed to "make up."

The Bible has a beautiful word for this "making up."

It is "reconciliation." We all make mistakes. We all have a condition I refer to as "meitis (me-I-tis)." It can be terminal.

When Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, he had one goal in mind for them — that they might be "right" before God. He knew they had been pagans. They had thought like pagans and they had lived like pagans (v. 21). It was the life they knew best.

But after becoming Christians, they realized God had a higher standard for their thinking and their believing and their living. Their new standard was Christ.

Paul also made it clear that although they had Christ's teachings and power available to them, living this Christian

life was not going to be easy.

Their faith could be shaken. They could stray. They had to commit to this life and not be deterred by the voices and will of others (v. 23).

In verse 22 we have three beautiful words to describe this goal of being "right with God." None of us is capable of attaining these words. What are they? Holy, faultless (irreproachable), and blameless.

These are words to describe God, not you and me. Yet, these words are the fruit of reconciliation. Holy, set apart, without fault or blame, forgiveness, recipients of grace.

How is this possible?

The answer is found in verses 20-21. Christ has reconciled "you" to God by the giving of His body, by the shedding of His blood on the cross.

Further, that one act of amazing love has paved the way for the Christian to have "peace" with God, both in the earthly life and in the life to come. God's wants honesty from us. Strange as it may seem, I've

met men who "remarkably" claimed to have never, ever had a disagreement or ill word with their wife.

I worry about people who make

such claims. Hopefully, we're more honest with God.

Hopefully we recognize we're only "right" and "righteous" when we admit we're sinners saved by grace.

"But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him"
— Colossians 1:22



Wayne Proctor
pastor, Eure Baptist Church

Rejoicing in Suffering

Focal Passage: Colossians 1:24-29

Persecution of Christians 2010: On Dec. 12, seven house churches were forcibly closed by Muslim extremists in West Java, Indonesia. On Dec. 3 a Pakistani mullah offered more than \$6,000 (US) to anyone who kills Asia Bibi, who was previously sentenced to death by a Pakistani judge on Nov. 8. Her crime — telling Muslim women about Jesus. On Oct. 31 in Baghdad, 59 Christians were killed when Islamic radicals attacked worshippers at the Syrian Orthodox Church (source: *persecution.com*).

It is common knowledge that persecution of Christians in North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia is occurring at alarming, record levels.

As Baptists, we are not allowed to know the name or location of hundreds of our missionaries.

Furthermore, much of the abuse and persecution goes unreported.

It seems we have gone back in time to the days of Paul and Silas where suffering for Christ was not optional — it came with the job.

Paul makes a number of salient points in this text.

First, he found joy in suffering for Christ.

Not that pain was fun, but there was a pleasure he received knowing that he was pleasing Christ.

In a real way, his pain was a continuation of the suffering Christ Himself had endured (v. 24).

Christ had instituted the church, and Paul reveled in the privilege of being a church leader.

Second, Paul rejoiced in the proclamation of what he called "the mystery." What was this mystery?

It was the revelation of the gospel to the Gentiles, and their reception of that glorious gift.

Paul called the Christian experience, "Christ in you, the hope of glory (v. 27b)."

Third, there was the goal of spiritual maturity.

Colossae was unfortunately infected with a brand of Greek gnosticism and Jewish extremism.

Dangerous heresies abounded.

Paul was constantly "warning" the new, vulnerable Gentile believers to avoid all corruptive influences.

Yet, to use an analogy from sports, you don't win by just playing defense. In fact, the best defense is a good (great) offense.

Paul's tact was to work extra hard (relying upon Christ's strength in him) teaching the people the foundations of the Christian life.

It was no coincidence that he spoke of making God's message "fully" known to them (v. 25b).

There is a great need for quality Bible teachers in today's church.

We have an amazing number of resources at our disposal.

We just need to take the time and make the commitment to learn, to study.

Of all the books we might read, the Bible needs to garner our time and affection.

And for those who are teachers, teach it with passion, compassion, and love.

Lesson for April 10

Bible Studies for Life

Lesson for April 17

Recognize God's Presence

Focal Passages: Psalm 31:7-10, 14-16, 21-24

In Psalm 31:1-24, David is certainly "up the creek minus a paddle."

