



BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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NAMB trains GenSend student recruiters

By **KRISTEN CAMP** | NAMB

Abby Hughes is one of only two Generation Send (GenSend) campus mobilizers in the Northwest who is taking on the responsibility to find other college students to participate in GenSend 2015.

“I have been working alongside my church, as well as reaching out to pastors around the Northwest to connect with students who could potentially take part in GenSend,” said Hughes, who will be leading a GenSend team in New York City this summer.

GenSend is a development process designed to be an exciting, intense and unique student missionary experience that immerses college students into an urban context to gain practical knowledge of the realities of missions and leadership.

Dhati Lewis, right, is lead pastor of Blueprint Church in Atlanta. He’s helping the North American Mission Board train the next generation.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) conducted its first mobilizer training weekend for 41 students, including Hughes, in Atlanta in September 2014. A second training was held Jan. 6-7, 2015. The trainings are designed to equip students to create missional communities with other students on their college campuses and invite these students to serve in a major city in North America with a GenSend team this summer.

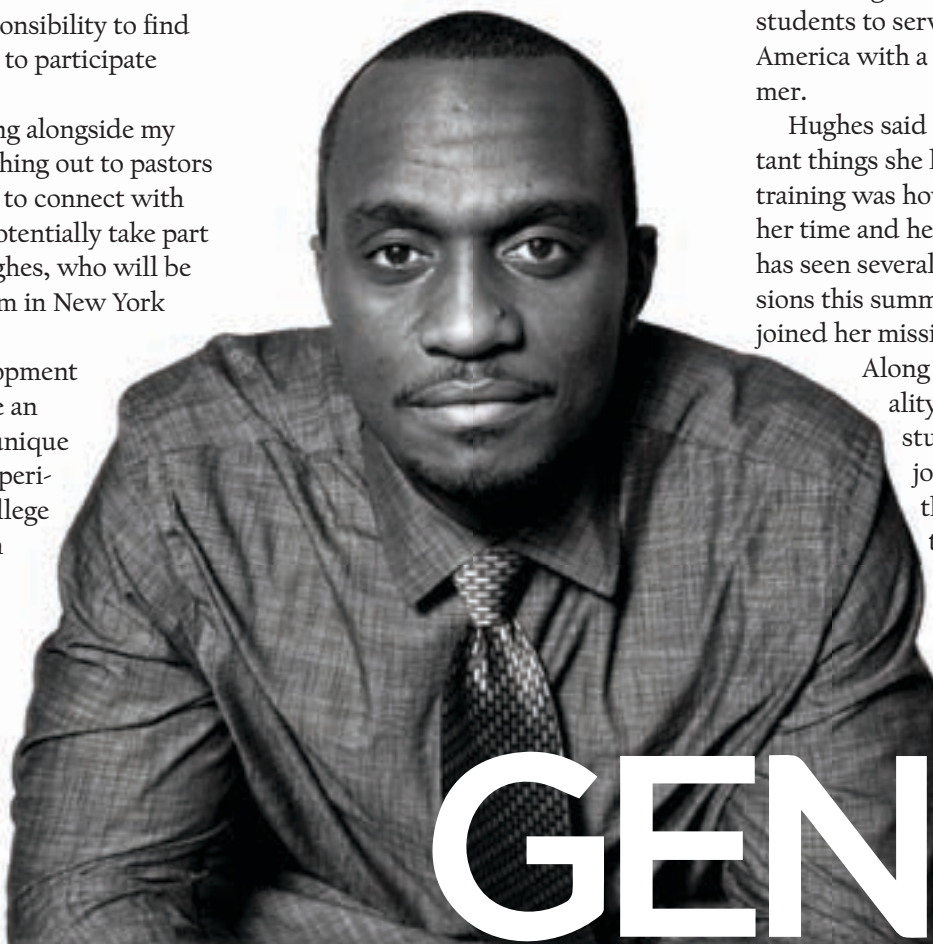
Hughes said one of the most important things she learned at the mobilizer training was how to be intentional with her time and her relationships. Hughes has seen several students commit to missions this summer and several more have joined her missional community group.

Along with teaching intentionality, members of NAMB’s student mobilization staff joined other speakers at the mobilizer trainings to share the vision for GenSend and urban church planting. The speakers also walked the students through practical instruction to fulfill their assignments.

“One of the most helpful and beneficial parts of the mobilizer training for me was having all of the practical questions answered,” said Hughes, a sophomore at Washington State University. “I was given clarity on what steps to take going forward as a mobilizer as well as how to leverage the personalities on my team for Christ and the mission He has given us for the summer.”

Dhati Lewis, lead pastor of Atlanta’s Blueprint Church emphasized the importance of contextualization in an urban setting during his session on urban church planting. “There are four things to consider in contextualization,” said Lewis. “The gospel must be contextualized. We can’t put our confidence in our own ability to contextualize. We should contextualize with a sense of urgency and we should remember that the goal of contextualization is reconciliation.”

[See GenSend page 15](#)



GENSEND

ERLC Summit confronts racism in the SBC

By **SETH BROWN** | *BR* Content Editor

“The cross and the Confederate battle flag cannot coexist,” said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), “without one setting the other on fire.”

Disagreement among American Baptists about slavery was one of the major reasons why the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) formed in 1845.

Many Baptists in the Confederate South wanted to support missionaries that owned slaves. Others argued that the Bible condoned slavery as a societal institution. Still more advocated

against racial integration almost 100 years after slavery was abolished in America.

Racism has lingered in the SBC since the beginning, according to Moore.

In 1995 the SBC apologized in the form of a resolution, saying it had historically accepted and perpetuated racial strife of the worst kinds, “from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest.”

Over 500 attendees gathered into LifeWay’s Van Ness Auditorium in Nashville, Tenn., March 26-27 for the 2015 ERLC Leadership Summit.

The first-annual summit in 2014 addressed the gospel and

[See Summit page 9](#)



Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, discusses racism with a group gathered in Nashville, Tenn. (ERLC photo)

Absolutely amazing

Pam and I had the privilege of prayer walking the streets of Stirling, Scotland, with some International Mission Board missionaries about 15 years ago. We strolled up and down narrow streets lined with small shops, praying for God's grace to reclaim Scotland. We were grieved to see so many of these storefront shops selling items of sorcery and materials to draw customers into evil, man-centered religions.

To our surprise, alongside the material lures to false religion, many of the same stores displayed prints of the popular Christian song, "Amazing Grace."

Although Scotland has no official national anthem, most Scots will say "Scotland the Brave" deserves the honor. But unofficially, Amazing Grace is given the honor by many, and certainly is among the most recognized songs of the land.

You likely know the story of how John Newton came to pen the words more than 250 years ago.

Born in London July 24, 1725, his father was the commander of a merchant ship. At the age of 11 Newton made six voyages with his father before the elder Newton retired. The boy served on a man-of-war, the H.M.S. Harwich, but the intolerable conditions prompted him to desert the ship and crew. He was quickly recaptured, publicly flogged and demoted to a common seaman.

His plea for service on a slave ship took him to Sierra Leone, where he became the servant of a slave trader and was brutally abused. In 1748 he was rescued from turbulent seas by a captain who had known his father. The experience of this brush with death made a profound impression on Newton's life.

The childhood religious instruction he received from his mother, who had died when he was seven, had long since been abandoned. But as the ship's captain on a homeward voyage, he attempted to steer through a violent storm, experiencing what he called his "great deliverance."

The fierceness of the storm convinced him that the ship would surely sink and all would be lost. According to his journal he cried out, "Lord, have mercy upon us." Reflecting on the event he was convinced that God had responded to his cry in the storm, and that the grace of God was at work on his behalf.

Until the day he died Newton observed the anniversary of May 10, 1748, as the day of his conversion.

Thus was born the motivation for "Amazing Grace" and more than 280 other hymns. The song expresses Newton's

gratitude for the amazing grace of God. "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

Although he continued in the slave trade business for a time after his conversion, he ensured that slaves under his care were treated humanely. Ultimately he became a minister and a strong force in the abolitionist movement.

Newton later wrote a strong pamphlet in which he described the horrific conditions of the slave ships, and worked with William Wilberforce, a devoted leader of the Parliamentary campaign, to abolish the African slave trade. He lived to see the British passage of the 1807 Slave Trade Act, that initiated many changes in the slave business.

Newton's story, the immense popularity of this song and the powerful impact of its message raced through my mind on the evening of Good Friday.

Pam and I were enjoying an Irish music concert when the drone of bagpipes drew our attention to the aisle beside us. A piper launched a rendition of Amazing Grace, strolling from the back of the concert hall to the front, joining singers and other instrumentalists on stage as they mastered the music and message of the great hymn.

The crowd at the concert of otherwise non-religious music jumped to their feet and enthusiastically applauded the musicians' presentation of Amazing Grace.

It occurred to me, this is a song that is played and/or sung at almost every state funeral in the United States. It is played at secular concerts like the one we attended. Many in the British Isles expect the song when they hear bagpipes. Around the world, the song has been translated in countless languages. Worshipers sing it wherever believers gather across the nations. It could very well be the most recognized hymn in history and surely is near the top of most "favorite" lists.

Amazing Grace has been printed in more than 1,100 hymnals, included in hit films and performed by stars like Aretha Franklin, Judy Collins, Johnny Cash and Rod Stewart. It is amazing that this song gets so much play time around the world.

What makes the song so popular? Is it the longing of all mankind for forgiveness? Is it the opening words that invite us to experience God's grace – even though most people probably have no idea what grace really looks like?

I believe it is powerful because the magnitude of our sin makes grace necessary. The message of grace is the core truth of the Christian faith. Paul, a first

century terrorist to believers, wrote, "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" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The man-created religions of the world do not have a concept of grace. There is no grace in Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, atheism or animism. Some forms of Buddhism claim an element of grace. Grace is unique to the God of the Bible.

Christians have a Savior who is twice described by John as "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, 17). Notice that grace does not stand separate from truth, but in balance with it.

Grace does not ignore man's sin problem. It confronts sin head-on from the very person of God. Grace does not minimize sin or wink at it. Sin is still the heinous, evil destroyer of man and an offense against Holy God.

But grace forgives and changes lives. Where we were once blind, we now see.

This is the message of John 3:16. God so loved lost mankind that He gave. His gift was not a trifling one. His grace was demonstrated at the expense of the excelling gift of His only Son. He gave the most costly gift of grace – Jesus, the Messiah.

As I pondered the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the incredible grace of God during the Easter weekend, I was moved to use the space in this column to accentuate His amazing grace for readers of the *Biblical Recorder*.

I was tempted to comment on the battles for religious freedom in the United States, more recently highlighted by embattled legislation in Indiana and Arkansas. I could offer my thoughts on

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.

– John Newton

the cowardly acts of terrorists in Kenya and dozens of other hot spots. There are many subjects I could write about that are relevant to spiritual, social and political tensions.

But nothing is more relevant to us than the incomprehensible grace of the true and living God Who conquered death and gives us life.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work" 2 Corinthians 9:8. **BR**

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Join me in Columbus for SBC Annual Meeting

In just two short months, Southern Baptists from across North America, and countries around the globe, will gather in Columbus, Ohio, as the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) holds its 158th annual meeting June 16-17.

I hope many North Carolina Baptists will make plans now to come join in the worship and celebration of all that God is doing through Southern Baptists as we pray and labor to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission. When you hear the testimonies and reports during this convention meeting of how God's Spirit is at work, joy will overflow your heart and you will want to share these stories with your church family.

SBC President Ronnie Floyd has challenged Southern Baptists to ask God daily for another Great Awakening in America that would enable His Church to reach the world for Christ.

Will you lead your church family to join you now in praying for this annual meeting in Columbus? He has said that Southern Baptists "need extraordinary prayer for the purpose of revival personally, revival in the church, and spiritual awakening in America, so we can see commitment to the Great Commission escalated, and accelerate to its completion in our generation. I believe this should be our heart and our goal."

My prayer is that each messenger in attendance will

be drawn to pray for revival and spiritual awakening and will become more involved in the mission of God to make disciples of all nations.

