



BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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Baptists join podcast boom

BR staff

The digital world of podcasts is expanding at a remarkable pace, and many Southern Baptists are taking advantage of the audio platform’s popularity to broadcast their message across the web. Unlike articles and some other sources of information, podcasts allow for personal, conversational interaction with current events, said Amy Whitfield, communications director for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and co-host of SBC This Week, a weekly news program focused on Southern Baptist life. “A podcast, particularly one with multiple regular hosts, allows for more lively discussion and banter,” she told the *Biblical Recorder*. “We actually get to explain our thought processes and ask each other questions. The more conversational nature of a podcast also allows listeners to get to know the personalities of the hosts.” Podcasts were first launched into cyberspace in the early 2000s but gained mainstream attention in 2005 when Apple included a podcast feature in its iTunes music player software, according to *Wired* magazine.

See Podcast page 6

WHAT’S INSIDE

Allan Blume: Remember history’s lessons	2
Milton Hollifield discusses SBC annual meeting	3
Augie Boto named interim EC president	4
Jimmy Draper named EC ambassador	4
SEBTS aiding Cuban convention’s momentum	7
Call for diversity resonates at event	10
Memphis pastor: Go ‘all in’ for ethnic unity	11
TFNG tackles tough issues	12
Gaines names SBC Committee on Committees	13
Around the State	13
Classifieds	15



TAKE MINISTRY MOMENTS WITH

Open Hands

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Tom Richter, pastor of Cullman (Ala.) First Baptist Church, spoke about Mary using expensive perfume on Jesus in John 12. (BR photo by Steve Cooke)

All Christians are called, gifted and sent. “But God can’t use us if we don’t give Him what we have with open hands,” said Richard Brunson, executive director of North Carolina Baptist Men (also known as Baptists on Mission), to more than 1,200 people at the 2018 Missions Conference April 6-7 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Brunson referred to the “Open Hands” theme during the main sessions as did featured speakers – Bryan Loritts, pastor of Abundant Life Christian Fellowship in Mountain View, Calif.; Vicki Grossman, director of operations for the Good Shepherd Ministries in the western region of Guatemala; Kyle Idleman, teaching pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Ky.; Jennifer Rothschild, author and speaker; Terry Rae, founder of Africa for Christ and former general secretary for the South African Baptist Union; and Tom Richter, pastor of Cullman (Ala.) First Baptist Church. The Annie Moses Band led music for the event. Referring to John 6, Brunson said the boy who had the loaves and fishes “could have kept what he had for himself. [God] gives you and me the freedom to hold onto what we have with clenched fists or

See Open page 16

IMB accepting nominations for new president

Baptist Press & IMB

The International Mission Board’s (IMB) Presidential Search Committee announced April 12 it is accepting nominations for the Southern Baptist entity’s next president. The committee, chaired by Chuck Pourciau, senior pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., said in a statement they will accept nominations

through May 15 by email at imbsearch@broadmoor.tv. “The International Mission Board Presidential Search Committee has benefited greatly from your prayers and input during the early stage of this process,” the statement said. “We continue to desire your help as we seek the person God has chosen to be the next leader of the IMB. ... We covet your prayers until this task is done.” On Feb. 12, David Platt announced plans to transition out of his role as IMB president.

He noted he will continue to serve until a new president is selected. Trustee chairman Rick Dunbar named a 16-person committee to find Platt’s replacement during the trustees’ Feb. 28-March 1 meeting in the Richmond, Va., area. Platt is also pastor teacher at McLean Bible Church, which has several locations. A full story including the entire statement from the committee is available at BRnow.org. **BR**

Remember history's bad, good lessons

History has some messages for us. Some very evil people in places of leadership have done great harm. Some very godly people in places of leadership have done great good. Both lessons should not be forgotten.

Auschwitz was a Nazi death camp where nearly a million Jews were slaughtered for one reason – they were Jews.

In the same World War II concentration camp, hundreds of thousands of Poles, Roma and others were robbed of life. In many other death camps throughout Germany and Poland, more than six million Jews were tortured and killed in one of history's most inexcusable moments.