He acknowledges God and His power, His protection and His liberating presence, but his situation in verses 6-13, is the point when the "white flags" would go up for most people.

Very few of us have had people plotting to take our lives (v. 13).

Throughout the Psalms we read over and again the difficulties David faced in his life.

Here in this psalm, David admits his distress (v. 9) and acknowledges his grief (v. 9).

He feels so alone he is "like a dead person" (v. 12).

Yet beginning in v. 14, we see a noticeable shift in his attitude?

How does he pull this off?

By the time I would finish a verse 13 moment in my life, I would have already thrown a party for my three favorite people: me, myself and I!

Of course there would be no keg (I am a Baptist preacher-dude) and the dancing would be limited, but man oh man, the three of us would be downing great big bottles of pity — self-pity to be exact.

And unlike fine wine, self-pity is great straight off the circumstantial vine.

David is able to see his circumstances because of his relationship with the Lord.

Far too often we allow the circum-

stances of our lives to "pile up" between ourselves and Christ.

We overlook the fact that the Lord knows we are made of little more than dust.

In the midst of our sufferings, we frequently forget God's faithfulness in our lives — especially in our difficulties — and as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our abilities, but in the midst of the temptation and trial, "He will also provide a way of escape."

He knows our tolerances, He understands what we can and cannot take, and He will always give us options.

David understood this very well.

Unfortunately, when I find myself stressed, I forget too much of what I know — and should know!

I have read that in a stressful situation, many people can forget up to 40 percent of what they know.

The solution? To over prepare.

Since I have been married, I have experienced a lot of stress (but this has nothing to do with my wife).

In the midst of the stress I have never been tempted to forget I was married.

Why haven't I forgotten? It is because of my great relationship with my wife. That and my relationship with Christ serve to define who I am.

So, are we defining ourselves by our circumstances or by Christ?



Jim Grieme
pastor, Watkins Chapel Baptist Church

Receive Comfort — Give Comfort

Focal Passage: 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

In 2 Corinthians 1:1-11, the overwhelming idea communicated is this: not everything is about us.

In other words, it is not all about me. God, being the "God of all comfort," grants us comfort so we might be able to comfort others.

Paul intimates the sufferings we face are but an "overflow" of the suffering Christ Himself faced.

Paul is instructing those of us to view our sufferings as an opportunity to minister to those who are suffering.

At first glance we might be tempted to say, "You're kidding, right?"

For many of us, just surviving whatever is afflicting us is tough enough!

Now Paul wants us to view this as a "study hall prep class?"

I grew up in Illinois. Because of this, I have experienced many tornadoes in the middle of the night when our parents would wake us up and either carry us or drive us to a storm shelter.

One of the things I distinctly remember is that my dad always placed himself between the opening in the storm shelter and the rest of us. I knew even then how destructive tornadoes were, but my dad was communicating

"For as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so our comfort overflows through Christ."
— 2 Corinthians 1:5

to us they would go through him first.

We might get wet, or blown on, but we would only get whatever overflowed off of my dad.

Is what Paul is communicating difficult? Yes, it is unbelievably difficult. Is it possible to survive such ordeals?

Only through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul said Christ stood in the way of all of the affliction and suffering first: "as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us."

Where is Jesus when a parent or child dies? Where is he when our spouse is told they have inoperable cancer? Where is Christ when madmen fly a plane into a building trapping hundreds of people?

He is there, accepting the full-blow of the pain and only allowing us to receive, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "(God) is faithful, and He will not allow (us) to be tempted beyond what (we) are able."

If everything Jesus did during His earthly ministry was done for the glory of God, should we not remind ourselves that everything in an obedient believer's life accomplishes the same thing? Let us

remind ourselves of the grace given to us, so in turn, we may give it to others.

Since every experience we

have is custom made for our lives, those same experiences enable us to minister to others for God's glory.

Disaster pushes Japanese beyond secular thinking

(Continued from Page 1)

War II — a time when the nation pulled together and persevered.

The neighbor has no doubts that Japan will rebuild and make it on their own.

“They really believe that in themselves they have what they need, which makes it very difficult to share the gospel,” Fujino says.

“What we need is for people to be shaken and realize that you need something outside of yourself — God.” The 1995 Kobe earthquake did just that for Yoko Dorsey.