At a time when the world is in desperate

need of the truth, we have a dire need to plead for God's Kingdom to come, on earth, as it is in Heaven. I ask that you pray specifically for revival, and pray that God will use you to demonstrate His love and mercy to lost people in your sphere of influence.

As multiple thousands of people move to the United States from the nations, we have a perfect opportunity to witness and pray for God's light to shine through us.

Is it really your desire that all people groups will one day embrace Jesus Christ as Savior? Isn't it obvious that God is bringing the nations to this country?

Many of these immigrants have never heard the gospel. We cannot afford to squander this opportunity of participating in international missions through evangelizing and discipling those who have come to us from other countries.

In Columbus alone, 139 languages are spoken, and it is the 15th largest city in the United States.

What a wonderful place to host our meeting and see the providence of the Lord!

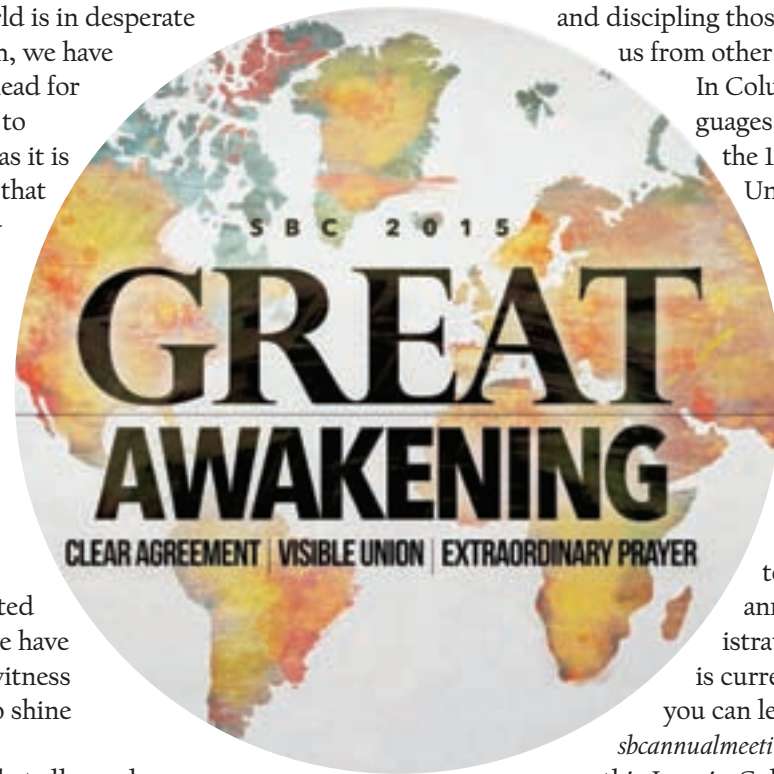
The time is here and opportunities abound for a spiritual harvest.

I urge you to attend this year's SBC annual meeting. Registration for messengers is currently underway, and you can learn more by visiting sbcanualmeeting.net. I hope to see you this June in Columbus!

"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest," Luke 10:2b (NKJV). **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
SBC executive
director-treasurer



TAR HEEL VOICES

Campus church plant or supplant?

I have noticed the changing and challenging nature of ministry on college campuses. Baptist Student Unions have seen dramatic transformation over the last two decades. I admire those who minister in such settings as these.

I always understood student ministries to function in concert with local churches. Working alongside congregations to disciple students puts the "para" in para-church.

The new model of an actual church on campus fulfills a number of perceived needs. Students are comfortable with their peers with whom they share classes, sports, dorms and meals. A homogeneous worship style attracts and unifies this narrow demographic. God is glorified and the gospel is preached by faithful leaders.

However, as local congregations lose their students to the church on campus, these other local expressions of the body of Christ suffer the dearth of college-aged fervor and insights. Worse, these students may not experience the richness of life with children, adults and seniors. And, someday, they will have children and grow old.

When leaders scheduled campus ministry during the week, students were free to attend churches on Sunday. The post-modernists will argue that the church needs to reform, to better meet the needs of those students, most of whom were not attending on Sundays anyway. This is true. But how does transformation take place with a non-present partner?

I have sympathy for the leaders of churches on campuses meeting during "church" hours, such as 11 [a.m.] on Sundays. You are no doubt, reaching people not otherwise touched by grace. But I plead for your sensitivity to the congregations surrounding you who also aspire to reach college students.

Specifically, given the geography wherein a "new church plant" sets up adjacent to an existing congregation, on their property as leased to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and schedules worship at 11 a.m. Sunday, compromising an already difficult parking issue, it does not seem right to me. I wonder whether the effort constitutes a church plant or a church supplant.

John Alden Tagliarini
Bryson City

Americans' muddled morality about the unborn

Religion News Service

On March 18, Michelle Wilkins answered a Craigslist ad for baby clothes. When she arrived at the seller's home, Dynel Lane, a former nurse's aide, attacked her, cut her open and removed her unborn child. Wilkins survived the incident; her child did not.

Hearing about this horrifying crime provokes a sense of moral revulsion, as well as a demand for justice to be carried out against the killer. But this crime took place in Colorado, and therefore, the attacker will not face murder charges. Colorado state law does not recognize the fetus as a person unless the fetus has reached the point he or she can survive outside the womb.

Today, 38 states have fetal homicide laws that increase penalties for crimes involving pregnant women or explicitly refer to the fetus as a person worthy of protection.

But creating and passing these laws is a contentious process because it takes lawmakers to the heart of our society's debate over abortion: What is the unborn?

Opponents fear that some of these laws go too far in bestowing "personhood" on the unborn and may jeopardize a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion. Supporters believe these laws provide justice for women like Wilkins

and Laci Peterson, a pregnant California woman who disappeared in 2002.

The debate over fetal homicide reveals our society's inconsistency in the ongoing debate over abortion: We only affirm the humanity of the unborn if the child is "wanted."

With friends and neighbors and family members who celebrate a pregnancy, we speak of the unborn in warm and

personal terms: "baby" and "child."

When debating the right to abortion, we speak of the unborn in clinical and impersonal terms: "fetus," "zygote" or "tissue." One wonders if our manner of conversation conveniently shifts, depending on the context, or whenever we find it necessary to distance ourselves from the humanity of the unborn.

American views of the morality and legality of abortion are complex, defying the conventional labels of "pro-life" and "pro-choice," and confounding



TREVIN WAX
Guest Column

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.

Raleigh campus ministry ‘high-leverage’

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

“Give me the right lever, and I shall move the world,” said David Ethridge, paraphrasing the Greek thinker Archimedes. “Collegiate ministry is the right lever to move the world.”

Ethridge is the minister to young adults at Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Raleigh and a board member of the Raleigh Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM). He believes that, along with the various collegiate ministries at university campuses across North Carolina, the Raleigh BCM has a lot of potential.

“It’s such a high-leverage ministry,” Ethridge said. “These are businessmen, engineers, journalists, artists, lawyers, politicians, doctors, teachers. ... They are going to be leading this country 20 years from now; and they are going to be leading their churches 20 years from now.”

“There are 77 different languages spoken just at N.C. State. In the American university, you find the nations. ... They are typically the best, brightest and the most affluent from their countries ... They are a force, if they get saved.”

Ethridge added that many of these students, if they become Christians, either go back to their home countries where they can take the gospel to their own cultures, or they stay in the U.S. where they can help local churches reach their increasingly globalized culture.

The Raleigh BCM began in 2014 as a handful of area churches felt the call to create a “viable, vibrant, evangelistic, biblically sound, Baptist presence in Raleigh that students can be involved in.” They pooled money, energy and leaders to create a non-profit organization that could connect students to local churches, involve local churches in collegiate ministry and allow them all to engage thousands of students on Raleigh-area college campuses.

The *Recorder* previously reported on the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) shift in emphasis from direct convention involvement in collegiate ministry to local church involvement.

Evan Blackerby, central region consultant to the BSC collegiate partnerships team, told the *Recorder* in 2014, “We have a tendency to get our hands in the church’s ministry, but we’re here to serve the churches. We want to wash their feet. For us to do anything that the churches could do on their own would be taking

something out of their hands that God intends for them to have.”

There are numerous ways for churches to engage in collegiate ministry with the help of the BSC. The Raleigh BCM is one particular way for them to do collegiate ministry, and they believe local churches are the key.

In a time when North Carolina Baptists are thinking about impacting lostness through disciple-making, Ethridge believes collegiate ministry is a great way for local churches to do that. “You want to make disciples of the nations? Go to a college campus.”

Local churches should feel strongly about serving college students, according to Ethridge. Most young people that are involved in church stop attending after high school, and they don’t usually come back until they’re married and have children. Most people make the most important decisions of their lives during those years – vocation, marriage, children – and they do so disconnected from a local body of believers.

The Raleigh BCM tries to prevent that from happening, funneling freshman students into discipleship relationships with churches and older students. “We’re trying to create and produce after two years a junior that is equipped,” said Ethridge.

T.J. Cople, campus director for the Raleigh BCM, said the ministry is not designed to take the place of a local church. The guiding question, he said, is “How can we serve the local church, as well as serve students and engage students?”

The campus ministry doesn’t host small groups or large Bible studies so that students will join those types of groups at their local church. They do, however, provide teaching that equips students to engage their peers on campus.

They teach on an eight block plan – two sessions in the Fall and two in Spring for two years. Each block is dedicated to a topic like “What is the local church?” “How to study the Bible” or “Holiness.”

During each block, they host a mission outreach project and a panel discussion related to the current topic. Mission projects and panel discussions rely on church involvement, since the projects are often suggested by churches and the discussion panels are filled by church members and leaders.

“That’s our sweet spot,” said Cople. “That allows us to be a specialization of the church rather than a replacement of the church.” He explained that the goal is not to steal students away from local churches, but to help local churches



T.J. Cople, inset, is campus director for the Raleigh BCM, which meets at the Baptist Student Center next to North Carolina State University’s campus in Raleigh. (Contributed photos)

“It’s better for the local church to be doing the discipling,” Ethridge said, “because you get a more of a well-rounded, intergenerational thing going.”

Cople illustrated, “They’re the general practitioner; we’re the cardiologist.”

Ethridge lamented that many churches try to avoid college students, saying “some churches shy away from college students because they’re broke.” Ethridge believes that’s a mistake since students can contribute in other ways. “They can’t always give money, but they can give energy, creativity and time,” he said.

Ethridge said they can provide manpower for mission or outreach projects that local churches are doing.

Even if college students couldn’t make a significant contribution to the ministry of a local church, Ethridge believes the sacrifice would be worth it. “If you only help those who can help you, what benefit is that? ... There is a blessing in helping those who can’t repay you,” said Ethridge.

In response to a question about how churches can become involved in the Raleigh BCM, Ethridge said, “There’s

almost no area where we don’t need help, and wouldn’t take help.”

They welcome churches, according to Ethridge, to provide meals for students, help with tutoring or moving, and lead discipleship groups.

They also welcome churches to invite students to come for corporate worship on Sundays.

“We need churches to be involved,” Cople said, “because there’s a huge mission field at these college campuses, and they’re sending students there every day. And we’re able to stay with those students and give them the tools they need.”

Currently Raleigh BCM receives funds from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and four area churches. A total of seven churches are involved in the ministry of the Raleigh BCM.

The Raleigh BCM is located near several campuses – Meredith College, Peace College, Shaw University and North Carolina State University. They also reach out to students at Wake Tech and The College at Southeastern.

North Carolina has more than 200 colleges and universities, home to almost 600,000 students. **BR**

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Moldova partnership is relationships, not events

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

Lake Norman Baptist Church (LNBC) in Huntersville has a growing understanding of international missions because of a four-year partnership with a small country in Eastern Europe. “Moldova has helped us cast our eyes beyond ourselves,” said Bobby Blanton, the church’s senior pastor. “We have really stepped up our missions emphasis over the last couple of years, and Moldova has been a big part of that.”

The church has participated in mission projects in Cuba, Honduras, Panama and Haiti, but Blanton said this new partnership has given the church a much needed, sustained missions focus. And the breadth of the project has offered a variety of ministry opportunities for members with different skills.