It would be convenient to forget such cruel, inhumane moments of history. But we should not – ever!

A disturbing report was released last week with the results of a survey commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. It found that 66 percent of Americans ages 18 to 34 cannot identify what Auschwitz was. The figure for all adults was 41 percent. “Heartbreaking, appalling, inexcusable,” I said to myself. “How are we failing to teach the valuable lessons of history to the next generation?”

American philosopher George Santayana is attributed with the saying, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” If he is correct and the survey is accurate, Americans can expect ominous days ahead. We pray that will not be so.

In the same week this stunning report came out, my attention was drawn toward the other end of the spectrum to something very positive, but still reflecting on the value of history's lessons.

I wondered if younger North Carolina Baptists know about those who have made extremely positive contributions to Kingdom ministry in our state and shaped the biblical course we now travel. Do others realize that our state convention was spared the pain of serious division in recent decades?

The contrast of these polar opposite lessons of history came to mind after the April 10 Heritage Awards Luncheon at the

Grandover Resort in Greensboro.

Each year the North Carolina Baptist Foundation hosts the Heritage Awards Luncheon in conjunction with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC). This formal gathering allows each N.C. Baptist-related entity to honor a person or couple who has made a significant contribution to the institution's ministry goals through their time or resources. It's an impressive event that no other Baptist foundation or state convention provides for their institutions.

The full report on this year's Heritage Awards honorees is on pages 5 and 8 of this issue. Those of us who have been active in North Carolina Baptist life for more than 15 years will readily acknowledge the strategic role of the late C.

Mark Corts in shaping Baptist life as we know it. I've heard seasoned N.C. Baptist leaders say, “Mark Corts was the most influential voice for keeping the Baptist State Convention from splitting in the 1990s.”

The leadership he gave to pastors is highly valued. “He was a voice of wisdom and reason,” others said. “Always a gentleman, Mark Corts was a visionary leader.”

I hope those who are not familiar with this man, will pay attention to my brief commentary.

For many years, I wanted to posthumously honor Mark Corts, but the Heritage Awards were reserved for those who are living. However, this year, the guidelines were revised, opening the door to honor deceased Baptist leaders.

With his wife of 48 years, Shirley, standing beside me at the luncheon and other family members present, the *Biblical Recorder* honored Mark Corts because of his vision and leadership. His influence on the current course of the *Recorder* is measureless.

Mark Corts was the senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem for more than 39 years. He died of congestive heart failure on August 29, 2006 at the age of 68.

At the age of 25, he became the pastor of Calvary and served there until his re-

tirement in 2002. The church grew from 125 members to 6,000 and to a budget of more than \$12 million, with 25 percent of the total devoted to missions.

He served as president of the BSC (1977-79) and on the Fruitland Baptist Bible College board of directors. He was chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Resolutions Committee in 1990, and chairman of the Committee on Committees in 1995.

Corts was a member of the Foreign Mission Board, now International Mission Board, for 10 years and chairman of that board for two years.

He mentored hundreds of young pastors through the Tarheel Leadership Network, a yearlong training program he developed to equip the next generation of leaders that continues after his passing. His son, Steve, leads Tarheel Leadership training today in cooperation with the BSC. Steve Corts is senior pastor of Center Grove Baptist Church in Clemmons.

Mark Corts was a very rare individual. He expressed genuine warmth and compassion in personal conversations as well as in relationships. He lived with a strong passion for the truth of scripture. He demonstrated an unswerving commitment to the Great Commission. His love for missions, missionaries and mission involvement was unquestionable. His passion for equipping pastors was unending. He was humble, wise, gracious and winsome.

As a teenager, Steve Hardy knew Corts as his pastor. Later, he served with Corts on Calvary's church staff as coordinator of Tarheel Leadership and minister of

missions. “Mark loved Baptist life and saw the importance of serving North Carolina Baptists and Southern Baptists with the same extraordinary leadership skills that he also used to grow Calvary church,” Hardy said.

“Many of us remember that during times of great turmoil in our state and national conventions, Mark was the voice of reason that things would change and we should keep working toward the goal of returning the conventions to their biblical mandates.