She lost everything.

In Japan, she explains, people work for material things. They are defined by what they own. So when it is lost, you lose everything — worth, pride and value.

The 60-year-old member of Tokyo Baptist Church says she thought at the time she could depend on herself, just as many Japanese feel today.

“I learned in the Kobe earthquake that I needed God. I learned that I don’t need material things. My heart opened up,” she says. “I think God saved me back then because He wants to use me now.”

Dorsey took in a single mother and her daughter whose other family members remain missing. As people evacuate from the disaster zone to Tokyo, she plans to bring even more to live with her.



GOING — A couple of volunteers from North Carolina Baptist Men help unload food at an evacuation center in Japan. The volunteers were part of a search and rescue team that responded when the earthquake first hit. When disaster strikes it is typical for North Carolina to send Baptists to help. The nuclear reactor issues have caused some delays in sending volunteers. Baptist Global Response and N.C. Baptist Men are in the process of working with Japanese Baptists to get money to the hardest hit areas. Because of the uncertainties with the nuclear crisis, officials with North Carolina Baptist Men are waiting to see how they can best help. Right now that is sending money.

She explains that the Japanese government will take care of things and rebuild houses in a few months, but she can do something even bigger — introduce people to the God who can rebuild their lives.

“I have a really strong God,” she says. “I want those people in the disaster to know my God’s strength and power.”

Dorsey cannot make it to the disaster zone yet because of radiation fears,

not to mention the lack of government permits, but she’s doing what she can in Tokyo.

From her church just a few miles from the Shinto shrine, she prays for her country.

Dorsey’s prayers are different than those hanging in the shrine. Hers are not “wishes” or “hopes.” She knows her God personally and knows He will provide.

(EDITOR’S NOTE — Rain is an IMB writer/editor living in Asia. The International Mission Board has established a relief fund for the Japan earthquake. Donations may be sent to: Office of Finance, International Mission Board, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, VA 23230. In the memo line write “Japan Response Fund.” Or you can give online by going to imb.org and clicking on the “Japan response” button. For further information, call the IMB toll-free at 1-800-999-3113. North Carolina Baptist Men is also collecting funds to help with recovery efforts. Make check payable to N.C. Baptist Men, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512. Designate your check Japan Earthquake/Tsunami Fund.)

IMB leader makes bold challenge

(Continued from Page 1)

Elliff, 67, is a long-time Oklahoma pastor, former missionary, denominational leader as well as author and speaker.

Clyde Meador, an IMB vice president, had been serving as interim president since Jerry Ranking retired last year.

At age 67, Elliff’s age has raised some questions about the longevity of his presidency.

“It’s unfortunate that some people’s vision for their lives stop at 65,” Elliff said.

“I’ve hardly started. I have work to do.”

“When studying the Bible the issue was never age. It’s always obedience.”

Elliff said the IMB needs to be good stewards of what Southern Baptists have given.

“The biggest issue is we need ... to be doing God’s work God’s way,” he said.

A firm believer in the Cooperative Program, Elliff stressed that Southern Baptists can do better to serve God collectively than as individuals or churches.

Making a commitment

The effort to reach the unreached will take “major adjustments to the real commitment of Southern Baptist people to prayerfully and financially support reaching the unreached peoples,” Hollifield said.

This effort will take a significant shift — a “radical, sacrificial obedience” — Hollifield stressed, of time, resources, etc., but he wants “to have the joy of being a part in what God is doing.”

Jackson said his church had not taken on this challenge before but plans to prayerfully approach adopting a people group in the coming year.

To find out more about adopting a people group, visit www.imb.org. There are also other stories about Elliff.

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Pastor

Enon Baptist Church of Salisbury, NC, is seeking a **full-time Sr. Pastor**. We are a Baptist church associated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. We would prefer someone with at least 10 years experience for sr. pastor and we have adopted the 1963 Baptist Faith and have a blended worship style. Also, we would like someone with a master divinity, but it is not required. Our motto is “Love God, Love Others, Serve in Jesus’ Name.” All interested applicants please send your resume to: 1875 Enon Church Rd., Salisbury, NC 28147.

