

LOOK INSIDE FOR

Easter feature columns

BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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RECONCILED: Baptists on Mission speakers share stories of God's mercy

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

“In our brokenness, God sees and cares about us,” Richard Brunson said about Christians and their God. “Our God is a God who reconciles.”

“Reconciled” was the theme – based on 2 Corinthians 5:18: “*All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*” (NIV) – for this year’s Baptists on Mission conference March 17-18 at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

Brunson serves as the executive director-treasurer of North Carolina Baptists on Mission (NCBM), also known as North Carolina Baptist Men.

Throughout the Friday and Saturday sessions, Brunson shared about NCBM’s 17 different ministries with the more than 1,600 participants, a capacity crowd for the church. An offering raised \$16,223 for NCBM.

He also referred to the many Bible sto-

ries that reflect that theme – the prodigal son, woman at the well and Zaccheus.

One of the biggest ministries of NCBM is disaster relief, which “is a great way to bless others and be a part of reconciliation to people whose lives have been torn apart because of disasters.”

For North Carolinians, Hurricane Matthew and the subsequent floods devastated more than 40,000 homes.

“You know when you’ve lost most everything you own, it’s easy also to lose hope, but Christians who have hope are the ones who can best provide hope for hurting people, preparing the way for Jesus to bring reconciliation,” he said.

N.C. Baptists were among the first to respond with hot meals, clean water, chaplains, showers, laundry and child care when the hurricane hit the state Oct. 8, 2016. They worked closely with Red Cross and other local agencies and churches to get items and volunteers where they were most needed.



John Ortberg said an open door is “symbolic of boundless opportunities, of unlimited chances to do something worthwhile.” (BR photo by Steve Cooke)

Eleven sites administered help in those first days, and NCBM has pledged to provide help over the next few years as more people return to their homes.

The Annie Moses Band provided music for the conference, while speakers included Anne Graham Lotz, John Ortberg and Gary Chapman.

Testimonies of reconciliation were

offered by Terry Rae, Jennifer Rothschild (see separate story on page 8) and Taylor Field.

Daniel's prayer

Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of Billy Graham, offered five keys from Daniel 9 to pray effectively: Daniel prayed under

[See Reconciled page 9](#)

Reality TV series #PREACHED delivers ‘authentic Christianity’

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

There are more than one billion websites on the internet and hundreds of cable channels, but there is nothing like “#PREACHED,” according to Pastor Matt Chewning. “I never in my wildest dreams thought I would be doing something like this TV show.”

The new reality series follows Chewning as he talks to Christians and non-Christians in New England about real life issues. Through his interactions, Chewning demonstrates that authentic Christianity can be fun and normal, yet full of honest, broken people who are just like everyone else, according to the show’s publicist.

“It breaks down many stigmas that Christians fight

against every day, yet it also shows the beauty of how we walk with a confidence, hope and security in Jesus.”

Two dozen episodes were released in February through Verizon’s Go90 app and website, go90.com. Go90, a streaming platform similar to Netflix, is now a standard feature on Verizon devices, but not limited to their customers. Public response to the series has been positive.

Chewning left the security of a lucrative job in North Carolina almost seven years ago to start NetCast Church in the Boston suburb of Beverly, Mass.

With support from the North American Mission Board, North Carolina Baptist churches and others, the

[See Reality page 10](#)



Matt Chewning, right, pastor of NetCast Church in Beverly, Mass., talks with his wife during taping of “#PREACHED,” a reality show on Go90. (Screen capture from go90.com)

Pence-Graham rule causes media frenzy

The media reported that Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch may make it through the confirmation process in the Senate. At the same time, headlines told us the repeal of Obamacare was disastrously dead. On international fronts, Russian President Vladimir Putin has reportedly interfered in last year's president election in the United States and the insane leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, is ready to take on the whole world with his nuclear weapons.

But what was the biggest news of the week? Mike Pence, vice president of the United States, is committed to his wife!

Everyone learned that the VP and his wife, Karen, have disciplined boundaries for their marriage. One news report called the guidelines “unusually strict.”

Ashley Parker, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, wrote a story about the Pences' 32-year marriage and their mutual commitment to the Christian faith. She explained that the VP never eats alone with a woman who is not his wife. This standard is often called the “Billy Graham rule” because this has been the announced practice of Billy Graham through his marriage.

By now, everyone knows about the social media eruption that followed a tweet by Parker. Newspapers, television networks, cable news, blogs and websites carried the tirade along with countless articles. Everyone wanted to take sides over this strange information.

Believe it or not, a simple biblical standard caused some to endure a complete meltdown – they literally freaked out. They seemed utterly shocked that such Stone Age ideals actually exist in our modern, progressive world.

Some thought the VP was courting Sharia law – the Islamic legal system that is imposed on national and local governments by the Muslim faith. Pence was taunted and ridiculed with labels such as “sexist” and “chauvinist.” There were accusations that his practice is discrimi-

natory and illegal.

Baptist Press reported that Clara Jeffery, editor-in-chief of the liberal publication *Mother Jones*, tweeted a series of responses claiming, among other things, that the vice president relegates women as “second class citizens.”

The fact that the vice president's self-imposed standards caused such a fuss in social media and mainline news only demonstrates the stark contrast between the far left progressive mind set and the traditional Christian world view. Progressives just don't understand.

They live in a strange bubble. Of course, we live in a completely different bubble, and I understand that they might say my bubble is very strange. That's the point! It is very ordinary for each of us to believe our world, our bubble, is the norm for everyone else. But, it is not the case.

When you think about it, it's actually very self-centered to believe that my personal world and the worldview I embrace is the norm for everyone else.

I will take that thought a step further. It is also incredibly naive. It is non-missional.

Christians should not be shocked when we witness one more example of the temporal world system that wars against the Christian faith. It would be humorous if it were not so tragic.

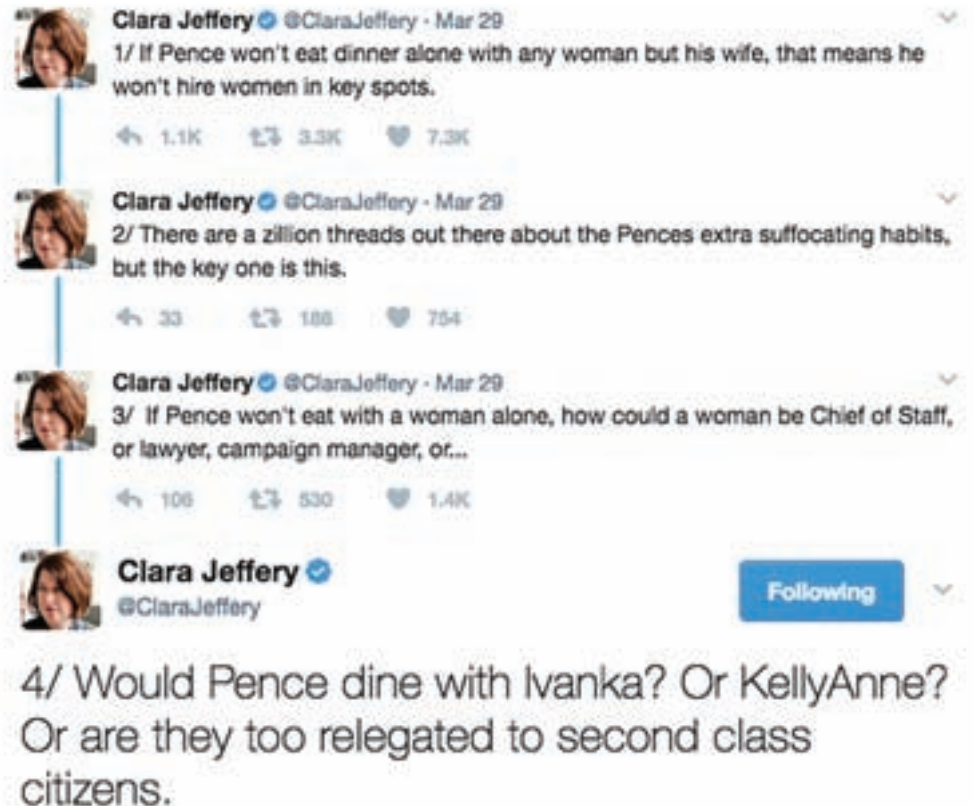
The world that lives apart from Christ does not see the truth of God. Like the parables of Jesus, they hear, but they do not understand. They are deaf and blind. Spiritual blindness is part of the state of lostness. Spiritual deafness is what it means to be lost.

This is at the core of the Apostle Paul's message in Ephesians 2. We were once “dead in trespasses and sins,” and “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.”

Before we submitted to God's truth, we “conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor



mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Paul continued writing his letter with full awareness that the only difference between himself and the lost, confused world around him is God's love, grace and mercy. “*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

There we have it. We are very different. Our standards are different. We think in ways that are very different from the systems of this world.

Our God is timeless and unique. Those trapped in the short-sighted ways of this age are baffled by the eternal nature of God and His children.

They are surprised that there are many additional Billy Graham rules and Mike Pence rules that we have imposed on ourselves because we are keenly aware of our sin nature, hence our need for boundaries.

Personally, I wholeheartedly agree with Mike Pence. I have the same standard in my relationship with my wife.

National Public Radio (NPR) wrote a column the points to four important Billy Graham rules, or standards, that he set for himself early in his ministry. They point first to Graham's financial accountability and second, to his safeguards from sexual immorality.

Third, Graham refrained from criticizing pastors and local churches. Fourth on the NPR list is the standard of accurate publicity, that is, not exaggerating attendance numbers and successes.

I would add another prominent Graham standard. Wisely, he did not defend himself. It is easy to create wars with our words. He admitted when he was wrong, but he did not engage in defensive battles when he believed he faithfully represented biblical truth.

The Christian faith is not a legalistic list of rules. But every believer needs personal standards – about finances, sexual purity, vocabulary, alcohol and all other areas of life – because our witness is important.

Thank you, Vice President Pence, for reminding us of this high value. **BR**

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IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Easter: an opportunity to plant seeds of truth

As Christians, Easter is a very special time for us each year. On Resurrection Sunday, we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death and the salvation that we now have in Him.

However, this Easter season, I would like to invite you to think about those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. In our state, we are blessed to have many people living among us who have little or no religious background and may have very confusing beliefs about what Christianity is all about.

The wonderful thing about Easter is that it provides an opportunity to open the door to begin sharing the gospel. As Christ followers, we should not assume that



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

people know why we celebrate Easter, and during this season, people may be more receptive to hearing about the true meaning and implications of Resurrection Sunday.

Here at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, we have some excellent resources for sharing the gospel with non-believers. One such resource is *The Story* material, which can be found online at viewthestory.com. It is also available in pamphlet form so that you may carry it with you to share

the gospel with others.

I recently had an opportunity to use *The Story* to introduce the gospel to a young woman who had a Muslim background. I was attending a conference in California and was walking around one afternoon, when I saw a woman standing outside. I began engaging her in conversation, asking her if she had any religious beliefs.