The partnership has included medical clinics, children’s Vacation Bible School ministry, church demolition and construction, pastoral training, youth camp ministry, orphan hosting and adoption, nutritional outreach and vocational training. Blanton has been to Moldova three times and plans to return this year to train pastors. Almost all national pastors are bi-vocational and have no formal

History of Moldova partnerships

When the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina began a partnership with Moldova in November 2011, two separate channels of ministry were established. One was a partnership with the Baptist Union of Moldova. This is a “convention” of 490 Baptist churches and mission points in this small Eastern European nation.

A second partnership was launched with a small network of churches labeled the Agape Network, named after the Agape Baptist Church in Chisinau and a fellowship of churches that were not comfortable with some of the theological positions of the union. Many N.C. Baptist churches were already working with the Agape network and with individual churches across Moldova. Lake Norman Baptist Church in Huntersville has taken the lead role in this second partnership.

The *Biblical Recorder* reported on the partnership with the Baptist Union in a story about Hephzibah Baptist Church in Knightdale in the Feb. 28 issue.

training in ministry. “The pastor training has been a great blessing to me,” he said. “My heart is with those pastors ... I can’t say enough about the work ethic of the people in Moldova. It’s amazing. The pastors work in the fields during the day and preach in the churches on the weekend. God bless them.”

LNBC prays for and supports 12 pastors, providing \$1,000 annually for each pastor’s ministry.

Food ministry

Last September LNBC held a massive

food-packing event that yielded 70,000 dehydrated meals in sealed packets. The church shipped 40,000 meals to Moldova and 30,000 to Haiti.

The pack-a-thon was organized in part by Feed the Hunger (*feedthehunger.org*), a ministry based in Burlington that works with N.C. Baptist Men (also known as Baptists on Mission) and many Baptist churches.

Ron Hoppe, a volunteer missions coordinator, manages the Moldova partnership for LNBC. He said a church member worked with FedEx to arrange delivery of the four large pallets of food. “FedEx donated the complete cost of air freight to get the pallets to Moldova. They arrived on schedule, undamaged and nothing had been compromised,” he said.

The food arrived in late October and is stored for weekly distribution throughout the year. Each meal meets the daily nutritional needs of four adults or six children. The packets include beans, rice, dehydrated vegetables and vitamin powder.

“It’s not gourmet dining,” Hoppe said, “but in locations where food is a major issue, this will be a very powerful tool that pastors can use to get out into the communities and expand ministry opportunities.”

“We’re excited to see what the potential of those meal packets might be to help the pastors in Moldova spread the gospel,” he added.

Victor Mirza, pastor of Agape Church in the capital city of Chisinau, Moldova, said the meals help small churches as they work with children and families in

the villages. “Most of the villages have a children’s ministry where they depend on these meals,” he said. “After school, the kids come to church for a meal and a Bible lesson. This is a great resource for these local churches to reach children.”

Some of the food is distributed in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center, orphanages and to the poor. Mirza said a large portion of the meals went to neighboring Ukraine, a nation that has recently experienced much social and political unrest.

Hoppe said the value of Moldova’s currency has declined significantly, making food more expensive. “So the meal packets are more valuable now than when they were packed and shipped,” he added. “Victor and the other pastors are using those meals in ways that are innovative and effective to reach their communities.”

An older Moldovan pastor and wife who live on \$150 monthly, still found a way to feed 20 children in their village twice each week, Hoppe said. “So, stepping in and providing them with some of these meal packages made a great difference in their ability to serve their community.”

Some LNBC volunteers enjoy manual labor, so they responded to the needs of a small church in the town of Leova. An old, unsafe building was demolished, and a new church is being constructed on the same site. In 2012 Hoppe learned about a home for disabled and developmentally challenged adults that had a very inadequate kitchen. “A man in our church who is an architect made a trip over to evaluate the needs, then he drew up plans,” said Hoppe. “A team from LNBC demolished the kitchen and took a lead role to rebuild a commercial kitchen. It was a very significant project, and it certainly improved the quality of the food service provided in the home.”

Orphan ministry

Moldova’s sustained poverty and high unemployment has created a large number of orphans. When an orphan reaches 18 years of age, they are forced to leave government-run orphanages. Jobs are scarce; crime and human trafficking lure many children into hopeless traps. LNBC is trying to respond to that need, also.

See Moldova page 12

North Carolina Baptist Hospital

Mother's Day Offering

Week of Prayer
May 3-10, 2015

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” ~Hebrews 13:16

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N.C. House bill, churches contest property tax loophole

By M.H. CAVANAUGH | Christian Action League

Neal Jackson, pastor of Beulah Baptist Church, in Bennett, North Carolina, and his congregation were shocked when they learned last year that the Randolph County Tax Department had assessed their property and determined they would have to pay taxes on it. The assumption was that property used for religious purposes was exempt from paying taxes by state law.

Tax assessors, however, found a loophole in the property tax law and billed Beulah Baptist for more than \$7,000. North Carolina General Statutes say that buildings “shall be exempt from taxation,” if the edifice is “wholly and exclusively used by its owner for religious purposes.”

At the time, Beulah Baptist was building a new sanctuary. Because the construction was not finished, the church had yet to obtain its occupancy permit. The Tax Department determined the new construction was not being used “wholly and exclusively for religious purposes” and should be taxed.

The church appealed the tax bill to the Randolph County Board of Equalization and Review and the Board reversed the decision. Nevertheless, Jackson remained concerned that similar occurrences might be happening to other churches in the state.

Jackson was right.

Jeff Clawson, pastor of Vienna Baptist Church in

Pfafftown, says his church was building on a piece of land the church owned near their current location. The land, he found out, was not considered tax-exempt because they did not yet meet on it.

“After the building was completed and the occupancy permit received, which was in late March of 2012, we were notified that we would have to pay taxes on the church building because the building was not occupied as of January 1, 2012,” says Clawson.

Clawson added that his church appealed the decision of its county tax assessors to the Forsyth County Board of Equalization and Review and lost. So the church appealed to the North Carolina Property Tax Commission, and was denied again.

The Property Tax Commission ruled the present use of the property was the determining factor. The commission’s report said, “Thus, property merely being held for planned future religious purposes is not exempt.”

Clawson said the church’s legal fees exceeded \$13,000. “While we have no intention of not paying taxes we should pay, it would seem the intention of the tax code was never to charge taxes on a place of worship while its being constructed, then, no longer tax it when occupied,” he said.

Rep. Allen McNeill agreed and filed HB 229 – Modify Religious Property Exemption earlier this month. McNeill’s bill closes the loophole and clarifies what most would assume has always been the real intent of the tax law. It specifically exempts buildings and land occupied

by the structure from local property taxes if the edifice is “intended to be wholly and exclusively used by its owner for religious purposes upon completion.” The tax exemption for incomplete religious buildings ends after 90 days from the date of the issuance of a certificate of occupancy or 180 days after the end of construction.

HB 229 was taken up by the House Finance Committee March 26. McNeill made his case for the bill before the committee, along with Rep. Garland Pierce, who is also a Baptist minister.

“As I was watching the proceedings of the bill’s consideration,” said Mark Creech, executive director of the Christian Action League, “and as Rep. McNeill explained the reason for it, the looks on the faces of some of the lawmakers was one of shock and dismay. You could tell they were troubled such a loophole would even be employed. These are my words and not theirs, but I think the feeling was, ‘We need to fix this now. This is really unjust.’”

“There was little discussion on HB 229 in committee,” said Creech. “Two lawmakers actually seemed to be racing to be the first to give the bill a favorable report. It passed with ease.”

HB 229 was also taken up for consideration on the House floor on March 26. The bill passed unanimously in the House, 114-0. The legislation now moves to the Senate for consideration.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – This article first appeared at christian-actionleague.org. Used by permission.) **BR**

Survey: Americans see value in church attendance

By LISA GREEN | LifeWay Research

The overwhelming majority of Americans say they find value in attending church, a new LifeWay Research study shows.

Two-thirds of Americans think attendance is admirable; only 11 percent consider church useless.

Even among nonreligious people, 80 percent believe church attendance is acceptable, and 43 percent label it admirable. Just 29 percent call it useless.

But despite their professed fondness for church, Americans are more likely to believe attendance is declining (55 percent) or the church is dying (42 percent) than growing (36 percent) or thriving (38 percent), according to the LifeWay survey of 1,000 Americans from Sept. 19-28 of last year.

“Americans have a much more optimistic view of the people and practice of attending church than they do of the health of the church,” said Scott McConnell, vice president of the Nashville-based LifeWay Research. “Church attendance is much like regular exercise and driving the speed limit. People do not live out everything they admire.”

Confirming McConnell’s assertion that Americans’ churchgoing is at odds with their behavior, even on Easter, traditionally the best-attended Sunday of

the year, large segments of the population say they don’t plan to attend, previous LifeWay research has found.

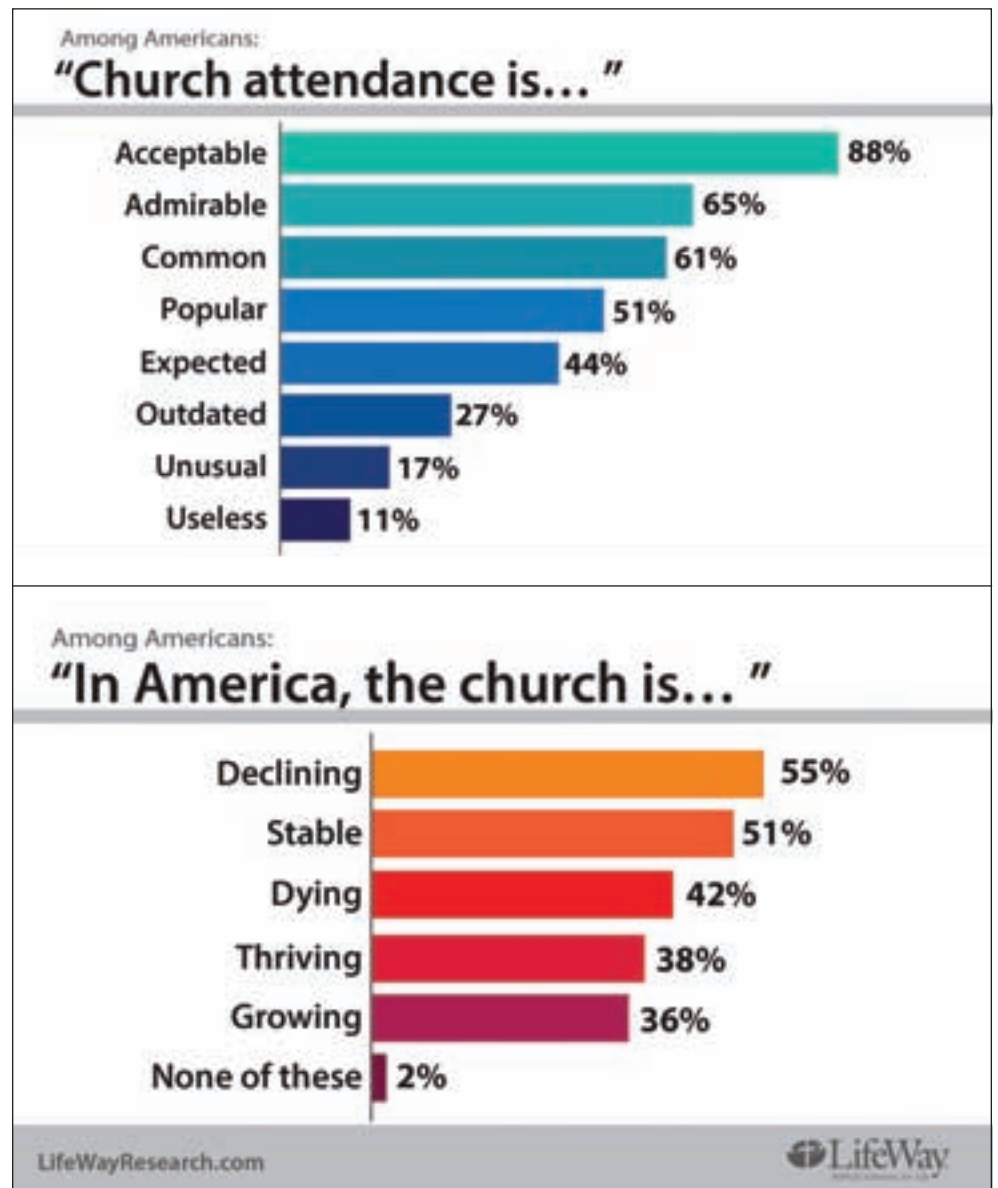
Their attitudes reflect the mixed trends of the past 50 years. While many mainline denominations have lost membership, some have grown. And while more people are Christian today than in 1970, Christians make up a smaller share of the burgeoning population, according to a study from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Some say church is out of date

Faced with those trends, many churches have shifted toward contemporary worship styles and new outreach methods, although 27 percent of Americans still think church attendance is outdated, LifeWay research found. That belief is even more pronounced among the nonreligious (42 percent), Catholics (31 percent) and people 25 to 34 years old (34 percent) who are among the Millennial generation in which fewer claim religious affiliation or profess belief in God, according to the Pew Research Center.