SEEKING SENIOR PASTOR. Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Hayesville, NC, is seeking senior pastor for 200+ active members. Located 90 miles north of Atlanta, GA, and 90 miles west of Asheville, NC. Send resume to: MPBC — Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 52, Hayesville, NC 28904 or email to office@burchinsurance.net.

Virginia Church Planter. Seeking godly, proven leader for church plant in the I-81/66 bedroom communities 75 miles NW of Washington, D.C., for growth area of the Shenandoah Valley, known for its rich history and small town appeal. This plant offers a strong support network. Please send resume to Phil and Jody Faig, Co-Coordinator, V3/A Church Multiplication Movement of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board at jody.faig@vbmb.org.

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

Church Staff

Full-Time Youth Pastor. Cheraw First Baptist located in Cheraw, SC, is accepting resumes for youth pastor. Please send resume with references to pastorsearch@cherawhc.com. More information on this position is available at cherawfbc.com.

Lakeview Baptist Church, Monroe, NC, is seeking a **full time Minister to Students** (children through college). Ordination and experience required. E-mail resume to Sjirgal@lakeviewfamily.org.

Stony Point Baptist Church seeks a **full-time Associate Pastor**. This man should be self-motivated, have strong work ethic and called by God with a heart for youth and evangelism. A bachelor’s degree or in pursuant of degree required. SPBC is a conservative church with a desire to be firmly rooted in the word of God. We strongly affirm and support the Cooperative Program and the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Send resume’s to Associate Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 198, Stony Point, NC 28678.

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

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

PT Director of Children’s Ministries. Passionate about leading children and families closer to Jesus? Growing Greensboro-area church seeks director 20 hours per week, flexible schedule. Details: www.gatecitybaptist.org.

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Baptist relief efforts still touch Chileans' hearts

By Maria Elena Baseler
Baptist Press

A little more than a year ago, one of the most powerful earthquakes on record rocked Chile. Since then, working in Baptist quake relief efforts has led missionary Alfredo Valencia to many suffering families.

But he'll never forget one family in particular.

Valencia found them living in a partially collapsed home on a hillside in Cartagena, Chile, a coastal town hit hard by the 8.8-magnitude quake that shattered central Chile early Feb. 27, 2010.

The family with eight children — ranging from ages two months to 17 years — “were living in really, really bad conditions,” recalls Valencia, an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary in Santiago, Chile.

It was months after the disaster had struck, and Baptist quake relief efforts were drawing to a close.

By then local officials had deemed the family's house uninhabitable and had asked them to move out.

But the family had nowhere else to go.

When Valencia saw their urgent need, “I said, ‘God, You’ve got to provide for us to be able to help this family.’”

God's answer came when Valencia's cell phone rang.

It was a member of a team of California Baptist volunteers heading to Chile to build “mediaguas” — prefab temporary shelters — for quake victims. Valencia told the volunteer about the family.

The two discussed options for helping and agreed the family needed more than a 10-by-20-foot temporary shelter. The volunteer said his team was willing to rebuild the house.

The California Baptists spent seven days — working from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. — reconstructing the house with the help of Marcos, the father of the family. When their work was completed, the group celebrated with a thanksgiving service. During that service, Marcos prayed to receive Christ. Today, he and his family are studying the Bible at a Baptist mission congregation in Cartagena.

“The eight kids in this family will grow up one day, and they will have a story to tell about how they survived the earthquake — and what God did with their house,” Valencia said. “They will remember us as those who came to their house with the gospel, because God allowed us the time and resources to rebuild.”

“But what God really rebuilt for that family was their lives — their hope. And He used us to help them understand they truly mattered to God.”

Since the devastating earthquake and subsequent tsunami that claimed the lives of 524 people in Chile, hundreds of Chileans have received that same message through Baptist relief efforts. Together Chilean Baptists, Southern Baptist volunteers and International Mission Board missionaries have met countless physical, spiritual and emotional needs in Jesus' name.

A total of \$722,000 in Southern Baptist disaster response funds helped finance the relief effort.