It was then that she shared with me that she was Muslim, but that she had not been active in her faith since she came to the United States. When I began speaking about my own belief in the gospel, she told me that she had many questions. I could tell she was searching for truth.

Because I carry in my pocket copies of *The Story*, I was able to share the highlights of God's story with her. I left the pamphlet with her that afternoon, and even though I did not get to lead her to Christ that day, I was blessed with the opportunity to plant a seed for the gospel.

I share my own experience with you because I have seen first-hand how scarce knowledge of the gospel is in our state and nation. It should break our hearts when we think of those around us who do not know the Lord and do not have the joy of eternal life in Him. This Easter season, please join me in sharing the message of the gospel with those who might not know the Lord. Even if you do not have the opportunity to witness a salvation decision, every conversation you have about the saving power of Jesus Christ will plant a seed. The apostle Paul reminds us of the process of leading a person to Christ when he said in I Corinthians 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." **BR**

Six 'common sense' reasons to support the Cooperative Program

By MIKE CRESWELL | Guest Column

Churches do not give to the Cooperative Program (CP).

Rather, churches fund missions, church planting and numerous other ministries *through* the Cooperative Program.

CP is not a destination for dollars but a channel for missions support.

CP allows churches to set aside a percentage of their income into a shared pool of funds so that, in partnership with other Baptists, they can accomplish a wide range of kingdom ministries they could not possibly accomplish alone.

Through the Cooperative Program, North Carolina Baptists partner with some 16 million Baptists in 46,000 churches for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) three primary ministries: international missions, North American missions and the six SBC seminaries, including Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here in our state.

So that's CP. A church agrees on a budget and sends money through that budget to support a variety of ministries. It's that simple. It's common sense.

Here are six "common sense" reasons to support the Cooperative Program:

1. CP is biblical.

From the book of Acts in the New Testament, we see how the early churches cooperated to send and support missionaries.

2. CP allows churches of all sizes to contribute.

Small churches that could not send even one missionary can have a part in the greatest missions support system ever created. But even big-budget churches with thousands of members can accomplish more in partnership with other churches than they could manage alone.

3. CP is amazingly effective.

Since it started in 1925, CP has enabled thousands of independent-minded, autonomous churches to unite together in missions and ministry causes. CP has enabled Baptists to establish schools, hospitals, orphanages and many other ministries we agreed on, all while leaving the autonomy of local churches unimpeded.

4. CP has enabled Baptists to do big stuff.

Consider that our churches – where the overwhelming majority average well under 200 members – established some huge ministries. When Baptists decided they needed seminaries to train pastors and missionaries, they established six of them. Now all six SBC seminaries rank among the nation's top 10 seminaries by enrollment, collectively equipping more than 18,000 students.

Consider that our International Mission Board (IMB) sends thousands of missionaries into some of the world's most dangerous places to share the gospel. The IMB has also been a leader in identifying unreached people groups and figuring out how to get the gospel to them.

Consider that through our North American Mission Board, we as Southern Baptists helped start about 40 percent of all new churches that were started in the United States last year. That works out to an average of two new churches every day, 365 days a year.

5. CP is efficient.

Every financing system has costs, whether you call it overhead or administrative costs. Administration and overhead of the SBC comes to less than 3 percent of its budget. And that includes having those huge annual meetings in June each year.

State conventions' costs are similar. While some of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) staff are focused on administration or support, most are directly involved in ministries that help existing churches minister more effectively or help new churches get started.

In other words, they are focused on ministry, not overhead. Compared with most non-profits, BSC's overhead is shockingly low.

6. CP is flexible.

We all talk about how rapid change is these days. Turns out that the seemingly old-fashioned system of having an annual meeting to set next year's budget is quite compatible with a changing society.

Ministries can be added, dropped or otherwise adapted as conditions change. For example, the 2017 budget is quite different from the one 10 years ago.

Many churches will recognize Sunday, April 9 as Cooperative Program Sunday. It might be a good day to ponder and thank God for what a bunch of autonomous Baptist churches have been able to do together by following what the Bible teaches and being willing to partner with other Baptists.

It might also be a good day to ask God what He may be leading your church do in the future. Consider that if all of the approximately 4,300 churches in our state that are affiliated with the BSC increased CP giving by just 1 percent, it would produce an additional \$6 million each year for missions and ministry.

Given all this, doesn't supporting CP seem to be a good idea for your church? And doesn't increasing your church's Cooperative Program giving just seem like common sense?

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Mike Creswell serves as a senior consultant with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.) **BR**



Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

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

Holbrook retires after 32 years as director of Caswell

By **EMILY ROJAS** | BSC Communications

As a high school and college student, Rick Holbrook looked forward to summers at Caswell.

The son of a Baptist minister, Holbrook spent his teenage and young adult years working just about every job available to a summer staff member at the N.C. Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell, from serving in the cafeteria to being a lifeguard and working with the boys' summer staff.

Holbrook never dreamed he would one day serve as the facility's director.

Fifteen years later, after spending time in the military and as the director of admissions at Gardner Webb University, Holbrook accepted that very role, moving his wife, Kathryn, and their children back to Oak Island.

Now, after achieving countless improvements at Caswell and serving as its director for over 32 years, Holbrook will be leaving the Assembly to retire this summer.

In 1984, Hurricane Diana devastated the eastern coast of North Carolina, and North Carolina Baptists on Mission (NCBM) took on the site as its personal renovation project.

NCBM, then in its first year of disaster relief missions, along with Holbrook, who accepted his current position as director in 1985, worked together to renovate each residence and conference facility at Caswell, creating a place of retreat and growth for all who visit.

"Rick Holbrook has done an outstanding job in helping to make Caswell what it is today," said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

"The Lord has truly used him as an instrument to change lives, and I am truly grateful for Rick's influence on N.C. Baptists. I do not believe we could have had a better person to lead our work at the N.C. Baptist Assembly than Rick Holbrook. For many years in the future, I predict we will continue to value and appreciate his accomplishments and influence at Caswell," Hollifield said.

Under Holbrook's leadership, Caswell also shifted from a seasonal facility to a year-round destination.

Today, approximately 40,000 guests visit Caswell yearly for events such as summer youth weeks, homeschool trips, senior adult events, women's retreats, environmental stewardship classes, family retreats, and other activities.

As a result, the Assembly at Fort Cas-



For more than 32 years, Rick Holbrook has overseen Fort Caswell as its director. "Rick Holbrook has done an outstanding job in helping to make Caswell what it is today," said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., Baptist State Convention of North Carolina executive director-treasurer. During the past 16 years of summer youth weeks, a recorded 6,016 students made first-time decisions to follow Christ, and 3,441 answered a call to ministry. (BSC file photo by K Brown)

well has become a place where hundreds of decisions for Christ are made year after year. During the past 16 years of summer youth weeks, a recorded 6,016 students made first-time decisions for Christ, and 3,441 answered a call to ministry. It is likely that more people have made decisions for Christ at Fort Caswell than at any other location in North Carolina.

Holbrook led the organization through changes that reach beyond Caswell's activities and programs. Holbrook's passion for Caswell and BSC staff created an atmosphere of humility and gratitude that imbues personal relationships at work.

"Personally, working with Rick has been one of the highlights of my time with the BSC," said John Butler, executive leader of business services at the BSC. "Rick Holbrook is the epitome of what I believe Jesus wanted servant leadership to look like – he has always put the needs of our churches and N.C. Baptists ahead of his own desires and has trained his staff to do the same. (Holbrook) has become a friend, a confidant and an example for me, and I will never stop being appreciative of all he has done to help me be more effective in my role at the convention."

Though much has changed over the years, Holbrook's joy and gratitude have remained the same.

"These things are humbling – you have

to believe that God could have accomplished His purpose with anybody here,"

Holbrook said. "I just happened to be the one." **BR**



RICK HOLBROOK



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Prayer gathering emphasizes need for personal revival

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Revival must take place in the hearts of God's people before it will take place in America.

That was a recurring message shared by pastors and ministry leaders at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) statewide prayer gathering, sponsored by the Office of Prayer for Evangelization and Spiritual Awakening and held Friday and Saturday, March 10-11 at Osborne Baptist Church in Eden. The event's theme was "Awaken" based on Joel 2:13 and included a series of messages and times of focused prayer for revival and spiritual awakening.

"We need a revival in the church that will usher in a spiritual awakening in the land," said K. Marshall Williams, senior pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church in Philadelphia, in the gathering's concluding sermon.

Williams' message summarized a common theme shared throughout the weekend.

While many Christians say they want to see revival take place, God's people aren't desperate enough or willing to pay the price to see the hand of God move.

'Spiritually sick'

Gordon Fort, former missionary and senior ambassador for the president of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention, said America is "spiritually sick" and lamented over the fact that although North America is saturated with the gospel, it is



K. Marshall Williams, senior pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church in Philadelphia, offered the closing sermon at the March 10-11 Awaken – A North Carolina Prayer Gathering at Osborne Baptist Church in Eden, N.C. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

not penetrating our communities. "How much more gospel do we need to have the evidence of God in our nation?" Fort asked.

Fort said the church has lost its influence and impact not just in the community, but within the congregation, as well. Fort said that every sin that can be found in the community can also be found inside the church in the lives of unrepentant members.

"The people in the house of God know the sin that exists in their church," Fort said. "Those individuals who come in the house of God living in known rebellious sin sit comfortably in our midst, sing along with us, read along with the

scriptures, hear the sermon preached, the invitation given, and they leave and go out and have their lunch, and they are not changed and not under conviction in one bit."

Fort said the great need of our day is for individuals to become broken over sin and desperate for God, recognizing that He is our only hope as we return to Him in prayer.

"We have only one hope," Fort said. "This is not a problem that we can fix ourselves. It's not a problem that can be fixed from Washington, D.C., by government. This is only a problem that can be fixed by the people of God when they are desperate enough to call on Him in the power of God."

'A desperate condition'

Mel Blackaby, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Ga., followed up on Fort's theme of desperation by explaining that God often places His followers in seemingly impossible situations to demonstrate His glory and power.

Citing the biblical examples of Moses at the Red Sea, Gideon's army of 300 soldiers and Joshua at the city of Jericho, Blackaby shared how God often "creates impossible situations that require faith."

"Sometimes God has to get you to the end of yourself so you will see Him like never before," Blackaby said.

Blackaby noted that throughout history, God has never brought about revival through prosperity. Instead, revival has come through persecution, poverty or some other great need.

"Sometimes God takes you through an impossible situation just to get you on your knees," Blackaby said.

"God just may create an opportunity to cry out to Him like never before. So don't get discouraged at the condition of America. God may be answering your prayer for revival by creating a desperate condition.

"That may be what it takes for the church to become a house of prayer."

'Awakening always requires change'

In the opening sermon, host pastor Steve Griffith posed the question to attendees that if God desires His people to experience spiritual awakening, and His people say they want it, then what's the problem?

"Is the problem with God, or is the problem with us?" Griffith asked. "What we think we want, we don't really want because we're not sure we want to pay the price."