“If you were a pastor seeking advice, a listening ear, or spiritual direction, Mark always made time in his very busy schedule to listen and help as he could. He became your friend, calling you by name and greeting you with genuine interest in your ministry. He had a passion for strengthening churches and developing pastors' skills to lead their churches to grow and thrive.”

He strongly believed in the work of North Carolina Baptists and the promotion of that work through the *Biblical Recorder*. I often apply models of ministry and leadership that I learned from Mark Corts to my job as editor of the *Biblical Recorder*.

I am forever indebted to Dr. Corts. N.C. Baptists have many reasons to appreciate his contributions to our convention.

Please, let's learn about history's horrible atrocities, and never forget the lessons we learned. And, please do not forget the spiritual giants in our Baptist history. Do not forget the lessons they taught us on matters of unity, conviction and the advance of the gospel. **BR**



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

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What stories do you have to share? Please send your story ideas, church news, staff changes to us. Email editor@BRnow.org.

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‘Testify! Go. Stand. Speak.’ in Dallas this June

This year’s annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is right around the corner, and I hope you are making plans to attend.

This year’s meeting is scheduled for June 12-13 in Dallas, Texas, and the theme is “Testify! Go. Stand. Speak.” The theme verse is Acts 5:20. Please be in prayer for the meeting, as well as the SBC Pastors’ Conference that will be held June 10-11 and the Greg Laurie evangelistic crusade on Sun., June 10.

One of the things I look forward to most during the SBC annual meeting and pastors’ conference every year is seeing and connecting with all the folks from North Carolina who attend our convention’s national gatherings.

I am grateful that we have so many pastors, church members and associational leaders from our state who are invested in our denomination and give of their time, energy and resources to participate in these meetings at all different levels. Thank you for your willingness to be involved.

Messengers at this year’s annual meeting will also cast ballots for a new SBC president, and at the time I am writing this column, both of the announced candidates are North Carolina Baptists. They are J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham

area, and Ken Hemphill, a North Carolina native and current member of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville, N.C., who has served the SBC in a variety of roles throughout his ministry. Greear will also be preaching at this year’s pastors’ conference.

I can say without a doubt that these are two godly men from two great N.C. Baptist churches who are running for the office of SBC president in 2018. I am grateful for the friendship that I have with both of these individuals, and I believe that either one of these two men could serve our Southern Baptist Convention well as president.

One candidate is the current senior pastor of a North Carolina Baptist church. The other is a former pastor who is a good and supportive member of his church.

When I consider that we have two good men running for the office of SBC president,

I am disappointed that some supporters of one of these candidates seem to have given this election the appearance of a secular political party system through their publication of materials via the internet. I am thankful that both Ken and J.D. have mutually called upon all Southern Baptists to pray and interact with grace and civility leading up to the convention and the presidential election.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer



Please understand that I would equally defend Ken Hemphill or J.D. Greear should any information be published about either of them that is contradictory to what I know about these men.

In saying that, some of the characterizations and descriptions of J.D. that have been made are very different from my personal interactions with him and the church he serves, which is an active partner with our state convention. I wish that we had more churches in our state like The Summit Church and more pastors like J.D. Greear.

As we approach this year’s SBC annual meeting, I hope that you will be in prayer for the convention, all of the related events and for our denomination as a whole. Also, please be in prayer for our current SBC President Steve Gaines as he makes plans to preside over the meeting and deliver the annual president’s address.

To learn more about this year’s SBC annual meeting and to register as a messenger or guest from your church, please visit sbcanualmeeting.net.

“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life” – Acts 5:20 (NKJV). **BR**

Seminary or cemetery?

Baptist Press

As a young ministerial student in college, I’d eagerly accept any opportunity to speak so that I might grow and develop as a preacher of the gospel. A frequent venue for me was a “brotherhood breakfast” in small rural churches.

After speaking at one particular meeting, an older man approached me and engaged in conversation. He was interested to know about any future plans after college.