Young adults, like most Americans, don’t see church attendance as an assumption in today’s culture. While 54 percent of those over 65 describe churchgoing as an expectation, that viewpoint is in the minority for every other age group

See Church page 16



SOUTHERN BAPTIST BRIEFS

LifeWay campus under contract

(Baptist Press) LifeWay Christian Resources has entered into a contract for the sale of its campus in downtown Nashville. Contract terms, including the sale price, have not been disclosed pending closing of the sale in a few months, according to a LifeWay news release.

The contract is with Uptown Nashville, LLC, a consortium of local and national developers formed specifically to develop this property.

LifeWay has previously acknowledged that after a sale is closed, they will lease back a portion of the facilities until a new building is finished.

The sale involves LifeWay's 14.5-acre downtown Nashville complex, including more than 1 million square feet of office, warehouse and parking space. About 1,100 of LifeWay's employees work in the downtown offices, utilizing about a third of the facility. The organization also oversees 186 stores and 4,300 employees in 29 states.

Warrens mark 35 years at Saddleback

(Baptist Press) Pastor Rick and wife Kay Warren marked 35 years in ministry at Saddleback Church on March 22 in Anaheim, Calif., celebrating its growth from a seven-member Bible study at the Warrens' home to more than 27,000 weekly worshippers at 10 U.S. campuses.

More than 20,000 worshippers gathered for the celebration held at Angel Stadium to accommodate the crowd.

"I believe that the growth of any church ... is dependent upon both sovereignty factors and human factors," Rick Warren told the crowd. "Why has God blessed our church in such an unusual way? It's not because we're smarter; it's not because we're better; it's not because we're stronger; it's not because we're better looking; it's not because we're more deserving, none of those factors.

"But God has blessed Saddleback because we have chosen to believe God for just a little bit more ...," he said of the Southern Baptist congregation. "We chose to say, 'Let's go to the whole world. We chose to say, 'Let's go after multiple campuses.'"

Stores pull 'heaven visitation resources'

(Baptist Press) LifeWay Christian Resources has stopped selling all "experiential testimonies about heaven" following consideration of a 2014 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) resolution on "the sufficiency of scripture regarding the afterlife."

LifeWay told Baptist Press about its decision to halt sales of heaven visitation resources March 24 in response to an inquiry about the book *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Don Piper, which is being made into a movie slated for release this fall. The book recounts Piper's supposed experience of heaven following a severe auto accident and has sold 6.5 million copies in 46 languages.

Though LifeWay "was not mentioned in the SBC resolution affirming the sufficiency of biblical revelation and affirming the truth about heaven and hell," said LifeWay spokesman Marty King, "the resolution was approved overwhelmingly and was considered during our process."

The resolution, adopted by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in June 2014, warned Christians not to allow "the numerous books and movies purporting to explain or describe the afterlife experience" to "become their source and basis for an understanding of the afterlife."

New health insurance law may affect churches

(Baptist Press) A new tax rule in conjunction with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act may affect many churches that pay or reimburse individual health insurance premiums, and imposes daily fines beginning June 30 for those not in compliance.

GuideStone Financial Resources health plan participants should notice no impact as a result of the rule known as IRS Notice 2015-17, GuideStone said in a March 2 press release. Other churches whose employees do not participate in a group health plan could be affected.

The IRS notice clarifies guidance on the one-employee health plan exception from the market reform provisions of the Affordable Care Act, as well as reimbursement arrangements for Medicare and TRICARE.

The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) points out a viable option for churches affected by the rule, which is to increase employees' overall taxable compensation without requiring that the additional income be used to purchase health coverage. Employees would then have the option of using the funds to purchase coverage, the ECFA said in a March 9 press release.

Full stories available online at BRnow.org.

Baptist colleges make mark on N.C. economy

BR staff & press releases

Baptist colleges help put more than \$14 billion into the North Carolina economy and create more than 219,000 jobs.

Campbell, Chowan, Gardner-Webb, Mars Hill and Wingate universities, all affiliated with North Carolina Baptists, were part of the study of the 36 North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) conducted by Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI).

Data collection covers the fiscal year 2012-2013. The study was commissioned by NCICU, the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System.

"While the true contribution of Gardner-Webb University (GWU) is the positive impact on people's lives, it is gratifying to know that the university makes a significant economic contribution to our region as well," said GWU President Frank Bonner in a story on the school's website.

"I suspect that many people will be pleasantly surprised both by the magnitude of this contribution and the various forms that it takes."

Kristin Reese serves as executive director of the Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP) in Shelby, N.C., and believes GWU has also advanced the local economy in ways that were not measured by the study.

"GWU has been intimately involved in our regional, state and local economic development initiatives," Reese shared in a report on GWU's website.

"The university directly contributes to our CCEDP financial incentive packages by offering tuition credits to new and expanding companies. I'm unaware of any other private university that is contributing to economic development in this manner, and the tuition credits have brought significant value to our business recruitment efforts."

The economic impact study examined numerous categories – employee data, revenues, expense and students – to assess the influence of the campuses at various independent colleges.

The study did not include state universities. The research breaks down the types of jobs created by the colleges and the students the schools educate as well as the incomes for various education levels.

It is the first multi-sector analysis of higher education's impact on the state's economy, and one of the most compre-

hensive reports of its kind ever done for a single state.

There are a number of variables that contributed to the study and its results. Researchers at each university helped track information for EMSI.

"Campbell University is one of the largest private employers in Harnett County," said Campbell President Jerry Wallace in a story on the university's website.

"With more than 700 full-time employees, 6,000 students on our campuses, and nearly 30,000 alumni in North Carolina, we knew we had an impact, but this study validates our value locally and across the state."

During the 2012-13 fiscal year, Campbell had an impact of \$452.4 million in the seven counties in central North Carolina it most directly serves: Harnett, Wake, Johnston, Cumberland, Lee, Durham and Chatham.

That impact includes payroll, operations, the purchase of goods and services, start-up companies, and spending generated by students and alumni. Campbell's total impact is the equivalent of creating 7,055 new jobs, Campbell reported on its website.

"The economic benefits of a Campbell degree to our graduates represent the ability to lead a productive and self-sufficient life," Wallace said.

"Over 80 percent of our students and alumni call North Carolina home, and Campbell offers programs in the health sciences, business, law, medicine, pharmacy, education, divinity and other disciplines that consumers demand and our state needs."

With all 36 members of NCICU, the schools enrolled almost 90,000 students from around the world and generated a combined \$14.2 billion in added state income. This includes more than \$4 billion in payroll and benefits for 66,309 full-time and part-time employees and \$6.8 billion on goods and services to carry out their day-to-day operations, research and clinical activities.

The rest comes from construction and the spending of their students, visitors, start-up companies, and alumni, which in turn creates more spending and employment across the state.

The added state income, or additional gross state product, of \$14.2 billion created by NCICU's institutions is equal to approximately 3.2 percent of the total gross state product of North Carolina, and is equivalent to creating 219,590 new jobs. The findings are available at ncicu.org. **BR**

Speaker says wives of pastors yield sacred influence

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Whether welcome or not, ministers' wives wield tremendous influence over their husbands.

Referring to the sacred influence wives have over their husbands, Kathy Litton, national consultant for the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) Flourish ministry (*Flourish.me*) for ministers' wives, said the ladies' "husbands work in a unique industry ... an industry of eternity. Our influence on them has an eternal significance."

With that thought, Litton says, comes much weight.

"We have the potential to fan the flames in our husband's life and advance the gospel," she said.

Pastors live in a "thumbs-up, thumbs-down world all the time," Litton said, also referring to it as a "glam-our shot, mug shot" world, which makes pastors vulnerable.



KATHY LITTON

Litton was part of "Equipping Day for Ministry Wives" March 28 hosted by Embrace, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's women's ministry, and NAMB's Flourish. Joining Litton was Lori Frank (*lorifrank.org*), wife of Biltmore Baptist Church's pastor, Bruce Frank. Biltmore is a multi-site church based in Arden. Cindy Johnson (*cindyjohnson.org*) served as the day's worship leader. She is a member of Old Town Baptist Church, where the event was held.

Litton discussed the need for Southern Baptists to have a strong theology of suffering, especially for ministers' wives. Litton is a two-time pastor's wife. She was married to Rick Ferguson for more than 20 years before he died in a car accident in 2002. In 2009, she married Ed Litton, pastor of First Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala. Kevin Ezell, president of NAMB, asked her to come on board to help minister to the wives of pastors, church planters and missionaries.

Litton stressed the importance of words.

"Men are big and strong ... but they can't absorb the words when she cuts him down," she said. "God has entrusted you with this ... influence. You and I get an opportunity to be stewards."

Litton referred to Genesis 3, 2 Samuel and Proverbs 31 when talking about the powerful influence women have.

"Far more than you can possibly realize, your husband longs for your affirmation," she said. "Do not underestimate your power."

She shared five things to create positive influence: vibrant, spiritual passion; godly character; a healthy biblical love; shared vision; and godly wisdom.

Litton considers character as Christlikeness, truthfulness, kindness and generous, as well as being responsible, unwavering and hardworking.

"Partner with him on the highs and lows," she said.

"Parenting is a stewardship of love for the glory of God."
— Lori Frank



Ladies participate in a song with motions during Equipping Day for ministers' wives March 28 at Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. Cindy Johnson, below right, was leading the music for the day's event. (BR photos by Dianna L. Cagle)

"When he knows you're on his team, that brings him great security and great support.

"Do you realize how many times a week your husband has to make decisions that require godly wisdom? Ministry is always very murky. There are a lot of voices that speak into his life.

"Men do not thrive in an atmosphere of negativity," Litton said. "They will shut down and withdraw."

Litton also tackled the topic of sex.

"Our whole society is broken about sex," Litton said. "You're not going to hear those realities from the culture about what sex is intended to be."

She stressed the importance of holding high what God meant marriage to be: between one woman and one man. She stressed the need for communication between husband and wife in this area.

Battling burnout

Frank tackled the topics of burnout and parenting.

In her "Battling Burnout" session, Frank stressed that burnout remains the number one "threat to your husband's legacy" while pastor's wives' face washout.

"We burn out when we serve in the flesh," Frank said. "If you're spending yourself for the Kingdom of God but you're spending the finite part of you, you will become exhausted."

But ladies will wash out when they withdraw. "Sometimes ministry is grubby," she said.

"Sometimes people say things that hurt you ... we build hedges around our lives; we're afraid to be vulnerable; we're afraid to be authentic."

Other mistakes include failing to sow, sowing in poor soil or disconnecting from your calling.

She encouraged the ladies to take a healing Sabbath by being present, restored and renewed.

"You need a Sabbath," said Frank as she encouraged the ladies to make their priority "the glory of His name and the sake of the gospel. Everything else is just fluff."

Frank shared that the women did not owe anyone



LORI FRANK



transparency but they do "owe everybody authenticity."

She stressed that the legacy of someone's life is built for the long haul. Women need to partner with their husbands to set boundaries within ministry.

Fearless parenting

Frank admits a fear of raising "bratty" preacher's kids.

"I didn't want to mess my kids up," she said. "Whether our children are in our home or out on their own, we can trust God fearlessly with their welfare spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. Parenting is a stewardship of love for the glory of God."