Griffith preached on "How to Have Spiritual Awakening" from Jeremiah 1:4-19. Griffith warned that believers and churches seeking revival and spiritual awakening would face challenges and opposition.

"Awakening always requires change because God is doing something new," Griffith said.

"What has to change in your heart for there to be awakening?"

See Prayer page 12

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Three commands from an empty tomb

Baptist Press

“The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you’” (Matthew 28:5-7 NASB).

Springtime is here. Dogwoods and daffodils bloom as winter retreats and warmer days are welcomed.

Across America, churches will soon be packed on Easter Sunday.

Why?

Easter is about forgiveness and hope through a sacred death and an empty tomb. Easter is about the grimness of the grave being overcome. It is about Jesus Christ rising bodily, victoriously and eternally from the grave.

Behold our resurrected Lord triumphantly displaying the keys to death, hell and the grave in His nail-scarred hands! No wonder Easter is the annual apex for all Christians.

No other religion dares to make such claims. Muslims readily admit that Muhammad is dead. Buddha and Confucius are also in the grave, as is Joseph Smith. But after Jesus died, He rose from the grave, never to die again.

The women who followed Jesus to Jerusalem from Galilee had gone to the tomb to properly anoint their Lord for burial. There they found an angel who gave them three significant commands:

The first command was “Do not be afraid” (v. 5).

Those women came to the tomb wondering how they would remove the stone so they could anoint Jesus’ body (cf. Mark 16:1).

But when they arrived, an angel had already rolled the stone away (cf. Matthew 28:2).

Jesus was not there – He had risen! And because He had risen, there would never again be a valid reason for fear. As Bill Gaither’s song says, “Because He lives, all fear is gone.”

The angel’s second command was “Come, see” (v. 6).

There was nothing to hide. Jesus’ body had not been stolen. This was no gimmick or fabrication, as the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem slyly suggested (cf. Matthew 28:11f).

Jesus was really alive.

The angel rolled the stone away, not to allow Jesus to leave the grave, but to let the women and everyone else to look in! Jesus’ burial proved His actual death. His empty tomb proved His actual resurrection. Now everyone could “come, see” for themselves.

The third command was, “Go quickly and tell” (v. 7).

The Good News of Jesus’ resurrection demanded sharing. The angel’s words at this point were similar to those spoken by Jesus after His resurrection and prior to His ascension: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15, NASB). Jesus had risen from the grave and His disciples were commissioned to take that Good News to the ends of the earth.

As they proclaimed the gospel message, people repented of their sins, believed that Jesus died and rose for their salvation and received Jesus as Lord and Savior by calling on His name in humble prayer. The book of Acts describes how those early disciples boldly shared the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome in just three decades. They could not stop speaking of what they had “seen and heard” (cf. Acts 4:20).

Today we who follow Jesus must continue to tell the world the saving message of His death, burial and resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

No religion in the world claims anything like Jesus’ empty tomb. His vicarious death and victorious resurrection are what make the Good News “good.”

The angel’s three commands echo through the centuries, calling out to us this Easter season. By faith, with spirit-ears, we still hear His commands:

“Jesus is alive! Do not be afraid!”

“Jesus is alive! Come, see!”

“Jesus is alive! Go quickly and tell!”

Southern Baptists, that is the message of Easter!

That is what we must share with our lost neighbors. We must tell everyone that there is hope, healing and forgiveness for anyone who comes to Christ in repentance and faith, and that salvation comes from the bloody cross and empty tomb of Jesus.

Do not be afraid. Come and see. Go quickly and tell.

Have a glorious Easter!

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Steve Gaines is president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church.) **BR**



STEVE GAINES
Guest Column

Resurrection life: Christ will always be more than enough

Baptist Press

I was completely blindsided after being called into a meeting at my church with another woman in leadership who had been upset with me for months. But sadly, I had no idea until she told me in our meeting that morning.

Months earlier, someone told her I didn’t agree with her leadership style. But that wasn’t what I’d said in a team meeting with several other leaders. Our women’s ministry director had asked my opinion about leadership training, and I shared my thoughts, but nothing I said was directed at her.

We both volunteered countless hours in ministry, pouring our hearts and lives into women in our church.

All the while, we were on the same team, and I assumed we fully supported one another. But now the trust we had built for years was unraveling.

Driving home, my spirit felt crushed.

It felt like I just didn’t have it in me to keep pouring out with the risk of being misrepresented and misunderstood again. I wasn’t strong enough or resilient enough. And I was exhausted from the hurt I felt and hurt I had caused.

That afternoon, I sat in my home office in tears. Laying my head down on my desk, I told God, “I can’t do this anymore. I’m done.”

After telling Him all the reasons why it was time for me to quit, a truth buried deep in my heart rose to the surface: “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:19b-20).

With my eyes closed, I pictured Jesus crucified. Arms stretched wide and willing. Willing to give His life no matter what it cost Him. Willing to be misunderstood, misrepresented, questioned, rejected, betrayed and hurt beyond comprehension.

Tears streaming down my cheeks, I thought about Jesus on the cross. And I sensed Him asking me to die to my fears and let Him live His life and grace through me.

My eyes still closed and dripping with emotion, I saw the scene of Golgotha with Jesus nailed in cruciform.

But this time, there was a shadow of the cross behind Him, and I sensed the Holy Spirit telling me to lie down on the floor in the shadow of the cross.

I had never had this kind of encounter with God, but I sensed it was His way of showing me how to die to my fears. How to live crucified with Christ and find strength in His resurrection power, exchanging my brokenness for His humility and strength.

Lying in the shadow of the cross, I rested and waited for strength to get up again, strength to stand at the crossroad and decide: Would I walk away from God’s calling on my life or allow Jesus to live His life through me? Would I protect

myself from getting hurt again or live by faith in the One who died for me?

On our own we aren’t enough. Not strong enough, resilient enough or humble enough. But Christ in us is more than enough.

Jesus didn’t die on the cross just to get us out of hell and into heaven. He died on the cross to get Himself out of heaven and into us!

That is resurrection life – and the very place we get our enough. When we’ve been crucified with Christ, we no longer live, but Christ lives in us, and the life we live, we can choose to live by faith in the One who loved us and gave Himself for us.

By God’s grace, I chose to die to my fears and rise again in His courage by relying on Christ in me to navigate this very difficult relationship, leadership, and ministry situation.

It was far from easy, but I can look back and say it was good because God was in it, and over time our friendship was restored.

Relationships are hard. Being misunderstood and misrepresented makes it especially difficult to stay the course and pour ourselves out for Christ and others. Jesus knew it would be because He faced the same temptation to walk away. Yet, He stayed the course and He stayed on the cross.

This Easter, let’s remember Jesus’ willingness to give up His life for us, knowing He would rise again and, therefore, we could, too.

Let’s receive the resurrection power Christ offers as we open our hearts wide to Him and the life He wants to live through us. Let’s allow Him to be our enough, for indeed He is.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Renee Swope is Craving Connection, a new release from B&H Publishing, and best-selling author of A Confident Heart. This article first appeared in HomeLife, a publication of LifeWay. Learn more at LifeWay.com/magazines.) **BR**



RENEE SWOPE
Guest Column

Church planter excited for N.C. Baptists to ‘Embrace Boston’

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

As a church planter, Dane Helsing says he is thankful for the short-term missions teams that partner and serve alongside him in the Greater Boston area.

But Helsing and his congregation aren't the only ones who benefit.

“Obviously, the church benefits, but members of the mission team benefit, as well,” says Helsing, who planted Beacon Community Church in the Boston suburb of Belmont, Mass., about a year and a half ago. “That’s because God has a way of lighting people’s hearts on fire for His work in other places through missions trips.”

Helsing is looking forward to seeing how God will work this fall when a team from North Carolina will make its way

to Boston to serve alongside Helsing and the congregation of Beacon Community Church.

The Embrace women’s ministry of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) is sponsoring its biennial “Embracing Boston” missions trip again this year. The trip is scheduled for Sept. 14-17 and is open to women college-aged and older.

Space is limited, and interested participants must submit an application by May 5. Cost of the trip is \$675 and includes airfare, lodging, ground transportation, ministry expenses and insurance. More information and application materials are available at embracenc.org/boston.

When an Embrace missions team served in Boston two years ago, team members worked with Helsing just weeks before Beacon Community Church



launched on Sept. 27, 2015. Helsing said he is excited for members of the team coming this fall to see how God is working in the church and in the community.

“As Embrace has led mission teams over the years, I have seen how the Lord uses mission trips in the lives of the women on the team,” said Ashley Allen, who leads the BSC’s Embrace women’s ministry.

“For many ladies, volunteering to serve on a mission team means stepping out of their comfort zone as they engage people by serving and sharing the gospel. However, those same ladies have also seen how the Lord can use an encounter on a bus, at a coffee shop, or by handing out donuts as opportunities to begin building relationships that can lead to questions about God, Jesus, the Bible or the church.

“I think as women engage in conversations on mission trips, they realize they can do these things in their own neighborhoods in North Carolina. Women begin to see their role in the Great Commission ‘as they go.’”

Since Beacon’s launch, Helsing said he and members of his congregation have been hard at work building relationships with others and making inroads in the community. The work is a challenge, Helsing said, because many who live in the region are generally skeptical of the church at large.

Belmont is home to lots of commuters who work in downtown Boston. The church is located near popular train stations and bus lines which provides lots of opportunities to minister to morning commuters. One of the ways the church has sought to serve others and build relationships is by providing free coffee and donuts to morning commuters.

“It’s just one way we try to be a loving and gracious presence to the people here,” Helsing said. “We try to love them, serve them and share the gospel with them on their way to work.”

“We’ve seen people come to church because they’ve received a cup of coffee at the train stop.”

Through the commuter outreach, Helsing said he met a man who had been

on a path of restoration with Christ.

Although, he’d made a profession of faith years before, he’d experienced several years of difficulty and hardship.

Helsing befriended him at the train stop, continued to meet with him regularly and learned more of his story.

Over a period of about six months, Helsing and the congregation continued to minister to him. The man was baptized this past September during the church’s one-year anniversary.

Commuter outreach is one of the ways Helsing plans to work with the Embrace team coming to Boston this fall. In addition, he’s planning other community outreach events for the team involving local schools and parks, areas that Belmont residents take great pride in.

“We love doing servant evangelism and servant outreach in the community,” Helsing said.

The team will also help Helsing with some needs in Beacon’s children’s ministry, as well as participate in prayer walking activities.

Beacon Community Church meets for worship gatherings in a dance studio that was discovered as part of a prayer walk, Helsing said. As he’s gotten to know several business owners on the street where the church meets, Helsing says they are amazed when mission teams come to serve with the church.

“The business owners enjoy meeting the teams of people who come to serve,” Helsing said. “People are always touched by that. They’re like, ‘Wow, you raised money to come up here to serve?’ That’s a foreign concept for them.”