So I said, “I think I’m headed to seminary.” “Oh yeah?” he replied, “which one?”

I told him I’d narrowed my decision down to a couple of options, but my intention was to enroll at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

About that time a couple other guys had joined us in conversation, and the man turned to his friend and said, “Hey, this young man is headed to the Southern Baptist Theological Cemetery.” Everyone kind of chuckled, like they’d heard that one before. It took me a couple seconds, but I played along and said, “I see what you did there!”

I’m still not sure what was behind his quip, however. It could’ve been just a joke, or a dig at Southern Seminary specifically, or caution against higher theological education in general. I re-

call having conversations with church members and friends in other churches who believed seminary would ruin me because “knowledge puffs up.” Others said not to worry about more study and to “just get to work for Christ.” Sadly, far too many well-meaning folks doused cold water on the fire I had to prepare for a lifetime of ministry.

The comment from the man at the breakfast is revealing, though. A cemetery, by definition, is a place of grave plots, a place dedicated to physical death. But a seminary, by definition, is a place of “seed plots,” a place dedicated to spiritual life. Far from smelling the academic aroma of death in seminary, I was immersed in the life-giving fragrance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even though some of the Baptists I’ve encountered downplayed seminary education to me, I am profoundly grateful that they still contributed to my pursuit through Cooperative Program (CP) giving in their churches. Such CP giving helped make it possible, and affordable, for me to be equipped and prepared for gospel ministry.

The gospel came alive to me regardless of the course subject matter. Biblical languages brought the scriptures to life in deep and meaningful ways. Church history classes reminded me that generations of believers before me lived and died in

the hope of eternal life in Christ. Theology courses energized and grounded my faith. Evangelism and preaching classes stirred up a desire for all people to find eternal life in Jesus and to proclaim the riches of His grace.

In no way did seminary deal a ruinous death-blow to me! On the contrary, seminary planted and watered and cultivated the seeds of gospel truth, biblical knowledge, evangelistic fervor, pastoral care and theological rigor. In short, my spiritual life and ministerial call matured for fruit production and did not wither on the vine.

As I recall those days in college when I wrestled with whether to continue in higher education, I am pleased that the Lord led me to seminary. I’d do it all over again the same way! Although all of our Southern Baptist Convention seminaries are wonderful and are producing faithful and fruitful ministers, I’m thankful for Southern and her investment in me as a herald of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At every convocation since the seminary’s founding, Basil Manly’s hymn “Soldiers of Christ, in Truth Arrayed” has

been sung. Its words still ring in my heart and call me to make the most of my time and experience in seminary. May they encourage you as well as you proclaim the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ:

*Soldiers of Christ, in truth arrayed,
A world in ruins needs your aid;
A world by sin destroyed and dead;
A world for which the Savior bled.*

*His Gospel to the lost proclaim,
Good news for all in Jesus’ Name;
Let light upon the darkness break
That sinners from their death may wake.*

*Morning and evening sow the seed,
God’s grace the effort shall succeed.
Seedtimes of tears have oft been found
With sheaves of joy and plenty crowned.*

*We meet to part, but part to meet
When earthly labors are complete,
To join in yet more blest employ,
In an eternal world of joy.*

(EDITOR’S NOTE – April 22 is SBC Seminaries Sunday in the Southern Baptist Convention. Micah Carter is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Ripley, Miss.) **BR**



MICAH CARTER
Guest Column

Submissions for Tar Heel Voices

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EC executive VP Augie Boto named interim president

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

D. August “Augie” Boto has been named interim president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC).

Meeting in Nashville April 4, the EC officers acted according to EC Bylaw 6 in tapping Boto for leadership following the March 27 retirement of former EC President Frank S. Page, who cited a “personal failing” in announcing his immediate departure.

The EC’s five officers also granted Boto “the option to appoint an interim EC presidential ambassador during

this period of transition to assist him in fulfilling the many representative functions that fall to the office of president,” EC chairman Stephen Rummage said in a statement to Baptist Press (BP).