Frank encouraged the women to not "let the devil get to you with that 'mommy guilt.' You're going to find something to feel bad about. We just really need to support each other."

Women should look for evidence of God's power, take God at His Word and step into action, Frank said.

"Your family is a picture of the gospel in human form," she said. "A marriage is a gospel presentation. Everyone in your neighborhood is watching."

Embrace also has events planned in the fall, including a mission trip to Boston (deadline to apply is May 1), discipleship training and a women's retreat.

Visit embracenc.org for more information; click on "Events." **BR**

Summit

Continued from page 1

sexuality; this year's topic was racial reconciliation.

The theme was initially slated to address pro-life ethics, but the ERLC decided in December 2014 to focus the summit on racial reconciliation after highly controversial grand jury decisions in Missouri and New York failed to indict police in the killings of African-American men.

Moore sought in his opening sermon to fan into flame the so-called fires that will destroy racial strife among Southern Baptists. He deplored the comments of a Sunday School teacher from his childhood who told him upon the discovery of a coin in his mouth, "Get that out of your mouth ... a colored man may have handled that."

Moore went on to speak candidly about explicit and implicit racism among Southern Baptists, calling them to repent and believe the reconciling truths of the gospel.

Southern Baptists need to understand how ethnic divisions are overcome, added Moore. "White, born-again Christians tend to assume the body of Christ is white, with room for everyone else," he said. "Racial reconciliation is not a matter of mercy ministry toward minority communities."

Instead, it is about the fundamental Christian beliefs found in Ephesians 3:1-13 that the gospel is a message for everyone and the church is a unified, multi-ethnic people that are "*fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise.*"

Other speakers followed, like Tony Evans, renowned speaker, first African-American graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas; Robert P. George, McCormick professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions; H.B. Charles Jr., pastor-teacher of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., a majority black church that



From left, Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Frank Page, president of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (BP); Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans; K. Marshall Williams Sr., National African American Fellowship, participate in a panel discussing racial issues within the SBC. (ERLC photos)

merged with predominantly white Ridgewood Baptist Church in early 2015; and Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, also touched upon the gospel and racial reconciliation as he described the connection between the church's mission and all the nations of the world.

Walter Strickland, SEBTS special advisor to the president for diversity and theology instructor, moderated one of the panel discussions on key issues in racial reconciliation with Dhati Lewis, lead pastor of Blueprint Church in Atlanta, Ga.; Kevin Smith, assistant professor of Christian preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and teaching pastor at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.; and Dean Inserra, senior pastor of City Church in Tallahassee, Fla. They discussed topics ranging from the role of poverty in racial reconciliation to "the talk" that African-American parents often have with their sons about how to interact with law enforcement in ways

that diminish the heightened level of suspicion frequently placed upon black males.

John Perkins, civil rights activist, author, Christian minister and president of a foundation in his name, also joined Moore on stage for an interview. Perkins recounted his conversion to Christianity and immersion into the civil rights movement.

He also discussed his struggle to forgive whites after being ridiculed and beaten in a Mississippi jail for his civil rights involvement. Perkins said, "God, if you let me out of this jail alive, I want to preach a gospel that's stronger than my black interests." God answered his plea, he said. "God put me in relationships with white people who loved me beyond my racism."

Trip Lee, hip-hop artist and author, called listeners to love their fellow Christians by seeking to understand one another. "You cannot love others if you dismiss or ignore their experience," he said. "How can I possibly bear my brother's burdens if I don't know what his burdens are?" Lee asked. "If we're going to love one another, we have to know one another."

"If anyone ever told you to be color blind, don't. Don't be color blind, because He has created us uniquely for our good and for His glory" said Trillia Newbell, author and ERLC consultant for women's initiatives. "Racial reconciliation isn't just possible, it's a must in the church."

Thabiti Anyabwile, author and one of the pastors of Anacostia River Church in Washington D.C., said racial reconciliation is a necessary result of believing the gospel. "You cannot be a Christian renewed in the image of God and be

indifferent to or opposed to reconciliation in the body of Christ." He added that Christians must practice the habit of seeing one another as made in the image of God, "possessing inestimable, unfathomable dignity and worth and preciousness."

The SBC's first African-American president, Fred Luter, said the prayer for racial reconciliation in the church is a request for the realities of heaven to become true on earth. All races in the church will one day come together, "when all of God's children will be gathered at the throne, from every nation, from every tribe, from every tongue, from every race, from every nationality," according to Luter.

Racial reconciliation is not only about whites and blacks, according to the speakers. Afshin Ziafat, pastor of Providence Church in Frisco, Texas, addressed the topic with respect to races from Muslim contexts. "If you're only going to love people who deserve your love, well pat yourself on the back," he said. "You've just come up to the level of the world." Ziafat added, "The gospel calls me to go out to people who don't look like me, especially my enemies who I am expected to hate ... Before I am an American, I am a Christian."

The summit also included six break-out sessions that covered specific issues related to racial reconciliation, like the gospel and immigration reform and how terrorism impacts racism.

Jimmy McNeal, a worship leader at Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, and Norton Hall Band from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary led music during the event.

Visit erlc.com for more information about the leadership summit. **BR**



Tony Evans, left, senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, and Trip Lee, a rapper, were among the speakers at the ERLC Leadership Summit on race.

Proposed shift in Indiana religion law draws fire

Baptist Press

Indiana legislators have drafted an amendment to the state's new Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) specifically stating that no member of the public may be refused services by a private business based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The new language would exempt churches and religious organizations from the definition of "provider," which means churches will not be compelled to use their facilities for same-sex marriages, and pastors will not be compelled to officiate the ceremonies. Christian business owners, however, presumably would be required to provide services if asked.

The move comes after days of criticism from businesses, the NCAA, left-leaning politicians and gay rights groups who alleged the RFRA signed by Gov. Mike Pence gave legal sanction to discrimination against homosexuals. Pence said the bill only created a mechanism for the courts to test claims of conscience against state actions that could be seen as imposing a substantial burden on the exercise of religion.

Tim Overton, pastor of Halteman Village Baptist Church in Muncie, Ind., said in an interview on National Public Radio (NPR) April 2 that a guarantee of protected religious speech was what Christians were looking for in the original bill.

"I think most Americans would agree a pastor like myself should not be compelled by government to use my speech to support someone else's perspective" regarding religious beliefs, Overton said.

"And I think that has parallels to the cake maker. The cake maker is using his or her artistic ability to make a cake, and that cake communicates something. I think that cake is speech and it says, 'We celebrate this union.' And to force someone who doesn't believe that same-sex marriage is correct in the eyes of God – I just don't think they should be forced or compelled by government to use their speech to support someone else's perspective."

That is why, Overton said, the RFRA was needed in the first place. As "gay rights is on the ascendancy" the state is going to have to find a way to protect religious liberty, he said.

"It is wise for the legislature of a state or the nation – as has already been done – to say if government is going to interfere in religious liberty, they need to have a very good reason to do that. They need to meet the compelling interest test. Then, if they meet it, they need to do it in the least restrictive means necessary."

Criticism of the proposed amendment mounted during the day April 2, most

notably from two of the nation's leading religious liberty advocacy organizations.

Mark Rienzi, senior counsel with the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, said the "proposed 'fix' to Indiana's RFRA" is "unnecessary."

"Our country has had over 20 years of experience with RFRA's and we know what they do: They provide crucial protections to religious minorities," Rienzi said in a statement.

"The key disagreement," he noted, "is over what should happen in a very small class of cases where individuals are asked to participate in a same-sex wedding in violation of their religious beliefs. In that situation, there are two possibilities: 1) Our government can drive religious people out of business, fine them and possibly even imprison them or 2) our government can say that these religious people deserve a day in court, and that courts should carefully balance religious liberty with other competing values. The original RFRA would give people their day in court; the proposed 'fix' would be a green light for driving religious people out of business. Our society should not settle this issue by punishing religious people before they even have their day in court."

Kristen Waggoner, senior counsel with the Alliance Defending Freedom, said the Indiana measure is "a good law.... Surrendering to deception and economic blackmail never results in good policy."

Indiana's RFRA "does not pick winners or losers but allows courts to weigh the government's and people's interests fairly and directs judges to count the cost carefully when freedom is stake," Waggoner said in a statement. "The new proposal unjustly deprives citizens their day in court, denies freedom a fair hearing, and rigs the system in advance. It gives the government a new weapon against individual citizens who are merely exercising freedoms that Americans were guaranteed from the founding of this country."

In an early morning press conference April 2, Speaker of the Indiana House Brian Bosma, R.-Indianapolis, said changes to the RFRA were necessary because "what was intended as a message of inclusion – inclusion of all religious beliefs – was interpreted as a message of exclusion, especially for the LGBT community."

Senate President Pro Tem David Long, R.-Fort Wayne, said the law was intended to provide a standard of strict scrutiny in cases where there were potential violations of religious liberty. But for many, he said, the timing of the law created a different perception. The revised language being introduced will "unequivocally

state that Indiana's law does not and will not be able to discriminate against anyone, anywhere at any time."

Long also said the "calamity" and subsequent proposed amendment had shown that "religious rights and individual rights can coexist in harmony."

Gay rights advocates, however, have said they will press for more changes to state law because the changes to the RFRA do not officially recognize homosexuals as a "protected class."

According to the *Indianapolis Star*, any new legislation creating a protected class for homosexuals would be a bridge too far for Republican legislators this term. It also would not be logistically possible. In the press conference, Long said any addition to the state's civil rights law would be a major policy shift and could not be accomplished this late in the legislative session. Long said, however, that the discussion about adding LGBT as a protected class in the state's civil rights statute "has begun whether Hoosiers want to have it or not."

In fact, in the legislature's conference committee later in the morning, Democrat Senate Minority Leader Timothy Lanane, D.-Anderson, and Rep. Linda Lawson, D.-Hammond, both argued that the RFRA should be repealed in favor of a law that adds full civil rights protections for a homosexual class.

Lawson said the RFRA "is a mess," as is the proposed amendment to the law that was suggested.

Rep. Dave Frizzell, R.-Indianapolis, said he and members of his caucus would not support repeal and would place a new bill on religious liberty within the context of a discussion about homosexuals being made a protected class under Indiana's civil rights code.

"If you want to have the discussion about protected status, we can do that, but not in this bill," Frizzell said.

He also said he and the other legislators with Christian convictions would continue to pray and seek guidance because "we all love the Lord and want to do what is right." **B3**

When God knocks

Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."

Richard Baxter believed in knocking on doors. Baxter, a Puritan pastor in Kidderminster, England, from 1641-1660, upon his arrival found the congregation in spiritual disarray and decline. To remedy this condition, Baxter began preaching hour-long sermons that were full of passion and the power of God.

Baxter would be the first to agree that preaching was not the only way things were going to change. Baxter believed in heartfelt prayer and diligence in the making of disciples. Baxter set out to meet with each family in his parish, one-on-one.

He would go to their homes, knock on their doors and spend an hour with 15-16 families per week until he had visited with all his families each year (some 800 families a year). Baxter repeated the process yearly.

It is recorded that almost the entire adult populace of Kidderminster was converted. Baxter built relationships as he intentionally visited with his parishioners. He loved them dearly, prayed with them and labored for a vital faith and life in Christ for everyone under his care. His model of pastoral disciple-making is exceptional.



DR. CHRIS SCHOFIELD

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus stands at the door of His church knocking. His appeal is for them to have ears to hear and for them to open their hearts to His presence. It is an invitation to His people to experience a renewed faith, centered in a vibrant relationship, resulting in oneness with Jesus. In the previous passages (Rev. 2-3), Jesus has just spoken candidly concerning the condition of His people in the churches in Asia Minor. His verdict – they have left their first love, were persecuted yet faithful, involved in idolatry, worldly, persevering through opportunities, dead but appearing alive and lukewarm in the faith.

Sound familiar?

Today, Jesus is seeking out his followers. He desires intimacy, fellowship and relationship. He wants disciple-makers who will walk with him, impacting lostness. Jesus is standing before us knocking, waiting, knocking, waiting, knocking, waiting. Do you hear the knock? Will you open the door?