Helsing said he appreciates missions teams’ service and sacrifice, and he loves to witness how God works in the lives of team members through their trips. Helsing said a young woman who was part of a missions team from Texas for a Vacation Bible School event a few summers ago felt called to work with a church plant during her trip. She moved to Boston and ended up helping with the launch of Beacon Community Church.

“She spearheaded the launch of our children’s ministry and served in this role for the first year of the life of our church, all because she went on a missions trip,” Helsing said.

Helsing said he enjoys the relationships he builds with the teams and ongoing prayer and ministry support.

“Church planting is about intersecting life with people, and the more you do that the better,” Helsing said.

“Mission teams help you do that, and they are a huge support for us as a church plant. We love having them come and are looking forward to seeing Ashley and her team again in September.” **BA**

ARE PRAYING, GIVING AND GOING THE ONLY WAYS TO DO MISSIONS?



Many of us have heard and taught that each of us ought to be involved in praying, giving and going.

I’d be willing to venture that nearly every missionary who has ever spoken to your church has said these three things as a means of response to the message.

These are needed and must continue, but have you ever considered leading in other ways – welcoming the foreigner among us (Leviticus 19:33-34), sending for Kingdom growth (Acts 13:2-3) and mobilizing others to join in what God is doing (2 Timothy 2:2)?

Sending

Often in our churches in North Carolina, we emphasize church growth. We desire to see people who are far from God be introduced to Christ and brought into our own community of faith. While this is admirable, we must be careful to consider ourselves and our churches within the greater context of the Kingdom of God.

Leaders need to see and equip the individuals in their congregations as those the Spirit might call out to be sent to proclaim the gospel to those who would never have the opportunity to hear otherwise.



ZAC LYONS

Mobilizing

God has provided for North Carolina Baptists a plethora of partnerships in the least reached places and among unreached peoples in North America and around the world. All of these partnerships could benefit greatly from additional churches with all the prayer, provision and participation they might bring. Leaders can leverage their relationships with other North Carolina Baptists in order to bring needed gospel workers to their partnerships.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Zac Lyons is a senior consultant for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s Office of Great Commission Partnerships. Contact zlyons@ncbaptist.org or (984) 202-6037.)

Welcoming

In all of human history, we have never seen the global migration as we see it in our world today.

If all migrants today were gathered together into their own country, it would be the fourth largest country in the world.

Here in North Carolina, we see this every day.

Our sovereign God has strategically brought unreached peoples of the world within arms reach of our churches.

Because of this, we now have a Great Commission and Great Commandment opportunity to welcome the refugee, the international student and the immigrant among us.



Artist: Blindness reveals mercy of God

By **DIANNA L. CAGLE** | *BR* Production Editor

Drawing faces or caricatures of friends and family, Jennifer Rothschild remembers always loving art.

Rothschild gave her testimony during the March 17-18 Baptists on Mission conference at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. She also led a breakout session called “When Life Isn’t Fair.” The theme for the event was “Reconciled” based on 2 Corinthians 5:18.

She was 15 when she got her first diary and proceeded to write down everything, “what I wore, what boy talked to me at school that day,” she said. In the margins, she would draw caricatures. Because of her talent for art, her class chose her to make a banner for field day.

It was while drawing the school’s mascot on a white bed sheet that she noticed there were problems with the sheet. It looked like a marker had damaged the white sheet. Rothschild tried wiping the spots away, but her friend said the sheet was perfectly white.

A few days later, Rothschild was at an eye doctor followed by a visit to an eye hospital where she was diagnosed with a progressive eye disease and declared legally blind.

“Some things began to make sense,” she said, like her math grades – she couldn’t see the board. “To be honest, there were a lot more things that didn’t make sense.”

After hearing a prognosis of total blindness, Rothschild said she felt a “soul silence.”

Words like “blindness” or “cancer,” “you just don’t expect it to ever be your word,” she said.

“The silence that fell in the conference room seemed to follow us home,” she said as she reminisced about her dad’s knuckles gripped to the steering wheel.

“My dad was my pastor,” she said. “He was the one who led me to Christ. He was the one who baptized me. My dad knew everything, and my dad was silent. I can only imagine what he was praying that day.”

In that 40-minute drive home, she realized her dreams of becoming an artist were dashed.

Upon returning home, Rothschild sat down at an old, upright piano and began to play. While she had lessons when she was younger, piano was not something she practiced or kept up, but that day she “played in a way that I hadn’t played before.”

By ear, she played “It is Well.”

“It was almost as if God, in all of His mercy, allowed a door to be closed at that eye hospital and allowed another door to be opened right there as I played that piano.”

It was because of Christ that “He made it well with my soul,” she said. “I mean, the truth is, sisters and brothers, it is not always well with our circumstances, and on that day, and even on this day, it was not well with my circumstances.”

Rothschild’s parents moved her to a smaller Christian school from the large public school she was attending in Miami. She went on to a Christian college about 90 miles from her family. “Facing dark sometimes may be bigger than our faith,” she said, referencing Isaiah 45:3 where treasures are found in darkness. “Sometimes we don’t experience the treasures because we are not willing to step into the dark. Sometimes we don’t hear His voice because we have not stepped out of our comfort zone to a place where we can hear Him more clearly.”

Rothschild, now 53, and her husband have two boys,

born about 10 years apart. They are expecting their first grandchild.

“I’ve learned that I can be blind with the Lord, but there’s no way I can be blind without Him,” she said. “I’m learning that with blindness grief and gratefulness can share the same heartbeat. No matter how heavy your burden is, the glory is going to be heavier. What is seen is temporary; what is unseen is eternal so let us fix our eyes on Jesus.”

Rothschild began her breakout session quoting A.W. Tozer: “What comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

She asked people to think, “What do I think about God?”

“Is God just not fair? Or is God just, not fair?”

When in doubt she urged people to think about Psalm 18:30, which describes God’s perfect ways.

“The reality is, they don’t always feel perfect for us,” she said.

Referring to the workers in Matthew 20, the landowner had offered to pay people for their work but some had worked way less than the workers who had been sweating all day in the fields.

“[The] wage offered was the same to all the workers regardless of how much or how little they worked,” she said.

“Sometimes it’s because we associate equality and fairness with God being just. I’m really convinced that you and I are probably more grateful that God isn’t fair as we define fairness.”

Rothschild emphasized the acronym FAIR.

F – Fix your eyes on Jesus.

“When we fix our eyes on Jesus, then we have the perspective that we need,” she said. “When we consider Him then we don’t lose heart.”

A – Admit your pain.

“Lots of us in the church ... are hesitant to be honest when things just aren’t working out in our hearts or in our minds,” she said. “We don’t like to admit our struggles often, because we think it makes God look bad or perhaps because of our faith we shouldn’t have these feelings or questions.

“But I believe, to really live authentically and to show forth the strength and glory of God, we admit our pain because it’s in our weaknesses where His strength is magnified.”

Rothschild said it’s possible to be authentic before God and others in a way that brings God glory rather than attention to you for the wrong reasons.

“When we are mature in Christ and we’re living by His grace, we learn that balance,” she said.

I – Invite God’s presence.

Describing herself as a lone-ranger Christian, Rothschild said she leans towards emphasizing the words “*I can*” in Philippians 4:13 rather than God’s strength.

“When I do that, I don’t invite God’s presence into my situation,” she said, but when we do invite God’s presence, it allows for more intimacy with Him.

“Only in His presence is there clarity and light,” she said.

“Sometimes we don’t experience the treasure because we are not willing to step into the dark. ... Only in His presence is there clarity and light.”

– Jennifer Rothschild



Jennifer Rothschild discussed when she lost her sight as a teenager with participants in this year’s Baptists on Mission conference at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. She stressed that even through tough times, “It is Well With My Soul,” referring to an old hymn. See BRnow.org/Photo-Gallery. (BR photo by Steve Cooke)

R – Rest in Him.

“Sometimes you can’t find rest in your situation, but we can always find rest in the Lord,” Rothschild said. “The older I get, I really think there’s one of two postures we take in life.

We’re either going to wrestle, or we’re going to rest. There’s really very little neutral.”

It is through resting in the Lord that “we begin to experience perhaps all of the blessings and lessons that He intended to tuck into that really difficult thing in our life for us to learn from and grow from,” she said.

A few years ago, Rothschild admitted she really had a crash, where the weight of her blindness felt overwhelming. “I wasn’t admitting my pain,” she said. “I wasn’t inviting God into my situation. I was wrestling with every aspect of it.”

She read the Bible but she couldn’t hear God.

Reading C.S. Lewis, her favorite author, led her back to the Bible. “I just needed somebody with skin on to say ‘I’ve been there’ and he’s a million times smarter than me so man, there was a point there where I thought if he can rest in this, then so can I,” she said.

“[God] withholds no good thing from us,” Rothschild stressed. “He’s given us Himself, and if you don’t have an answer, if you don’t have satisfaction in your situation, you’ve been already given Christ, and He’s far more satisfying than any answer.”

Visit jenniferrothschild.com. **BR**

Reconciled

Continued from page 1

compulsion; he prayed because he was centered in prayer; he prayed confident in prayer; he prayed contrite in prayer; and he prayed clearly.

Lotz said Daniel was compelled to pray by problems he saw in his world.

“I just look at the world, and it’s melting down, and our nation is melting down,” she said. “We’re living in very serious, dangerous times. I believe it is time for God’s people to pray.”

Lotz said people don’t have to look far to find problems in the world.

“When you pray, ask God to give you a promise that matches the problem that you’re confronting,” she encouraged. “He loves to be held ... to His Word.”

It has been more than a year since Lotz’s husband died. She stressed the faithfulness of God.

“God is faithful,” she said. “He can’t be less than Himself.”

She talked of God’s patience with His people “because He doesn’t want any to come under His judgment. In wrath, God remembers mercy.”

Holding up her Bible, she told the crowd that the way to know God is through His Word.

“Daniel prayed for the sin of his nation as though it was his own,” she said. “He took the sin of his nation on himself ... our shame, our sin, our rebellion ... He wasn’t pointing his finger at anybody else.

“I think maybe it’s time for the church, you and me, to stop blaming other people,” she said.

“It’s time for God’s people ... to humble ourselves, to pray, to seek God’s face, to turn from our wicked ways.”

Open door

John Ortberg, senior pastor Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, Calif., talked of an open door, referring to Revelation 3:7-8 and Dr. Seuss’ Oh, the Places You’ll Go!

Open doors might signify different meanings, Ortberg said.

It could mean safety or hiddenness.

“No one knows what goes on behind closed doors,” he said.

It could mean rejection or rest.

An open door is “symbolic of boundless opportunities,” Ortberg said, “of unlimited chances to do something worthwhile, of grand openings into new and unknown adventures of significant living, of heretofore unimagined chances to do good, to make our lives count for eternity.”

Ortberg stressed that God loves to open doors.

“Open doors will come to me, not because of my cleverness or my giftedness or my gene pool or my boldness or my strength,” he said. “Open doors are a gift

of grace that God just loves to give for no reason at all.”