“As we mark the anniversary of this powerful earthquake, we are eternally



IMB photo by Cameron West

DAMAGED SCHOOL — North Carolinians Charles and Karen Clark, left, International Mission Board missionaries in Chile, survey quake damage at a school in Botalcura, Chile. After the powerful earthquake that rocked Chile a year ago, local officials told Clark of a need for new classrooms so area schoolchildren could begin the new semester on time. Clark, who headed up Southern Baptists' quake relief in Chile, arranged for a team of California Baptist volunteers to build 10 temporary shelters for use as classrooms. At right, a Chilean primary school student reads a Bible storybook given by Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists also donated socks with a Bible verse tucked inside and school supplies for each student.

grateful to Southern Baptists for addressing the human needs of people around the world, particularly here in Chile in light of this disaster,” said IMB missionary Charles Clark, who headed up Southern Baptist quake relief in Chile.

“We appreciate so much the many Southern Baptists who gave sacrificially of their time and money to meet the needs of Chileans. And we are equally thankful for our Chilean Baptist partners who we joined forces with to meet the immediate needs of those most affected by the quake.”

During the relief effort, Baptist volunteers shared the hope of Christ while building about 350 temporary shelters used for homes and schoolrooms while serving at least 150,000 meals prepared in field kitchens.

Besides financing these projects, Southern Baptist disaster relief contributions also funded the training of 3,000 Chileans in crisis counseling techniques to help survivors cope with post-quake trauma.

Baptist quake relief opened many other doors for sharing the gospel across the disaster zone.

One of those was in the small town of Botalcura, where the public primary

school was heavily damaged. When Clark heard about the need from local officials, he arranged for California Baptist volunteers to construct 10 temporary shelters for use as classrooms so students could begin the new semester on time. Several fathers of school children and some Chilean military personnel worked alongside the team in the construction.

Southern Baptists provided a Bible for each classroom and a Bible storybook for each child. Tennessee Baptist youth donated school supplies. Volunteers from Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala., delivered the items along with a gift of socks — with a verse tucked inside — for each student.

Clark and his wife Karen, who live about a three-hour drive away in Chile's capital of Santiago, developed a relationship with one of the Botalcura school families who hosted volunteers in their home.

They shared the gospel with them and gave them a Bible. “They are very open to the gospel and have even offered their home for a Bible study group to meet there,” Karen Clark reported.

Asking Southern Baptists to pray that God will lead some Chilean Baptists in the region to start a church in Botal-

cura and surrounding communities, she noted, “There's a real hunger for the gospel there.”

Across the disaster zone, God also opened doors through the operation of Baptist feeding kitchens and the construction of mediaguas used for homes. In the town of Talca, for example, several Chilean families who received Baptist aid now are attending Iglesia Bautista El Sembrador (Baptist Church of the Sower), where a feeding kitchen was set up.

The relief project also paved the way for future cooperative ministry among Chilean Baptists and Southern Baptists.

Because of needs their volunteers saw in Chile, several Southern Baptist churches have formed partnerships with Chilean Baptist churches.

“We are exploring opportunities for closer partnerships and joint training to be able to respond more effectively together in future disaster relief and community development projects,” Clark said.

Besides these results, the relief project brought opportunities for evangelism even beyond Chile. Before the quake, a team of Chilean Baptist young people from Santiago had been praying about how to share the gospel during an upcoming mission trip to Uruguay.

They told about their experiences serving as volunteers in the Baptist quake relief efforts and gave God the glory for how He had met the needs of Chileans. They were interviewed by numerous Uruguayan media outlets and spoke in many schools.

“God used them in a mighty way,” Valencia said, adding, “It's one of the many ways God used the tragedy of this earthquake for His purposes.”

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Baseler is an International Mission Board writer living in the Americas. Tristan Taylor, also an IMB writer in the Americas, contributed to this story.)

Pray for Chile

- Pray for Chilean families who are still coping with the quake's aftermath. Many Chileans still live in temporary shelters and don't have work. Pray God will provide them the necessary resources for rebuilding their lives.
- Ask the Lord to help several Chilean Baptist congregations who lost their church buildings in the quake. Pray God will help them find the means to rebuild while they continue to minister in their communities.
- During quake relief, Baptists found a number of small towns where no evangelical church exists. Ask God to give Chilean Baptists a vision for reaching these towns.
- Pray about the possibility of your church forming a partnership with a Chilean Baptist church. This three-to-five year commitment provides opportunities in evangelism and church planting in the quake zone and among unreached population segments of Chile. To learn more, contact IMB missionaries Jerry and Paula Bowling at losbowlings@aol.com.