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

Baptist leader Coy Privette dies

BR staff

Retired Baptist pastor Coy C. Privette, 82, died Mon., March 23, 2015, in Thomasville. Known as a colorful and witty leader, he was active in public service. Privette was a Republican candidate for governor of N.C. in 1976, but lost in a primary race.

He served four terms in the N.C. House, from 1985 to 1992. In 1992, he ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House of Representatives for the 8th congressional district. Privette served as a Cabarrus County commissioner from 1998-2010.

Privette was pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Statesville from 1955-1959; First Baptist, Ellerbe from 1959-1962; and North Kannapolis Baptist, 1962-1976.

He served 15 years as executive director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina (CAL) and five years as president of CAL. He also was on the board of directors of the American Council of Alcohol Problems.

In 1976 he was elected to the presidency of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC). He was re-elected in 1977 and later served on the BSC board of directors and executive committee.

A native of Iredell County, Privette was a graduate of Statesville High School, Wake Forest College and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.



COY PRIVETTE

In high school he was honored as the most valuable player and co-captain of the football team.

He went on to Wake Forest College (now University) on a football scholarship.

At Wake Forest he was president of the student body, active in the Baptist Student Union and the Omicron Delta Kappa national honorary leadership fraternity, president of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, sophomore class president and junior class vice president.

“Whether it was a personal conversation or whether he mounted the pulpit to speak to an audience, it was inevitable within just a short period of time that people would find themselves laughing at some joke, or some funny story that he had told, or just Coy’s humorous take on the day’s events,” said Mark Creech, current Christian Action League executive director, adding he was inspired by Privette’s courage, knowledge and his example.

Creech was commenting for an article on the Christian Action League website.

“You can only imagine how deeply honored I felt when he threw his influence behind my becoming the next executive director of the Christian Action League in 1999,” he added.

“To a large degree, I am where I am today because of him.”

Privette was commissioned a second lieutenant in

the U.S. Army in 1955 and later served as a major in the chaplaincy of the U.S. Army Reserves.

At the time of his death, he was a resident of Piedmont Crossing Retirement Community in Thomasville and taught Sunday School at First Baptist Church in Lexington.

In 2007, Privette was accused of paying a woman for sex in a Salisbury hotel room. He eventually pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges. He rejected pleas to resign from county party leaders and county commissioners, and finished his term in 2010.

Creech acknowledged Privette’s faults and asked for prayer for his family during their time of grief.

“We remember that his feet were made of clay. He stumbled and fell at one point, but the same God whose grace proved sufficient for King David was also sufficient for Coy,” he said. “He sought forgiveness and went on to serve His Master in constructive ways after retirement.”

In his later years, he enjoyed volunteering for disaster relief efforts and as a part of summer programs teaching English in China.

Survivors include his wife, Betty; four daughters, Denise Sherman of Raleigh, Lori Hinnant of Winston-Salem, Amy Perko of Fayetteville, and Melanie Caudron of Potomac, Md.; one brother, Bob Privette of Deerfield, Ill.; and 10 grandchildren.

Memorials to: North Carolina Baptist Men Disaster Relief Fund, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512. **BR**

Unborn

Continued from page 3

activists on both sides who see the issue with black-and-white clarity. Describing American views as “complex” is the nice way to put it; it may be more accurate to say we’re muddled on the morality of abortion because we are inconsistent in our view of human life in the womb.

This is why *Cosmopolitan* can post an article lauding Latina reproductive rights activists and a video of ultrasounds showing how unborn babies grimace when their mothers smoke, without any apparent dissonance. Cosmo readers are supposed to react with horror to the harm smoking may cause a prenatal child, while rallying to support a woman’s right to a procedure that, in the second and third trimesters, would tear the same child limb-by-limb.

It’s why many in our society demand the harshest penalties for people who commit violent crimes against a pregnant woman or unborn child, while maintaining the right of a doctor to do violence to the unborn within the sterile confines of an abortion clinic. It’s why there is outrage at the news of fetal remains being used to heat hospitals in England, as if we ought to treat a prenatal child with more dignity after death than before. If the baby is “wanted,” he or she deserves our protection. If the baby is unwanted, he or she can be discarded.

Appealing to religious grounds in

opposing abortion is difficult because of society’s wide range of perspectives. Agnostics or atheists may not agree that human beings are made in the image of God, or that abortion is a sin against another human being, or that human life begins at conception.

Appealing to science is difficult as well because, while science may answer the question of when human life begins (at conception), it cannot tell us if that developing human being should be considered a “person” or at what stage of development we should consider the fetus worth protecting.

But here at this intersection of science and faith the debate over the unborn is beginning to converge. Technology is playing a larger role in these discussions. High-quality ultrasounds offer us unprecedented pictures inside the womb. Millennial parents who put together scrapbooks for their children begin with sonograms, not newborn photos.

And so, as technology advances, our society is put in the increasingly uncomfortable position of both affirming and denying the humanity of the unborn. For now, however, our muddled inconsistency will deny justice to Michelle Wilkins, and no one will be charged in the death of the baby she lost.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Trevin Wax is managing editor of *The Gospel Project*.) **BR**

William R. Cromer Jr., longtime Southern professor, dies at 91

By ANDREW J.W. SMITH | SBTS Communications

William R. Cromer Jr., a retired faculty member with the longest-serving tenure as a Christian education professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died March 25 in his Louisville home at the age of 91.

Born in Atlanta, Ga., in 1923, Cromer was committed to Christian education and the training of Southern Baptist teachers and ministers. During Cromer’s 41-year tenure, more than 10,000 students came through the seminary and more than 4,000 sat in his classroom, estimated R. Albert Mohler Jr., Southern’s president, during Cromer’s March 28 private funeral service in the school’s chapel.

“The multiplied, countless half-lives of Dr. William Cromer’s influence are now being transmitted to generations of people who may never know his name in this life, but will know a minister who was taught by him in seminary,” Mohler said. “When we get to heaven we’re going to find out that Dr. Bill Cromer didn’t just teach 4,000 students, but those beyond number and limit, and he taught them faithfully.”



WILLIAM CROMER

He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Miami (Florida) and his master of divinity and doctor of education degrees from Southern, and was among the first graduates of the School of Religious Education, later made part of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. He was installed as the Gaines S. Dobbins Professor of Christian Education in 1993.

He was the business manager of the *Review and Expositor*, a former academic journal of Southern Seminary, intermittently for 17 years until 1989. He wrote three books on church leadership and published numerous articles and curriculum materials throughout his career.

Cromer was a longtime member of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., and often served as the minister of music or the minister of education in various churches over 30 years, including Third Avenue Baptist Church, Bethany Baptist Church and Shawnee Baptist Church.

He also served in U.S. Naval Intelligence during World War II.

He is survived by his three children, Bill, Dan and Brian; eight grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. **BR**

Moldova

Continued from page 5

Hoppe said LNBC is asking some hard questions. “How can we engage these 17 to 19 year old orphans in a productive way from a vocational or occupational perspective, so they have some legitimate means of supporting themselves?”

He found a family who runs a group home. “They take in 5-6 young men who have to leave the orphanage system with no place to go,” Hoppe said. “The husband of the family is a mechanic. Since the government offers some trade school training for aspiring mechanics, we asked him, ‘What would it take to set up a small auto repair business where some of these young men could be gainfully employed?’ So, we are in the exploratory phase to see what it would take to set up that small business as a ministry.”

Another vocational ministry idea surfaced when they met a man who leads an addictions ministry. Hoppe said, “This man has professionally made boots in the past. We had an opportunity to see the footwear, and it was quite impressive. So we are looking at the opportunity to gainfully employ some young men to help produce work boots, if we have an outlet to sell those boots.”

LNBC’s missions leaders are exploring ways to export the boots. “They were producing what looked to me to be a good quality men’s, fur-lined work boot for under \$25.00,” Hoppe said. “I think we can generate funds for that ministry without any difficulty whatsoever.”

Hoppe is trying to launch a project similar to one that is working in Ukraine. It will train orphans in computer programming skills, and work with businesses in the U.S. to contract with the graduates to program remotely. He said, “This is a fairly ambitious undertaking, but we believe this is something that has potential to succeed.”

Hosting and adopting

The Lake Norman church is no stranger to the ministry of adoption. “Our church family has established quite a record of orphan child hosting and adoption,” Hoppe explained. They have worked with several adoption agencies, but most recently with New Horizons for Children.

Last Mother’s Day the church announced the establishment of a scholarship fund that provides financial assistance to families interested in hosting and those making a commitment to adoption. Church members have connected with orphans in Latvia and Ukraine, but not Moldova. On Hoppe’s trip to Mol-



From left, Pastor Ivan Nedeoglo, Ron Hoppe, missions coordinator from Lake Norman Baptist Church and Victor Mirza, pastor of Agape Church in Chisinau are working together to meet physical and spiritual needs in Moldova. (Contributed photo)

dova in March some representatives from New Horizons for Children met him in Moldova, along with the government’s secretary of social services and the secretary of family services. They hope to see some results from the meeting by the end of the year with short term hosting relationships. Some of those could turn into adoptions.

“What is exciting to me is that this is another point of contact where our church family can be part of an ongoing dynamic relationship,” he said. “If we can get some of these kids there integrated into our church families over time, I think that will bode very well for the relationship between us and Moldova, and ultimately for the gospel.

“We want to show these children the love of a Christian family, that there is more to life than what they have seen, and there is hope. These kids need hope.”

Relationships vs events

Both Hoppe and Blanton want the Moldova partnership to focus on long-term relationships, not short term mission events. Hoppe said, “It’s easy to go on a mission trip, have an event in the country and never hear about it again. In our activities, we are trying to enter into relationships and also see how those relationships interact.

“If they need a new church building, fine, but there’s far more to it than that. If we are ministering to those kids in the orphanage, we ask ‘What can we do with and for those kids when they get out of the orphanage?’”

The partnership has something for everyone. Hoppe said, “Somebody is interested in construction, somebody has a heart for children, somebody has a heart for hunger, somebody has a heart for medical needs, somebody has a heart for Bibles – if we can present opportunities to engage as many of those constituencies within our church family as possible, I believe we will succeed.” **BR**

NEWS BRIEFS

NYC to change rules so churches can rent schools

(Religion News Service) Congregations in New York City that rent space in public schools were able to hold Easter services despite a March 30 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court rejecting an appeal from an evangelical church in the Bronx that sought to overturn a ban on after-hours worship services at public schools.

A spokesman for Mayor Bill de Blasio also said that the mayor would work to ensure that houses of worship could continue to rent space like any other group.

The March 30 decision, issued without comment, was the third time that the high court rejected an appeal by the Bronx Household of Faith, the plaintiff in the case. The church held Sunday services for years at a local public school. Last year, the church finished work on its own building near P.S. 15, but said it still needs extra space for events that include religious services.

India: Anti-Christian attacks up 55%

(Baptist Press/Morning Star News) The number of violent and nonviolent attacks against Christians in India has increased 55 percent since Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi became prime minister last year, according to the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI).

During a protest by religious minorities near India’s Parliament House March 19, rights activist and Christian leader John Dayal said there have been 168 acts of aggression against Christians during Modi’s first 300 days in power. That figure compares with 108 such cases in the 300 days before Modi took office on May 26, 2014, according to the EFI.

Charges against chaplain called ‘overt attack’

(Baptist Press) The attorney who represents 65 former chaplains suing the Navy for discrimination says the possible dismissal of a chaplain for giving traditional biblical counsel is evidence of a continuing attack against evangelicals.

For Virginia attorney Arthur Schulcz, the charge of “intolerance” leveled against Navy chaplain Wesley Modder shows how once-subtle discrimination against evangelical chaplains is increasing. The 65 chaplains’ cases continue to be waged in various courts alleging instances of discrimination dating back to the mid-1970s. The Navy’s action against Modder falls in the context of recent National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) language that protects the chaplain’s right to speak on matters of religion and morality, Schulcz said.

Modder is a veteran of nearly 20 years in the military, including a four-year tour of duty with the Marines. On Feb. 17, his commanding officer sent Modder a letter calling for the chaplain’s “detachment for cause.” Capt. Jon Fahs said Modder is unable to function in a diverse and pluralistic environment at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command base.