Boto, an attorney, “brings more than 20 years of denominational service to this strategic task,” said Rummage, pastor of Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla. “Following three years as a member of the Executive Committee in the 1990s, he was selected as Executive Committee vice president for convention policy/staff counsel in 1998. In 2007, he was named executive vice president and general counsel of the Executive Committee.

“The officers have confidence that Augie will provide stability in leadership for the Executive Committee during this interim period as the EC begins its search for a new president,” Rummage said.

Boto said the EC staff “is committed to the principle that Southern Baptists accomplish more when we work together. In the lead-up to the SBC annual meeting in Dallas, our staff will spotlight the full array of Southern Baptist missions and ministries, promoting support for our collaborative work through the Cooperative Program.”

The full EC will elect a presidential search committee during a special called plenary session in Nashville April 17.

In accordance with a provision of EC Bylaw 6, adopted in 2012, the six-member search committee will be elected by written ballot among nominees from the floor during the special meeting. The board chair will serve as an ex-officio member with the right to vote, constituting a seven-member presidential search committee.

“We ask Southern Baptists,” Rummage said, “to continue to pray for the

Executive Committee staff in their day-to-day duties in the countdown days to the SBC annual meeting in Dallas and for the full Executive Committee as we meet in two weeks to elect a presidential search committee.”

In addition to Rummage, the EC officers who met in Nashville were secretary Stacy Bramlett, a bank vice president in Collierville, Tenn.; Administrative Committee chairman Kent Choate, people development pastor at Foundation Church Sapulpa in Sand Springs, Okla.; Business and Finance Committee chairman Steve Swofford, pastor of First Baptist Church in Rockwall, Texas; and CP Committee chairman Rolland Slade, pastor of Meridian Baptist Church in El Cajon, Calif. The sixth officer, vice chairman Shane Hall, passed away in February and has not yet been replaced.

Boto is a member of Forest Hills Baptist Church in Nashville where he is a Sunday School teacher and regular Bible Study leader.

He is married to Cindy, and they have three adult children: Lucas, Matt and Grace. **BR**



AUGIE BOTO

Jimmy Draper named Executive Committee ambassador

By ART TOALSTON | Baptist Press

Jimmy Draper, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and president *emeritus* of LifeWay Christian Resources, has been named “EC Ambassador” by D. August Boto, interim president of the SBC Executive Committee (EC).

Draper, who has maintained an active speaking schedule since retiring from LifeWay in 2006, is “someone for whom no introduction or explanation need be given,” Boto said in an April 9 announcement. “He is someone whom involved Southern Baptists all across our nation would immediately recognize and trust.”

EC chairman Stephen Rummage, after an April 4 meeting of the Executive Committee’s officers, stated that Boto, the EC’s executive vice president and general counsel, was being named as interim president and was accorded “the option to appoint an interim EC presidential ambassador during this period of transition to assist him in fulfilling the many representative functions that fall to the office of president.”

Rummage, in an April 9 statement to Baptist Press (BP), noted, “The officers are very enthusiastic about our interim

president’s choice of Dr. Draper as EC ambassador. Mr. Boto has shown wisdom and insight into our Southern Baptist family in making this appointment.”

Boto, in his announcement, stated that Draper’s “experience as an SBC president and as an SBC entity leader will prove invaluable. Especially, I intend to ask him to relate to the Great Commission Council as the Executive Committee’s representative, and I would anticipate that the entity leaders on that body would welcome him in that role.

“Additionally, he will be able to cover speaking assignments at state conventions and elsewhere, already knowing and understanding the constantly changing SBC landscape and areas of challenge,” Boto said.

Draper was LifeWay’s president from 1991-2006; SBC president from 1982-84 and, earlier, president of the SBC Pastors’ Conference. He led the Dallas/Fort Worth-area First Baptist Church in Euless for 16 of his 35 years in pastoral ministry at eight churches. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he later served as trustee chairman and currently is chairman of the board of advisers of seminary supporters. Under Draper, LifeWay changed its name from the Sunday School Board in 1997; launched its True Love Waits campaign for sexual abstinence until marriage; released the Holman Christian Standard Bible (now Christian Standard Bible); created LifeWay International to broaden distribution of LifeWay products worldwide; and expanded the volunteer program for LifeWay employees to serve in missions efforts around the world.