In Acts, when the church is getting started, Ortberg said God used unschooled, ordinary men.

“Open doors start where you are,” he said. “Open doors are about opportunities, not guarantees. God is more concerned with the person I become than the circumstances I inhabit. God’s goal ... is that we become persons of excellence, of excellent judgment, of great discernment, of strong character.

“The reality is who you become while going through the door often matters much more than what door you go through.”

Don’t wait for peace before going through that door, Ortberg said. “Peace lies on the other side of obedience,” he said. “Our God is in the redemption business. Our God is in the reconciliation business. Our God specializes in bringing good where people thought there was no good.”

Referring to the story of Jonah, Ortberg said it’s the most famous case of resisting an open door.

“God is so persistent,” he said, emphasizing believer’s tendency to resist their destiny. “God’s yes is bigger than my no. What door does God want to open for you?”

God’s love language

Gary Chapman, author of *Five Love Languages* and senior associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, said he had been challenged by the speakers at the conference.

It was 25 years ago when *Five Love Languages* was first released, and Chapman said he’s been asked over the years if God has a primary love language, referring to one of the five love languages: words of affirmation, acts of service, gifts, quality time and physical touch.

“God speaks all five fluently,” he said.

In His Words of affirmation, God calls His followers co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). For acts of service, Acts 10:38 said Jesus “went about doing good” (translation).

What better gift could God have given us than that of His own Son (John 3:16). As for quality time, Jesus spent three years of his life traveling with the 12 He had appointed (Mark 3:14).

Chapman also referred to John 14:23, telling believers that for those who love God and obey Him, God will make His home with them.

There are several instances where God touches His people. Jesus touched the children and made time for them. He healed the blind and lepers. In the Old Testament, Jacob was touched by God.



Richard Brunson, left, executive director of Baptists on Mission, presents the Layman of the Year award to Tim and Vicki Etheridge, members of Riverview Baptist Church in Washington, N.C. See BRnow.org/Photo-Gallery. (BR photo by Steve Cooke)

“At the point of being reconciled to God, at the point of our conversion experience, God individualizes His expressions of love,” Chapman said. “We can’t expect everybody to respond to the same message because God uses us to speak His love to them through those languages.”

Reconciliation testimonies

Terry Rae, former general secretary of South Africa’s Baptist Union and former director of Africa for Christ, discussed how reconciliation has to be both vertically with God and horizontally with one another.

He shared three stories of reconciliation: a national story, a denominational story and a personal story. His national and denominational story involved race relations around the time of apartheid in South Africa (the late 1980s and early 1990s). Rae said especially in the cities, multicultural churches are more common now. Reconciliation has taken place in these places of worship.

But he admits there is something missing if you’re not a Christian.

“It’s almost impossible to reconcile with each other unless you have been reconciled through Jesus Christ with God,” Rae said.

When Rae was serving as a senior pastor of a church in Johannesburg, he had been at the church a couple of months when he preached on carrying one another’s burdens. He asked the members to take their bulletin, write their name and phone number at the top and put it in the offering plate.

The bulletins were put on tables near the exits of the church.

Rae encouraged members to pick one and pray for that person daily, and on Friday, to call that person and set up a meeting for Saturday.

At home that Sunday afternoon, he received a call about one woman’s bul-

letin. There was a pair of ladies who avoided one another. Rae heard from one on Sunday, because she has received her enemy’s name. The other woman visited his office on Tuesday about getting her enemy’s name.

Their husbands had a conflict, and even though the husbands were dead, the ladies had carried on with their feud, entering and exiting the church in different places as well as sitting far away from the other each Sunday. He urged each of them to follow through with their pledge to pray for the other.

“The following Sunday, they walked into the church holding hands,” Rae said.

Taylor Field, pastor of East 7th Street Baptist Church and director of Graffiti Community Ministries in New York, said it is important not just to give food to people but to eat with them.

“It’s more important for someone to have their story heard ...,” he said. “We want someone who will look us in the eyes and enjoy us, value us.”

But “the ministry of reconciliation costs, doesn’t it?” Field asked.

Working with the least of these can be challenging, Field said. It can be smelly and force you out of your comfort zone.

“There may be someone here that is in a tough situation as a servant,” he said. “You may be discouraged that things aren’t going right. This may be your finest moment. God bless you.

Thank you for your heart for others.”

Next year’s conference is scheduled April 6-7 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Laura Story will provide the music. Brunson said one of the speakers that had been confirmed is Bryan Loritts, lead pastor of Abundant Life Church in Silicon Valley, Calif.

Videos of the main speakers are available at vimeo.com/channels/1101572. Visit baptistsonmission.org for more about the organization, events and ways to get involved. **BR**

Reality

Continued from page 1

church plant has experienced significant growth.

As NetCast's lead pastor, Chewning's days are packed with ministry. He felt there was no room to add responsibilities to his schedule. That is one reason he quickly said no when approached with the initial concept of #PREACHED.

Chewning and his wife, Beth, rented a house from Joe when they moved their family to Beverly in 2010. Because of their friendship, Joe called Chewning one day to talk about marriage struggles. That led to more conversations with Joe and his wife, Karri-Leigh.

"Both grew up in the area as nominal Catholics but were never really involved with the church," Chewning explained. "The only thing they knew about Christianity was what they experienced in the Catholic Church and what they saw on television."

The Chewnings developed a good relationship with the couple and eventually led them to Christ. The broken marriage was restored.

"They both worked in reality TV and in the Hollywood scene for years," Chewning said. "It was the first time they had ever seen or experienced a relationship with anybody who was a Christian. What they saw was vastly different from anything they thought we were."

"We were normal people. We loved them well. We were willing to be their friends, even though they didn't believe what we believed."

The new followers of Jesus soon wanted to know how they could use their media skills so more people could experience what they saw in the Chewnings.

"Their mindset was, 'the world needs to see this,'" said Chewning. "They approached us with the idea of doing a TV show. At first, we were very much against it. If you know anything about reality TV, you know it's Hollywood drama – that's why people love it, because of the drama. We really didn't want to be associated with that."

He knew how Christians have been depicted on secular television. "The more we went down the road in this conversation about a show, the less we liked it," Chewning added.

Not wanting their friends to feel rejected, the Chewnings agreed to film a pilot episode. The Women's Entertainment (WE) network was interested in the project. "I figured there was no risk in giving it a shot," he said. "It was not going to be seen publicly."

The Chewnings did not like the pilot and walked away from the project. That was two years ago.

Last summer the Chewnings paid a return visit to Joe and Karri-Leigh in California. The idea for #PREACHED came up again. This time the interested party was a Nashville-based company called Rated Red, a network owned by Verizon that targets millennials in the heartland.

Chewning recalled, "This time the premise of the show was to de-construct false views of Christianity and reconstruct accurate ones that are based on the Jesus we see in the Bible – a Jesus who was very loving, gracious, kind, direct, full of grace and truth – but was a friend of sinners."

Joe and Karri-Leigh said this was the only opportunity they found that allowed them to portray an authentic message about the Jesus of the Bible without the dramatic distortion typically associated with secular television.

"We decided we would do it," Chewning said. "And,

to be totally honest, I've really been blown away by the way the whole show has come out."

Although many Christians are involved, this is not a Christian project, said Chewning. "This is something I've never seen or heard of before – a secular company has allowed Christians to give an explicitly Christian message to an explicitly non-Christian audience."

Each episode is 23 minutes long and divided into three segments. Chewning said the show is designed for the attention span of millennials who like to watch shows on mobile devices. New episodes are released on Mondays and Thursdays.

"If you watch the whole series, we deal with some really controversial issues that the church has struggled historically to talk about in healthy ways," he explained. "We talk about race, teen pregnancy, sexuality, relationships – including honoring your parents and relationships with people that have hurt you – abuse, addiction. We talk about these things in public ways and give people an opportunity to tell their story."

"We show Christians, not as those who pretend to have it all together, but people who are broken and understand their desperate need for Jesus. It also shows the premise and importance of mission in the Christian life. Even in our broken state, we are still called to be ambassadors and ministers of reconciliation. ... I'm a person who is trying to live as a missionary, called to understand my context and share Christ with the world. The show tries to demonstrate that."

Chewning said the network imposes no limits on his use of the Bible or Christian teachings. "I would not have done the show if they would not let me clearly portray what we believe," he added.

"You get a dose of Christ in every episode," he said. "We want to create conversation that our culture needs to be having. We want to be the creators of the conversation, not the ones responding to the conversation."

He hopes the series causes viewers to say, "OK my whole framework has just blown up. What I thought Christians were like or what I thought Christians believed, or what I thought I was supposed to believe as a Christian – now I need help putting the pieces together."

The long-term vision is to provide resources that answer questions raised by viewers. NetCast Church is creating a website that will point inquirers to resources such as a sermon series from other pastors and materials provided by Southern Baptist entities. The goal is to connect #PREACHED viewers to local churches for discipleship. Although Verizon has not released viewer data, Chewning said, "We know it is being watched because people are contacting us with their questions



In an episode of "#PREACHED," Matt Chewning and Ricky Grant Jr., pastor of Rescued Church in Boston, challenge people on the street to win \$100 by listing the Ten Commandments. They use the opportunity to discuss biblical morality. (Image captured from *go90.com*)

and response. Most of the response has come from those who grew up in the church or had some kind of church background but drifted away, burned out or turned off. In the show they see something different and it whets their appetite toward the faith."

Some Christians may be uncomfortable with part of the show's content, Chewning admitted. They may be "nervous about it." Some tend to avoid these subjects because they do not want to be critical or misunderstood.

In the first episode, Chewning has a conversation with a young woman who self-identifies as pansexual. "She wants to be identified by her sexuality," he explained.

"My question to her was, 'Why? Where did you come across this notion that you need to be identified by your sexual preference rather than being identified as a human?' I shared with her that she is a human being created by God in His likeness. ... She's a 15-year-old girl that is already being fed this trash from culture."

"In the show she has this moment, and she says, 'I really don't know why I feel this way.' You and I know why. Culture feeds this individualism to us. We want to help people find an identity in Jesus and not in their sexuality."

Chewning and the producers of #PREACHED hope the series will start gospel conversations among outsiders, draw them to healthy churches and cause churches to have more conversations with sinners – the way Jesus did. If that happens, Chewning said, "It will be an answer to my prayer."

Download the free Go90 app or visit *Go90.com* to watch all episodes of #PREACHED. Contact NetCast church at *NetCastChurch.org*. **BR**

HB2 repeal called 'a loss'

Baptist Press

North Carolina legislators have repealed a controversial law that required individuals in state buildings to use restrooms corresponding to the gender indicated on their birth certificates.

The repeal of House Bill 2 (HB 2) March 30 marked a compromise between Democrats and Republicans and culminated more than a year of contentious debate since the bill's passage in April 2016.

North Carolina's senate passed the repeal 32-16 following brief discussion. The house's 70-48 vote to repeal HB 2 followed more than two hours of debate and came some 90 minutes after a noon deadline

set by the NCAA for the Tar Heel State to overturn its restroom bill or lose the opportunity to host championship events in 2018-22.