Egypt’s president calls for moderated Islam

(Baptist Press) Egypt’s president, in a move applauded by conservative Western media, is challenging senior Muslim clerics to reform their teachings rather than fuel extremist ideologies that have led to widespread terrorism in the name of Islam. Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, who was elected last spring after the overthrow of Mohammed Morsi, said in a speech at Cairo’s Al-Azhar University, a leading intellectual center of Sunni Muslim thought, that Muslim religious scholars “must take a long, hard look” at the role of Islam in violent extremism.

In a feature on al-Sisi March 20, *The Wall Street Journal* referred to him as “perhaps the world’s most significant advocate for Islamic moderation and reform.”

New bill defends faith-based adoption agencies

(WORLD News Service) Legislation introduced in Congress in March would prohibit government discrimination against faith-based adoption and foster care organizations that are not willing to place children with same-sex couples.

The Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act, sponsored by Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., and Rep. Mike Kelly, R-Pa., was re-introduced March 4. Enzi and Kelly submitted the same bill last year, but it never made it out of committee. The act would ensure state-licensed child welfare providers are allowed to operate while also holding to religious and moral convictions on homosexuality and family structure.

In four states – California, Illinois, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia – faith-based adoption and foster care providers have been forced to stop providing services because they refused to place children with same-sex couples.

About 400,000 children spend time in the foster care system each year. Of those, roughly 100,000 are eligible and waiting to be adopted, according to the U.S. Children’s Bureau.

Full stories available online at BRnow.org.

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Habitat Women Build planned in May

Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina is looking for women to volunteer with the annual partnership week May 2-9 with Habitat for Humanity.

The project is in Alexander County. Participants must be at least 16 years old and sign a release and waiver of liability form. Prior construction experience is not necessary. Parents must sign the form for children under 18.

To register for a day to work at the Women Build contact Margaret Harding at mharding@wmunc.org. Once confirmed for your date, fill out the medical/liability information for WMU-NC and for Habitat.

Men's outdoor weekend planned

Come join Baptists on Mission (North Carolina Baptist Men) for an inspiring weekend of outdoor fun and fellowship for men on May 15-16. The Camp Caraway event begins Friday night with a men's worship rally, followed by fellowship around the campfire. Saturday morning will feature demonstrations throughout the camp on archery, fishing, skeet shooting, pistol shooting and more. Saturday afternoon will provide opportunity for participation in target shooting, fishing, canoeing, archery, skeet shooting, zip line and hiking.

Saturday will also feature a session on

beginning an outdoor ministry in your church.

Check in is at 6 p.m. Friday evening. Friday night program begins at 8 p.m. The weekend will conclude after supper on Saturday night. Cost is \$76 per person.

Registrations will be taken until all spots are filled, but space is limited to 130 participants, so don't wait. Deposit of \$20 will hold your space. Balances are due by May 8. Register now at baptistson-mission.org/Events/. Click on the May 15 event.



HopeFest benefits boys, girls camps

"HopeFest" is a Sandhills area festival hosted by Baptist Children's Homes that will benefit community children living at Cameron Boys Camp near Southern Pines and Camp Duncan for Girls in Aberdeen. It will be held May 30 from 10a.m.-6 p.m. at the Lee Regional Fairgrounds. In partnership with area businesses, churches and friends, HopeFest provides a day of music and family-friendly fun that introduces attendees to this amazing residential camping program and the boys and girls it serves. Visit HopeFestNC.org.

Gardner-Webb offers pastors' school

Gardner-Webb University is offering 2015 Pastors' School, a three-day educational retreat for pastors, and students of ministry and theology. This year's program, set for May 25-27, features the theme, "Living as an apprentice of Jesus: What the church forgot to teach us." The training is designed for the busy pastor to offer moments of inspiration, fellowship, renewal and rest. Theology professor James Bryan Smith and Gardner-Webb's Sophia Steibel and Tracy Jessup will serve as keynote speakers for this year's event.

For more information or to register online, visit gardner-webb.edu/pastors-school or contact Lisa Hollifield at (704) 406-3855 or lhollifield@gardner-webb.edu. Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 48 hours prior to the event. Please call (704) 406-4253 or email servicerequests@gardner-webb.edu with your request.

WMU-NC offers military wives retreat

The Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina is offering a potentially free retreat Aug. 22-23 for military wives at Camp Mundo Vista. While the retreat officially begins Aug. 22 at 9 a.m., ladies can arrive Aug. 21.

Each night is \$20 (food and lodging) but money will be refunded if participant stays until the retreat concludes on

Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Husbands and children can come too for an additional fee.

There are a limited number of free passes to the zoo; or they can show military identification for discounted tickets.

Email Margaret Harding at mharding@wmunc.org to receive more information including the schedule. Space is limited so register early.

To register visit our website at www.wmunc.org and under "Events" click on "Military Wives Retreat."



Embrace plans mission trip to Boston

Join Embrace, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's women's ministry, Sept. 10-13 in reaching Boston with the gospel. The trip is open to ladies college-age and older. The cost of \$650 includes airfare, missionary insurance, lodging, ministry expenses and ground transportation.

Application deadline is May 1. Please email any questions to Ashley Allen at aallen@ncbaptist.org.

CHURCH NEWS



Mars Hill Baptist Church, Colerain

Since January, children and teenagers at Mars Hill Baptist Church, Colerain, have been working on a project called Hospice Care Bear Packages. They collected personal hygiene items, candy, word puzzles, socks, devotionals and blankets for a new hospice in Bertie County. In conjunction with the church's teen Sunday on March 15, 30 packages were presented to Amedisys Hospice during a worship service. Pictured left to right: Anne Morgan, an Amedisys employee, stands behind Kate Matthews, Matt Harrell and Tanner Matthews, children who helped with the collection, while Kim Parker, Amedisys director, stands next to Mike Willard, pastor of Mars Hill, and Katelyne Willard. (Contributed photo)

AROUND THE STATE

Retirement

PRESTON WELLS retired after seven years of pastoral service at Providence Baptist Church, Holly Ridge, as of Jan. 31. Before serving as Providence's pastor, Wells was the music director from 1974-1993. He will continue to serve as interim pastor until May 31. After June 1, he will be available for interim positions and pulpit supply.

Staff changes

Clear Creek Baptist Church, Charlotte, welcomes **TIM FOSTER** as choir director and youth pastor.

HOMER MURDOCK has been called senior pastor by Clear Creek Baptist Church, Charlotte. He is the president of "Touch The World Ministries." Murdock previously served as pastor at South Fork Baptist Church, Todd.

Mount Olivet Baptist Church, Franklinton, has called **MICHAEL CRAVER** as associate pastor. Craver previously served as pastor at Trinity Baptist Church, Claremont.

STEVEN BLANTON has been called as senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Hendersonville. Previously Blanton served as associate pastor of students and missions at Christian Freedom Baptist Church, Kings Mountain, and prior to that he was senior pastor at West Franklin Baptist Church, Gastonia.

Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest.

Please send information immediately following an event, or for opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance.

All submissions will be subjected to *Biblical Recorder* styles and guidelines and will be edited for style and length. Include cost and contact information in your email or correspondence.

Send to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.

Have story ideas? Send to editor@BRnow.org.

April 19

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

April 26

Exalted Like No Other

Focal Passage: Ephesians 1:7-10, 18-23

If one were to take a vacation to first-century Ephesus, one of the highlights would be the Temple of Diana (also known as Artemis). It was one of the “seven wonders of the world.” The temple was a financial boon to the city for centuries. An ancient myth says that Diana was born in the forest of Ephesus when her image of wood fell from the sky. She became known as the “goddess of life,” the mother of everything living and existed everywhere there was life.

The temple that housed her shrine was four times the size of the Parthenon in Greece. Because of what she represented to the Ephesians, she was exalted like none other.

Diana was not, however, invincible.

Her shrine was destroyed by natural causes and human greed multiple times. Each time it was destroyed, though, it was rebuilt larger and grander than before. Today, however, its only evidence of existence is a rusted sign and abandoned stones.

During Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19), he battled firsthand the Diana

cult. He and his team were no strangers to spiritual warfare. Although they lived in the world of emperor and idol worship, they were unwavering in their proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord.

The contrasts of Diana and Jesus are stark. Diana reputedly fell as wood from the sky, was the mother of the fertility cult and became rubble for good around A.D. 400.

Jesus left his heavenly home to become fully human, giving His life as a living sacrifice for the salvation of those believing in Him.

Today’s scripture text speaks of why Jesus, not Diana, is exalted like no other. In verses 21-23 the apostle Paul rightly positions Christ as “far” above any human ruler or manufactured deity. As history has proven, idols will come and go, but Jesus will remain true and constant for every generation. As God’s exalted One, everything and everyone is subject to Jesus the Christ. As the Church, no one and nothing comes before our Lord.



WAYNE PROCTOR
Pastor, Eure Baptist
Church, Eure

Stick with Love

Focal Passage: John 15:9-14

Love is a difficult word to live. Jesus gave it to us as a command – not just to love Him, not just to love God, but to love “one another” with this perfect agape love.

One of the great children’s stories, which also serves as a parable about love, is *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams. The main character is a boy who treasures above all else in the world a velveteen rabbit given to him one Christmas. The toy rabbit’s great prayer is that he would become real. But he didn’t know what “real” meant.

Then one day he and another toy, the skinned horse, had a life-changing conversation. Here is part of the skinned horse’s wisdom: “Real isn’t how you are made. It’s a thing that happens to you.

When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real. ... It takes a long time.

That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter, because once you are real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

Love is what Jesus wants us to become. The key word in John 15 is “abide” or “remain.”

It’s all about relationship. If we want to produce Christian fruit, we must stick with Jesus no matter what.

In Williams’ tale the boy was taken ill with scarlet fever.

In order to arrest the disease, all of his belongings, including the velveteen rabbit, had to be burned. As the toy bunny shed a human tear, he miraculously became real.

When we love, even to the point of sacrificing deeply for another, we likewise become real. Jesus is our model for love; furthermore, because He loves us so much, He gives us the ability and power to love.

April 19

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

April 26

A Refined People

Focal Passage: Zechariah 13:1-9

Sometimes it’s easy to forget that God is a person.

We can read page after page in the Old Testament of how God interacted with His people – how He walked with Adam and Eve, how He called to Moses, how He caught Sarah laughing, how He inspired David or how He instructed His prophets.

Even still, because God doesn’t manifest Himself to us today in the kind of physical presence we read about, we can be tempted to imagine Him as an abstract, distant being who once interacted with His people in a direct way, but doesn’t anymore.

We might even begin to believe that our sins at hand are more real than the seemingly far-off promises of God. We may acknowledge the truth that God is present and sovereign and good, but do we always believe it?

Zechariah’s prophecy called to a small Jewish remnant of the Babylonian exile that was re-establishing the Hebrew kingdom.

The immediate circumstances were dismal.

How could this struggling nation be the people of Almighty God?

Zechariah spoke to them to focus their attention not only on the present, but the future: God would restore and refine His people from sin for Himself, and He would fulfill His promises.

A pierced Messiah would come to triumph over the sins and idolatry of God’s people, and this Messiah would be a cleansing fountain to remove their sin, making them a pure people dedicated to the Lord. In the fire of suffering, the hand of their loving, attentive God would refine them, and through the work of the Messiah, they would be freed from their sin and idolatry.

Jesus Christ, the Messiah foretold by Zechariah, came as God promised. By embracing Him through faith, we are cleansed from the guilt of sin and freed from the power of sin by the indwelling Spirit of God as our promise. In difficult circumstances, we can trust that God is working in our trials to purify us, making us more like Christ.



LINDSEY POPE
Christ Baptist
Church, Raleigh

Focal Passages: Habakkuk 1:1-6, 12-13; 2:1-4

Have you ever noticed that the most common objection to God isn’t centered on God’s existence, but rather God’s goodness?

If God exists, the age-old argument goes, why are there addicted men, hungry children or abused wives? “Because God is obviously not doing anything about the evil in the world,” some say, “He must not actually exist.” Others say, “If He does exist and yet allows evil and suffering, then what kind of God is He anyhow?”

These are common objections. Even the prophet Habakkuk questioned God’s power to stop evil and correct the injustice he witnessed around him.