The repeal bill, HB 142, contained three main provisions: a full repeal of HB 2; a ban until 2020 on acts by state government – including universities and local boards of education – to regulate "access to multiple occupancy restrooms, showers or changing facilities, except in accordance with an act of the" state legislature; and a moratorium until 2020 on ordinances by local governments to regulate "private employment practices" or "public accommodations." Those responsibilities are left to state government.

Visit *BRnow.org* for more coverage. **BR**

Acteens choose two North Carolinians for national panel

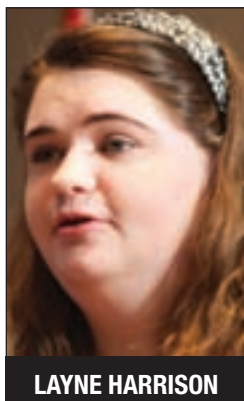
By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Woman's Missionary Union chose two North Carolina teenagers to be part of its National Acteens Panel.

Layne Harrison and Sierra Lee, both with ties to University Hills Baptist Church in Charlotte, will represent the state on the panel along with two Alabama teenagers: Bree Rooks from First Baptist Church in Ashville, Ala., and Caroline Swann from Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.

Harrison, a senior who is homeschooled, is a member of University Hills Baptist Church and has served with Lee the last two years as a state Acteens panelist.

Being involved in Acteens "gives me a lot of missions opportunities, and it means I can show younger girls how to connect to people and how to reach out and minister," Harrison said.



LAYNE HARRISON

Harrison, who will be starting the University of North Carolina – Charlotte this summer, said she was saved when she was really young.

"Because growing up as a Christian I still struggled the same as everyone else, but I never had that big change," she said, admitting to struggling as a teenager. "I was like, 'I've gotta get on the right path, I've gotta make the choice to do the right things and read my Bible all the time.'"

While Harrison still struggles, she realizes no one is perfect.

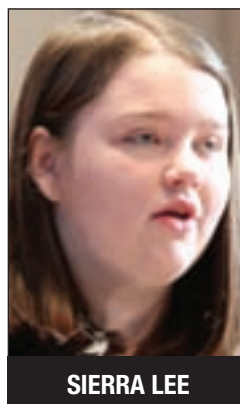
Her new favorite verse is Matthew 7:24-25. "It's making me think about the importance of having a good foundation and knowing scripture," she said.

Both Harrison and Lee found out they made the national panel in January. As part of their service, they will write 15 articles on a variety of topics – testimony, favorite Bible verse, what Acteens means to them.

They spoke at a church in Shelby in February as well as at the recent Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina Missions Extravaganza March 24-25 at First Baptist Church in Greensboro. They are also planning to attend the national WMU meeting in Phoenix in June prior

to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

While Lee grew up at University Hills, her father is currently student pastor



SIERRA LEE

and choir director for Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Fayetteville.

"I haven't ever not really been in church," she said.

When her family moved to Fayetteville, Lee started Acteens at their new church.

Her mom serves as

the leader.

She is a junior at Gray's Creek High School in Hope Mills. She thought she was saved at a young age but realized when she was 12 at a camp that there had been no heart change.

"I realized my heart wasn't right with where it needed to be," Lee said. "That's when I got saved that night. I've seen a really big life change since then. I've become more patient. I had a really big anger issue. That's changed a lot. I still struggle with it, but it's like I have God to help me now."

Struggling with depression, Lee said she finds hope in Romans 5:3 where Paul refers to how believers should glory in their sufferings.

Being involved in Acteens has opened doors for both teens.

"This group has allowed me to grow so much as a Christian, a young woman and a leader," Harrison said. "I am so grateful that I was able to join Acteens at a young age and meet young women who've inspired me to trust in God. The opportunities I have been given to lead various mission projects in my church give me hope that I've been able to inspire the younger girls in my group just as the older girls inspired me when I was growing up."

Lee was also inspired by the examples set by girls before her. "When you're lost and alone, you have people you can count on through whatever struggles you are facing," she said. "You have people there for you and people who hold you accountable in your walk."

Lee and Harrison led the participants in WMU-NC's Missions Extravaganza in praying for missionaries who were celebrating birthdays that day.

A story about the WMU-NC meeting will be in the next *Biblical Recorder*. **BR**

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BR BIBLICAL
RECORDER

‘Deaths of despair’ rising among middle-aged whites

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

A pair of Princeton University researchers released a new report that reveals an alarming increase in the number of “deaths of despair” among white, middle-aged, blue-collar Americans.

The statistics are concerning, said Brian Upshaw, Disciple-Making Team Leader for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), but churches can offer hope to the hopeless.

While mortality rates are decreasing in large sectors of the global population, the study says deaths caused by drug overdoses, alcohol related liver diseases and suicides are increasing in “extraordinary” and “unanticipated” ways among white Americans ages 50-54 with a high school diploma or less.

Anne Case and Angus Deaton presented “Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century” at a March 23-24 macroeconomics conference hosted by the Brookings Institution.

The number of “deaths of despair” among the group more than doubled from 1999-2015, according to their analysis. All-cause deaths are slightly increasing among whites, while mortality rates among blacks and Hispanics have fallen over the same period.

Case and Deaton said part of the the general increase in white mortality is due to the sharp uptick in “deaths of despair.”

They also said the recent opioid epidemic in the U.S. has been an “accelerant” to the growing problem.

The hardest hit states have been

Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi, but North Carolina’s mountain and coastal regions contained some of the highest mortality rates due to drugs, alcohol and suicide. The only states with decreasing general mortality rates are New York, New Jersey and California.

Some of the statistical data came from a 2015 study by the two researchers, but the latest report explored the underlying causes of mortality.

Case and Deaton said the disturbing trend could be fueled by long-term “cumulative disadvantage” for people without a college degree.

“There really is a decline of the American working class,” Deaton said in a video accompanying the report.

“The people who are really getting hammered are people with less education,” said Case.

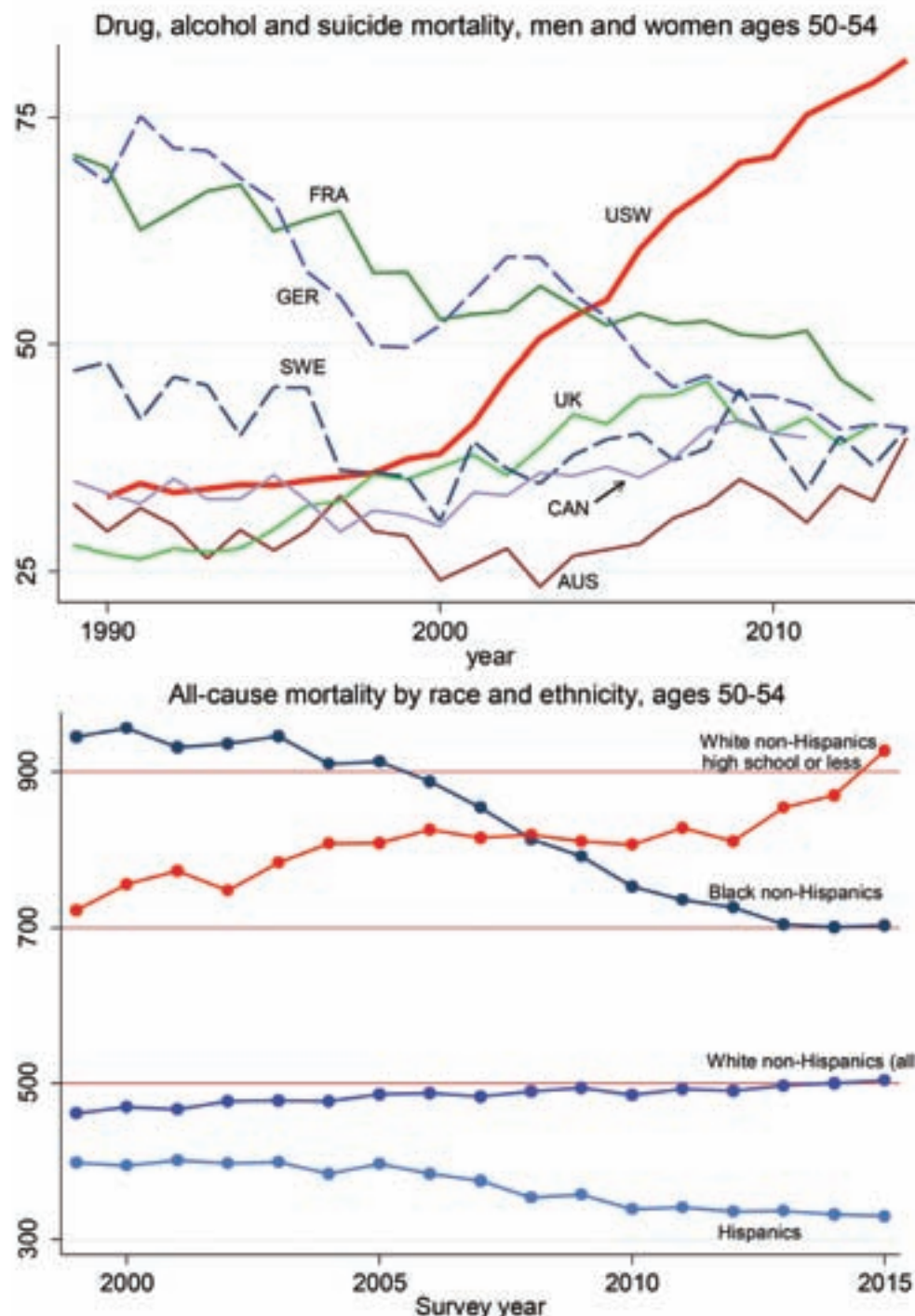
“It’s almost as if there are two Americas, one for people who went to college and one for people who didn’t.”

Case and Deaton said decades of wage stagnation has bred a sense of hopelessness, which can lead to drug and alcohol abuse, as well as suicide.

Other negative social developments contribute to the problem too, such as a decline in marriage stability and a decrease in religious community involvement.

A pre-conference draft of the presentation said, “Traditional structures of social and economic support slowly weakened; no longer was it possible for a man to follow his father and grandfather into a manufacturing job, or to join the union. Marriage was no longer the only

See Deaths page 13



Prayer Continued from page 5

Griffith said when God begins to work in the life of an individual or church, so does Satan.

He said opposition often comes from some of the most unexpected places, even inside the church. Griffith encouraged attendees not to give up hope in the midst of trials and to trust God for victory.

“God is doing things on your behalf right now that you can’t see,” Griffith said.

‘God is calling His people to pray’

Williams concluded the event with a message on revival from 2 Chronicles 7:14. He outlined several prerequisites for revival, which emphasized a passionate pursuit of personal holiness and a brokenness over sin.

“God has to break us before He can

make us,” Williams said. “He has to drive us to the point that we recognize all we need is Him.”

Chris Schofield, director of the BSC’s Office of Prayer for Evangelization and Spiritual Awakening, said he hoped attendees were encouraged and motivated to pray for God to bring revival, starting in the church.

“God is calling His people to pray, and we’ve got to heed that call,” Schofield said.

“But we’ve got to heed it out of a righteous heart. That’s what this (weekend) has been about.

“Revival doesn’t start with somebody else. It starts with me.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – For more information and resources on prayer for revival and spiritual awakening, call J. Chris Schofield and the BSC’s Office of Prayer at (919) 459-5514 or visit praync.org.) **BR**



Gordon Fort, former missionary and senior ambassador for the International Mission Board president, leads people to pray during “Awaken,” a prayer event held March 10-11 at Osborne Baptist Church in Eden, N.C. He said the church has lost its influence and impact not just in the community, but within the congregation as well. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

OPPORTUNITY CORNER



The Norlina Baptist Church Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) is hosting its second annual women's conference April 28-29. Donna Gaines, author and wife of Steve Gaines, the current Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., will be the guest speaker.

The weekend is based on Ephesians and Gaines' book, *Seated: Living From Our Position in Christ*.

April 28, the event starts at 7 p.m. and ends at 8:30 p.m. Activities April 29 start at 9 a.m., includes lunch and ends at 2 p.m.

The price for the conference is \$25 each. Refreshments will be offered during breaks.

Registration forms may be picked up at Norlina Baptist Church at 402 Division Street in Norlina.

Contact Debra Carter at (252) 456-4121 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.



Caswell Conference Center is hosting the Hispanic Young Adult Conference June 2-4 for ages 18-35, singles and married. The theme this year is "Royalty," based on 1 Peter 2:9. Registration

includes lodging, T-shirt and four meals and is \$130 per person before April 20 or \$140 from April 20-May 23. Registration for each child under 12 is \$20. Visit ncbaptist.org/hyac17.

Deaths

Continued from page 12

way to form intimate partnerships, or to rear children.

"People moved away from the security of legacy religions or the churches of their parents and grandparents, towards churches that emphasized seeking an identity, or replaced membership with the search for connections ... These changes left people with less structure when they came to choose their careers, their religion, and the nature of their family lives. When such choices succeed, they are liberating; when they fail, the individual can only hold him or herself responsible. In the worst cases of failure, this is a [societal] recipe for suicide."

Upshaw said local churches can counter the bleak outlook of what the authors call "cumulative disadvantage" among this group by offering "the right narrative of hope, which is found in the gospel."

He admitted, however, that churches have not always achieved that goal: "This overall sentiment of despair, I think, is linked in some way to discipleship deficits in the church."

People will not find satisfaction in drugs, alcohol or suicide, Upshaw added. "Their hope is in the gospel that addresses their brokenness. From a place of brokenness, we are usable, we are useful to Christ, because it's in our weakness that he is made strong."

Upshaw encouraged churches to utilize BSC resources in their efforts to serve people in midlife, along with their families.

Visit baptistsonmission.org and ncbaptist.org to learn about ministries like Baptists on Mission, a disaster relief and missions auxiliary, and Faith at Home, a family-based disciple-making ministry. **BR**

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

JACK A. PAINTER, 87, of Raleigh, died March 21.

A North Carolina native, Painter was a graduate of East Carolina University and commissioned as a U.S. Air Force officer. He served in the Strategic Air Command during the final months of the Korean War.

Painter married in 1955 and graduated from Southeastern Seminary with a master of divinity degree. He graduated from the North Carolina Baptist Hospital and Bowman Gray School of Medicine Clinical Pastoral Training in 1958. While in seminary, he served as youth director of First Baptist Church, Raleigh, where he was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1956. Following seminary, he began serving a series of churches: Ashley's Grove Baptist, Conway, N.C.; Menola Baptist, Woodland, N.C.; Knightdale Baptist, Knightdale, N.C.; First Baptist Church, Altavista, Va.; and First Baptist Church, Belmont, N.C., from which he retired (1994) following 21 years as senior pastor. In 1982, as a Mars Hill College alumnus, Painter served as a Life Trustee at Mars Hill University. He served as pastor for 57 years before retiring in 2011.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Catherine Stephenson Painter; daughters Tamara Painter Peebles of Raleigh and Melanie Painter Hobson of Woodstock, Ga.; brother, Harold D. Painter of Tarboro; sister, Brenda Painter Barnes; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Memorials to: Mars Hill University, P.O. Box 370, Mars Hill, NC 28754; or Trinity Baptist Church, 4815 Six Forks Road, Raleigh, NC 27609.

MARIAN SANFORD GIBBS GRANT died March 15 after an eventful life of 95 plus years.



MARIAN GRANT

While Grant was a Georgia native, her family moved to Carthage, N.C., when she was two years old. They moved to Greensboro when she was six years old.

She married in 1942 to James Marse Grant, former editor of the *Biblical Recorder* for 23 years. He died Oct. 17, 2008. She wrote for *Charity and Children* when he edited that publication for the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina and continued to write when he became editor and publisher of the *Recorder*. In 1982 the couple

started Grant Tours, Inc., to facilitate trips to annual meetings and other religious pilgrimages.

She volunteered with the handicapped and disabled and served as the chairperson of the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities. She was the first woman elected as recording secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

She was the first woman to serve as chairperson of the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on Order of Business and was recording secretary of the Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina.

She was Tar Heel of the Week in the *Raleigh News & Observer* in August 1977 and taught adult Sunday School at Crabtree Baptist Church and Hayes Barton Baptist Church.

She is survived by three daughters, Susan Grant Rawls of Murrells Inlet, S.C., and Marcia Grant Morton and Carol Grant Potter, both of Raleigh; six siblings, Thomas Adin Gibbs of High Point; Carl Gordon of Burgaw; Carey Lord Gibbs of Anaheim, Calif.; and Roger Allen Gibbs, Edwin Aubrey, and Laurie Wynne Gibbs Waynick, all of Greensboro; six grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Memorials to Transitions LifeCare of Wake County, 250 Hospice Circle, Raleigh, NC 27607, and to Hayes Barton Baptist Church, 1800 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, NC 27608.

Staff changes

PHILIP BROWN has been called as student pastor at Ratcliffe Cove Baptist Church, Waynesville. Brown previously served as student pastor at Beverly Hills Baptist Church, Asheville.

Sharpsburg Baptist Church, Sharpsburg, has called **JONATHAN HARRISON** as associate pastor of youth. Harrison previously served as youth minister at First Baptist Church, Deep Run.

DARRELL WEBB has been called as transitional/interim pastor at Rutherfordwood Baptist Church, Boone.

Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Submissions will be subject to *Recorder* style and edits. For opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance. Send to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.

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April 16

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

April 23

He Is Risen

Focal Passage: Luke 24:1-8, 36-40

On a Sabbath evening many years ago, Jesus' disciples slept fitfully, if at all. Disturbed, frightened and worried – they could not understand. Their Master, their Rabbi, their Teacher, had been crucified. He was supposed to be the Messiah. He was supposed to lead Israel to an unsurpassed political glory with them as his lieutenants and generals.

But now, they thought, that was not to be. He was dead. He had been taken, mocked, cursed, beaten, bruised and executed. Jesus had told them over and over, both in metaphor and plain speech, "I will rise again." Despite Jesus' statements, they did not understand.

In some ways, we shouldn't be too hard on them. Resurrection is an amazing prospect. It is not normal. Men don't rise from the dead. People just don't walk out of a tomb.

But all that was about to change.

Sometime early on Sunday morning, Jesus stepped out of that borrowed tomb and everything changed. Sorrow became surprise. Worry became wonder. Fear became faith.

All of this changed because death

had given way to the Lord of Life. Death could not contain the author of life – Jesus Christ Himself.

John Stott summarized Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection this way: "The resurrection was the conquest confirmed and announced. We are not to regard the cross as defeat and the resurrection as victory. Rather, the cross was the victory won, and the resurrection the victory endorsed, proclaimed and demonstrated."

Jesus' resurrection was God's exclamation point on the victory Jesus won on the cross. In the weeks leading up to Easter, we should ponder pensively the depth of Christ's suffering on the cross.

On Easter Sunday, we must proclaim powerfully His victory over sin and death. On Good Friday, we should consider carefully the meaning of Christ's cross and the extensiveness of our sin. On Easter Sunday, we confess courageously the glory of Christ's resurrection.

This Easter make sure you declare the Good News of Jesus Christ because His resurrection changed everything!



CHRIS HEFNER
Pastor,
Wilkesboro Baptist Church

Focal Passage: Luke 9:18-26

One of the more fascinating exchanges in the New Testament happens in this passage of scripture. Jesus asked his followers what others were saying about him. They offered a variety of answers – John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets.

These answers were not somehow related to Eastern mysticism or reincarnation. Rather, people were associating Jesus with an Old Testament prophet or the forerunner of the Messiah, identified in the Old Testament as Elijah. Then Jesus made the question personal to his followers, "Who do you say I am?"

This question is one of the most important questions we could possibly answer. C.S. Lewis observed concerning Jesus' identity, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the devil of Hell.

Life in Christ

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse."

Jesus claimed the power of God, the authority of God and to be God.

Jesus' claim to be God underscores every other perception of who He is. Also, we must not read a postmodern viewpoint into this question. Who we say Jesus is has no bearing whatsoever on who Jesus actually is.

Jesus was not, with His disciples or modern readers, giving us the authority to define who He is to us. Rather, Jesus asked His disciples, and by extension readers today, to acknowledge His true identity.

Peter's correct answer emphasizes this point. Peter accurately identified Jesus as the Messiah and Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16). Jesus confirmed His identity by commending Peter's answer. Jesus then demanded wholehearted devotion, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Jesus' identity, as the Messiah Son of God, grants Him the right to demand our unfettered allegiance.

My identity – your identity – is predicated on Jesus' identity as Lord and Messiah. We must follow Him.

April 16

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

April 23

Where Is Jesus?

Focal passage: Matthew 28:1-15

The Apostle Paul wrote these words about resurrection, "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:12-14).

In other words, if the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not occur, Christianity is just another empty religion. However, this is not the case, as we see in our focal passage: Jesus was raised from dead and is alive and well (Matthew 28:1-15).

Can you imagine arriving at the tomb with Mary and hearing the angel say, "...I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here! For He has been resurrected, just as He said" (Matthew 28:5-6)? How exciting that must have been for those early followers of Jesus!

Did you know there are more than 300 verses about the subject of Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament? In their book, *Immortality – The Other Side of Death*,

Gary R. Habermas and J.P. Moreland, write about the importance of the resurrection. They describe the resurrection as a sign for unbelievers (Matthew 12:38-40) as well as the answer for the believer's doubt (Luke 24:38-43).

The resurrection also validates that Jesus' teachings are true (Acts 2:22-24). It is the drive behind evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20) and a believer's power to live the Christian life (Romans 6:4-14, 8:9-11; Phil. 3:10). The resurrection even addresses the fear of death (John 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58) and is a model of the believer's resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:2; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

I don't think importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ can ever be overstated.