Where are you, God? Why are you letting this happen? Why aren’t you doing anything? How many of us have prayed such painful, desperate prayers too?

God is not threatened by our questions. We can come before Him in prayer,

search scripture, and ask Him about what we don’t understand. But sometimes God answers our hard questions with a difficult answer: “Just trust me.”

God doesn’t fully explain Himself to Habakkuk; He doesn’t need to. But He does reassure the prophet of His sovereign purpose and goodness. God will bring about His purposes in His timing and by His own ways.

We may not always understand why God allows certain things to happen. We don’t always need to understand. We need to learn how to trust God when we don’t understand. If you read through Habakkuk’s prayer at the end of the book, you’ll notice something important: He begins listing what God had done and ends His book worshipping God for His character and strength.

God was active all along, but not in the way Habakkuk expected. We don’t always need to know why things happen. What we do need to know is what God has revealed in His Word – His character. God is good and sovereign and active in the world, whether we recognize His work or not. He will accomplish His plans and right every wrong in His perfect timing. We can trust Him.

GenSend

Continued from page 1

For mobilizers like Hughes, contextualization will be key. The approach she took participating in GenSend Portland during the summer of 2014, will be different to contextualize the gospel as she leads her team in New York City this summer. “College ministry looks so different in the Northwest,” said Hughes. “But the beauty of the gospel is that it is transferable everywhere and accessible to everyone. Like Dhathi said, we have to contextualize the gospel into each person’s ‘heart language.’”

Mobilizers are required to recruit 10 students out of their missional communities by spring 2015 to serve in their assigned cities and continue to share the gospel. NAMB’s goal for GenSend 2015 is to have over 350 students serving in 16 Send North America cities across the

United States and Canada from June 22 to Aug. 5.

The number of teams per city will vary. But at least one team will serve and connect with a Southern Baptist church in each of the following cities: Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Atlanta, Miami, Boston, New York City, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Portland and San Diego.

Ken Miller, NAMB’s Missionary Development national coordinator encouraged the students to keep the right mindset during a session on missional community. “Don’t go into the city with the attitude that this is your team. You need to have the attitude that you are here to serve them and love them, as well as serve your city

alongside them,” said Miller.

These words definitely stuck with Hughes as she left Atlanta and went back to her campus to begin her work as a campus mobilizer.

“I’m so excited that I have the opportunity to spend 10 weeks in a major urban city with the sole purpose of loving and serving people in the name of Jesus,” said Hughes. “I am excited to be humbled and challenged alongside my team and see how the Lord moves this summer.”

Learn more about GenSend student missions opportunities at sendnetwork.com/gen send.

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

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Full-Time Pastor. Pine Level Missionary Baptist Church in Johnston County, NC, is praying that God will place a calling on a pastor’s heart, to be our church family’s Shepherd. This leader will continue a long heritage of strong, faith based, Southern Baptist pastors serving our congregation and the Lord. Those called should preach the gospel, support a mission-oriented platform, and teach biblical truths through sermons and Bible study. Christian counseling and pastoral care should be a part of the pastor’s body of work. Seminary degree and references are required. Send resumes to: plbc01@bellsouth.net, or P.O. Box 340, Pine Level, NC 27568.

Senior Pastor for White Level Baptist Church. In search of the one called by God to lead this Southern Baptist church full time into the future. We desire someone with passion for biblical truth. A master of divinity is preferred. Please email any resumes to jmwood77@aol.com.

Baptist Chapel Baptist Church of Autryville, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor** led by God and willing to lead our church by glorifying our Lord and Savior through worship, discipleship, fellowship, prayer and ministry. Preferred candidate must be a compassionate and caring servant. A seminary degree as well as 10+ years pastoral experience required. Primary duties will include Sunday morning service, Sunday evening Bible study, Wednesday evening prayer, visiting the sick, shut-ins, and ministering to the needs of the congregation. Send resume and references to Pastor Search Committee, 9339 High House Road, Salemburg, NC 28385, csbrown@intrstar.net. Resumes received through May 31, 2015.

Temple Baptist Church in Mooresboro, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **pastor**. A compassionate, caring servant led by the Holy Spirit. Applicants should be biblically grounded. Please send resumes and references to: Pastor Search Team, c/o Barry Hill, PO Box 368, Henreitta, NC 28076; or email penmelissa@yahoo.com.

Maggie Valley First Baptist is seeking a loving and spirit filled **full-time pastor**. We are grounded in biblical truths, have hearts for the lost, and are focused on growing outreach and inreach programs. Send resumes to fbc_maggi valley@bellsouth.net or PO Box 309, Maggie Valley NC 28751.

Church Staff

CHURCH SECRETARY WANTED. First Baptist Church of Maiden, Inc., is searching for an experienced, motivated full-time church secretary. Our current secretary has been in the position for almost 30 years and now desires to retire. Pay will be commensurate with ability and job qualifications. For more details, please visit: <http://www.fbcmaiden.com/#!now-hiring/cl5gc>.

Millers Creek Baptist Church, a conservative SBC church, near Wilkesboro, NC, is prayerfully seeking God’s man to serve as **Worship Pastor**. The full-time position is focused on leading the church in worship through choral, praise team, audio/visual/lighting ministries and includes various pastoral roles of visitation and outreach. Experience and a music degree from a college/seminary is preferred, but not required. Send cover letter and resume to Millers Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 559, Millers Creek, NC 28651, or by email to shannon.critcher@millerscreekbaptist.org. Resumes will be received through April 30.

Godwin Heights Baptist Church in Lumberton, NC, is seeking a qualified **Pianist** for Sunday and Wednesday services. Send resume to: Pastor, Godwin Heights Baptist Church, 704 Godwin Ave., Lumberton, NC 28358, or e-mail to godwinheightspastor@gmail.com.

Lake Gaston Baptist Church seeks an **Associate Pastor of Family Ministries**, which will actively lead the student ministry as well as oversee the children’s ministries of the church. More information about the position and church can be found at www.lakegastonbaptist.com. Please send resumes to 128 Lynwood Rd., Littleton, NC 27850, or to office@lakegastonbaptist.com.

Maplewood Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a person who possesses a definite call to ministry & a passion for spiritual growth to serve as our **full-time Associate of Worship & Family Ministries**. This person will lead the Worship Ministry (30%), Family Ministry (60%) and assist our Pastor as needed (10%). Should possess biblical training with a degree from a college or seminary in music with emphasis on youth & children or equivalent experience. To apply, please submit cover letter & resume by April 24th to Personnel Committee, PO Box 576, Yadkinville, NC 27055, or email office@maplewoodbc.org.

First Baptist Church of Woodbury, TN, is seeking a **full-time Associate Pastor for Student Ministries and Education**. This position will involve primary responsibility for student ministries from ages 12-25 and education administration for the church. Break down of position will be approximately 60% student ministry, 30% education and outreach, 10% pastoral care. Previous ministry experience, seminary degree, and strong relational skills are required for this position. This church values traditional worship and is affiliated with the SBC. Please submit resumes and cover letter to: Personnel Committee, PO Box 218, Woodbury, TN 37190, or send email to fbcwbry@dtccom.net.

Lake Gaston Baptist Church seeks a **Part-Time Minister of Music** to lead our two Sunday morning traditional services. Applicant will also need the ability and experience to lead our choir, pianists and organists. More information can be found at www.lakegastonbaptist.com. Please send resumes to 128 Lynwood Rd., Littleton, NC 27850, or office@lakegastonbaptist.com.

Rock Spring BC is seeking a **part-time secretary** to fulfill the clerical needs of the staff and church. Position entails answering phones, greeting visitors, record keeping, scheduling, ordering literature, typing and filing. Job requires sixteen hours a week and salary based on experience. If interested, send resumes to meltontyson@gmail.com.

East Maiden Baptist Church, Maiden, NC, seeks **Associate Minister** with a heart for the whole church, whose primary focus will be Youth and Children. Candidate should relate well with students, help them grow as Christians, and also reach new students. Some pastoral skills, such as preaching and visitation are welcomed. East Maiden Baptist Church typically has 170-190 in worship, with strong age-graded and missions ministries. Send resume to: toddbohémier@gmail.com.

Part-Time Worship Minister. Polkville Baptist Church is seeking a part-time Worship Minister with a heart to follow God’s will, being gifted in communicating and coordinating worship experiences, along with the pastor and musicians. Send resume by email to: employment@polkvillebaptist.com; or by USPS to: Search Committee, Polkville Baptist Church, PO Box 245, Polkville, NC 28136.

Miscellaneous

NCBAM is launching a network of leaders of aging adults. AAİM (Aging Adults Innovating Ministry) will hold a Leadership Roundup on May 7 in Thomasville. Join us! Call 877.506.2226.

Do you have staff changes at your church or association? Let the BR know by calling (919) 847-2127 or email editor@BRnow.org.

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Cost for Baptist churches/organizations is \$1.20 per word, number and stand-alone initial (\$1.42 for commercial and non-Baptist entities) with a minimum charge of \$35. Classifieds also are carried online.

Church Continued from page 6

– a sign that those who attend are making a personal choice rather than responding to societal pressure.

That's a positive finding, McConnell said. "I don't think evangelicals would want that to be the reason people go to church anyway."

Women & men on churchgoing

Women have more positive attitudes than men about churchgoing, the LifeWay study found, with 69 percent of women and 63 percent of men viewing attendance as admirable. Only 9 percent of women consider church useless, while 14 percent of men hold that opinion.

Larger shares of women also believe in the health and vitality of the church. Forty percent of women say the church is growing, and 41 percent describe it as thriving. Among men, only 32 percent think it is growing, and 34 percent label it thriving.

LifeWay Research also found significant differences along ethnic and racial lines.

Although most Hispanics believe going to church is expected (55 percent), attendance is considered useless by 1 in 5 – almost double the rate of the population as a whole.

Whites are among the least likely to

consider church useless (8 percent), but 60 percent believe the church is declining.

In contrast, most African-Americans believe the church is growing (55 percent) and thriving (56 percent). More often than other groups, they describe church attendance as common (74 percent) and popular (61 percent).

"The longevity of the Christian church proves it is not a fad," McConnell said. "Some Americans feel cultural expectations to attend church, but our recent research shows that those who actually do attend hold more closely to the teachings of Jesus Christ."

Methodology: The phone survey of Americans was conducted Sept. 19-28, 2014. The calling utilized random digit dialing. Sixty percent of completes were among landlines and 40 percent among cell phones. Maximum quotas and slight weights were used for gender, region, age, ethnicity and education to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.4 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Lisa Green is a freelance writer in Nashville, Tenn.) **BR**

Glorieta lawsuit against LifeWay dismissed, appealed

By SETH BROWN | BR Content Editor

The lawsuit filed by Kirk and Susie Tompkins against LifeWay Christian Resources, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and the SBC Executive Committee (EC), regarding the sale of Glorieta Conference Center, has been dismissed by The U.S. District Court for New Mexico, according to LifeWay.

Federal Judge James O. Browning handed down the five-part ruling that covered over 71 pages.

The Tompkinses own a cabin on conference center property; they lease the land year-to-year from LifeWay. They claimed the sale of the property to a non-profit organization called Glorieta 2.0 was mishandled. The suit disputed the ownership of the land, saying the EC still owned it, and had never transferred it to LifeWay.

Baptist Press reported that a total of 65 churches, institutions and individuals own structures on conference center property. LifeWay decided to sell the conference center because it had lost money for years, according to a report by LifeWay president Thom Rainer at the



2014 SBC annual meeting. He added that lease extensions and buy-out offers of up to \$100,000 were made to people that owned buildings on the land. Only a few accepted such offers.

Rainer told Baptist Press after the ruling, "This process has been extended, painful and costly. I am so thankful to get this ordeal behind us, leaving no doubt of our integrity throughout this process, and after so many months of baseless attacks on our ministry partners, trustees and executive leadership."

The federal judge handed down the ruling in five parts, covering 71 pages, according to Baptist Press.

The Tompkinses filed a notice of appeal to the U.S. District Court of Appeal for the Tenth Circuit in Denver shortly after the lawsuit was dismissed, according to LifeWay.

The 2,400-acre conference center is located approximately 15 miles east of Santa Fe. **BR**

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