It radically changed the early disciples' lives and it can radically change our lives today. It is by far the greatest event ever to occur in our world and we should thank God every day for it!



BARTLEY WOOTEN
Pastor, Beulaville Baptist Church

Focal passage: Matthew 24:36-51

When I was in basic training many years ago at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, I had the privilege of being the dorm chief of my flight. I was excited because it was an honor to be responsible for the 50 men in my group when the drill instructor was gone.

At the time I was chosen, I did not know it would require so much. One of my duties was to pull the last shift of guard duty from about 3 a.m. until 5 a.m. My responsibility was to make sure that no unauthorized personnel entered our dormitory. At no time during my shift could I sleep.

In fact, the drill instructors would plan surprise attacks and think of creative ways to distract me. They would often send other drill instructors from different flights to our dormitory to try to trick me in letting them in the building.

When I would refuse they would

What About the Future?

have a few choice words and threaten to inflict much pain on my life. Over time, I realized the key to success was to be alert and never get distracted.

When I think about our focal passage in Matthew 24:36-51, I reflect back on my basic training experience as a dorm guard. Jesus told the disciples to always be on the alert for His return.

In essence, Jesus was preparing the disciples for His death by pointing to His return. He reminded them not to get distracted, but continually look for His return, especially, since no one but the Father knows when that will take place.

In a similar way, just as I always had to be prepared in basic training, we must always be prepared for the return of Christ.

At the end of my basic training experience the drill instructor pulled me aside and complimented me on a job well done. I appreciated his words, but what I am hoping for more is that when Jesus returns He will find me ready to go and He will say, "Well done my good and faithful servant." How about you?

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Three Forks Baptist Church is searching for a **Pastor**. We are a Southern Baptist church affiliated with the Three Forks Baptist Association. We are a small congregation looking for a pastor with a shepherd's heart for the Lord's work. Please submit resumes to Search Committee, 1922 Hwy. 421 S., Boone, NC 28607.

Would you be interested in joining a journey that started more than 67 years ago? Memorial Baptist Church in Kannapolis, North Carolina, is seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor** to lead our friendly, mission minded, diverse church on our journey to fulfill the Great Commission. We desire a pastor with spiritual leadership, strong Bible knowledge and preaching skills along with an administrative skill set and a servant's heart. Our leader should embrace the ideals of congregational ministry as well as community engagement and be comfortable in a blended style of worship. The successful candidate will have a master of divinity from an accredited seminary or divinity school; a minimum of five years of ministerial experience and a certificate of ordination. Resumes including a statement of faith and philosophy of ministry should be sent by April 30, 2017, to: personnel@mbchurch.org or Pastor Search Committee, Memorial Baptist Church, 1785 Dale Earnhardt Blvd., Kannapolis, NC 28083.

Burgaw Baptist Church in Burgaw, NC, is seeking a **senior pastor** to shepherd our congregation and preach the inerrant Word of God. We are SBC affiliated and prefer college and seminary education with a minimum of eight years of senior pastoral experience. Send resume to Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 40, Burgaw, NC 28425, or email to pastor4burgawbaptist@gmail.com.

Crestview Baptist Church, Shelby, NC, is seeking to fill the **pastor** position. Looking for an outstanding communicator, leader, strong administrator and visionary. The person will teach the Word of God, provide pastoral care and has prior pastoral experience. Must be a teacher who challenges all ages through his sermons, have strong leadership skills and uphold the biblical doctrine of the Baptist faith. The pastor should also emphasize evangelism and the importance of lifestyle witnessing. Minimum education: bachelor's degree. Mail resume by April 24, 2017, to Search Committee, Crestview Baptist Church, 1090 Old Boiling Springs Road, Shelby, NC 28152.

Denominational

LRBA **Director of Missions** wanted. LRBA is prayerfully seeking a God-called, Spirit-led man to serve as Director of Missions for our 49 churches. Our association is seeking a leader who will promote a culture of unity, teamwork, humility and a vibrant vision for the future of LRBA. The ideal candidate will have demonstrated positive experiences in pastoral ministry and/or served on the mission field. Strong leadership skills will be required in the areas of church health & revitalization, church planting, missions and disaster relief. We further desire a DOM who will serve as a pastor to pastors, and promote networking among our leaders and churches. Please submit resumes and at least three references to: littletribebasearch@gmail.com or LRBA Director of Missions Search Committee, 194 Burrell Wilson Dr., Broadway, NC 27505.

WMU NC is accepting resumes for the position of **Associate – Preschool and Children (Part time)**. It is preferable for the applicant to be able to work in the Raleigh office, although exceptions would be considered. Please send resumes and a cover letter to Judy Pettigrew at judyjohn@bellsouth.net. The job description can be found on the WMU NC website. The deadline for applications is April 5, 2017.

Church Staff

Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church in Sanford, NC, is seeking a **full-time Associate Pastor of Music**. This Christian candidate will provide leadership for the entire music program of the church including a multi-generational, blended worship service and promoting/developing a music program for all age levels. A bachelor's degree in music is required; seminary or graduate study is preferred. Candidate must be a team player with excellent communication skills, be technologically competent, organized, with a desire to collaborate with the ministerial staff. Will also have staff oversight for senior adult ministry. Compensation will be commensurate with experience. Email resumes with cover letter to jhbcmusicsearch@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church of Richlands, North Carolina, is seeking a **full-time Minister of Youth and Children**. FBCR is dually aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Interested candidates should submit a resume by April 15, 2017, to info@fbcrichlands.com or First Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, 100 Rand Street, Richlands, NC 28574.

Lawndale Baptist Church, Greensboro, NC, is seeking **Associate Pastor of Married Adults**. Overall responsibilities include planning, coordinating and leading married adult ministry. These duties include: development of classes to equip parents at different stages of life; leading enrichment classes to better equip husbands and wives; developing methods and materials which facilitate mentoring of couples; counseling couples in marriage issues and provide a biblical approach to marriage; enlisting and training leaders for on and off campus groups working within the community; expected skills are solid judgment and decision making ability; a knowledge of membership and how best to meet the needs of that membership through planned programs; and a sensitivity to problems and fluency of ideas to meet the demands of the many areas of ministry. The successful candidate will have a master of divinity and five years ministry experience. Please send resume and salary history to: jthomas@lawndalebaptist.org or employment@lawndalebaptist.org.

First Baptist Church Joelton, TN, seeks a **Minister of Music and Worship** to lead a multifaceted ministry. For a list of qualifications and job description visit www.fbcjoelton.org, or to apply for this position, please visit www.fbcjoelton.org/minister-worship-application/.

Full-Time Minister of Youth and Children. Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Shelby, NC (www.poplarspringsonline.org) is seeking a full-time minister of youth and children. We are a moderate congregation that is dually aligned with the SBC and CBF that supports the Baptist Faith and Message of 1963. We seek a candidate with experience that is also a graduate of an accredited seminary or divinity school. Qualities we desire are an organized leader to continue to grow the youth and children's ministry. Send resume to Poplar Springs Baptist Church Search Committee, 1106 Poplar Springs Church Road, Shelby, NC 28152, or church_office@poplarspringsonline.org by April 28, 2017.

Faith Baptist Church, north of Charlotte in Faith, NC, is searching for a **full-time Pastor of Music and Media Technology**. Responsibilities include (but are not limited to) leading three blended worship services per week, directing the total worship program of the church in conjunction with the Senior Pastor, leading the adult choir, praise team, tech team, and administrating the digital/online presence of the church. Bible college or a seminary degree preferred but not required. Email resume and cover letter to PastorTim@FBCFaith.com.

Dry Ponds Baptist Church, Granite Falls, NC, is seeking a **full-time Youth and Music Minister**. Please send resumes to truthchaser77@gmail.com.

Second Baptist Church in Washington, North Carolina, is seeking an **interim music director**. We are also looking for occasional help in the planning and leading the musical aspects of our Sunday morning worship service. Please send resume to Second Baptist Church – attention pastor, 2516 W 5th Street, Washington, NC 27889, or email to secondbaptist2@embarqmail.com and address to the pastor.

First Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, NC, is prayerfully seeking a candidate to serve as **full-time minister of music and education**. This person must be a born again child of God, demonstrate Christian character, be called to head music ministry and provide testimony of faith. A bachelor's degree in music and education from a Baptist seminary is preferred. Responsibilities included teaching and directing a full music program. Worship services are a blend of traditional and contemporary music. Please submit resume to First Baptist Church, Attn: Search Committee, 125 Tappan St., Spruce Pine, NC 28777, or email to doctorrock1@yahoo.com.

Music Associate needed to assist Music Pastor on a P/T basis at Village Baptist, Fayetteville, NC. Musical background needed. Contact Chris for job description: chris@villagebc.church.

Miscellaneous

Chaplain Training. Assisting Individuals in Crisis (ICISF 2-day class): May 5-6. Training through Emergency Chaplains. More info: www.EChap.org/training.

Coffee Shop Contents For Sale. Baptist Pastor selling entire contents of Coffee Shop located in Fremont, NC. Includes La Cimbale espresso machine, tables, chairs, counters etc. Originally offered at \$8,250. Price reduced to \$7,250. If interested please call, 919-273-5358.

Senior adult leaders from around the state will meet in Thomasville on May 2 for the 3rd annual AAIM roundup! Call NCBAM at 877.506.2226 to learn how you can be involved with AAIM (Aging Adults Innovating Ministry).

Do you have staff changes at your church or association? Or special news you would like to share (significant church or church staff anniversaries or a mission effort to reach your community)? Let the *Biblical Recorder* know by calling (919) 847-2127 or email editor@BRnow.org.

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COOPERATIVE PROGRAM SUNDAY IS APRIL 9



BEYOND/ME

First, I obey God by giving my tithe to our church. My tithe joins tithes of fellow members.

Together, our combined giving enables our church to reach our community — our Jerusalem. *(My Group)*



BEYOND/US

Our church partners with thousands of others across North Carolina to support missions and

ministry statewide through the Cooperative Program. Together, we pray and train people to share Jesus in hundreds of communities where as many as 70 percent of the people do not know Him. *(My North Carolina)*



BEYOND/NORTH CAROLINA

As we partner with 46,000+ Southern

Baptist churches, our Cooperative Program dollars help send thousands of missionaries across North America to reach people for Christ and start urgently needed new churches. Together, we can reach our Judea, our nation, as Acts 1:8 says. *(My Country)*



BEYOND/USA

Our Cooperative Program giving helps send our missionaries far and wide, yes,

to the ends of the earth. It is tragic that decreased giving through the Cooperative Program has forced nearly 1,000 Southern Baptist missionaries to come home! Together, we must increase Cooperative Program giving now to reap the harvest of souls God is making possible. How many missionaries will we leave serving when our kids and grandkids must take over missions support? What missions legacy will we leave? *(My Globe)*

Download a bulletin insert and a PowerPoint presentation at:
ncbaptist.org/cooperativeprogram

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