Draper, who retired in 2006, and his wife of more than 60 years raised three children, James, Bailey and Terri. Full story available at BRnow.org. **BR**



Jimmy Draper, embracing “EC Ambassador” role April 9, speaks with young leaders prior to the 2005 SBC annual meeting. (BP file photo)

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Heritage Awards: N.C. Baptist entities recognize key leaders

Sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and North Carolina Baptist Foundation, the 18th annual North Carolina Baptist Heritage Awards were presented April 10 at the Grandover Resort & Conference Center in Greensboro. By entity, here is a list of this year's recipients:

• Baptist State Convention of North Carolina – Fred B. Lunsford

Although Lunsford considers himself a mountain preacher, his influence extends far beyond the mountains he calls home.

Born and raised on a farm in Marble, N.C., he trusted Christ at an early age and surrendered to the ministry after serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. After pastoring churches in western North Carolina and north Georgia, Fred became director of missions for the Truett Baptist Association, a position he held for 26 years.

The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) recognized Lunsford as Director of Missions of the Year for the eastern United States in 1987. That same year, he was recognized with a lifetime service award from the SBC's seminary extension ministry.

He is known for conducting numerous Sunday School revivals across North Carolina.

Following his "retirement" from the Truett Association at age 65, Lunsford returned to local church ministry and pastored until a few years ago. Today, at 93, he still teaches a Sunday night Bible study at Vengeance Creek Baptist Church, the same church he attended as a youth. "They won't let me give it up," he said.



FRED LUNSFORD

A lifelong supporter of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, Lunsford was instrumental in establishing the Broyhill and Truett homes in western North Carolina. The Baptist Children's Homes honored Fred with a distinguished service award in 2014. He has written five books and is working on a sixth.

Lunsford and his late wife, Gladys, are the parents of two sons: Dan, who is retiring as president of Mars Hill University, and Tony, a director of medical imaging in Georgia.

• Biblical Recorder – C. Mark Corts (1938-2006)

Corts was a rare servant of God whose impact can be measured in the local church, Baptist associations, state conventions, the Southern Baptist Convention and the world. He served as senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem for more than 39 years, leading the church of 125 members to reach a membership of 6,000 believers who devoted 25 percent of its budget to mission causes.

Corts served as president of the North Carolina Baptist Pastors' Conference (1976); president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (1977-79); a member of the Committee on Committees of the Southern Baptist Convention (1980) and as chairman of that committee in 1995; chairman of the Resolutions Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (1990); a member of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, now International Mission Board (1980-90), and chairman of that board (1988-1990); and on the Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute (now College) Board of Trustees.

Before his death in 2006, Corts mentored hundreds of young pastors through the Tarheel



MARK CORTS

Leadership Network, a year-long training program he developed to equip the next generation of leaders. He preached weekly on ShareLife, the TV ministry of Calvary in the Piedmont Triad area. He participated in overseas ministry in more than 50 countries.

The *Biblical Recorder* posthumously honored Corts because of his vision for the news journal's potential to advance Great Commission ministry through committed church members.



MIKE CUMMINGS

• Campbell University – Mike and Quae Cummings

For nearly 40 years, the couple has been synonymous with Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, one of the oldest Native American institutions in the state. The couple retired Feb. 28, with a combined 70 years of service for the Pembroke-based

association.

Born the eighth of 12 children on a 20-acre farm in Robeson County, Mike Cummings, a Lumbee Indian, learned the meaning of discrimination at an early age. Until 1964, he was denied admittance to white schools but worked hard to get an education and ultimately became a leader not only of his people but of all North Carolina Baptists. Cummings graduated from Campbell College (now university) in 1974 and obtained a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1977.

A pastor for 19 years, Cummings became director of missions for the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association in 1988. He became vice president of the Baptist State Convention of N.C. in 1997 and president of the convention in 1999. He was named Lumbee Indian of the Year in 1985, was the recipient of the Campbell Presidential Medallion in 1999 and received his honorary doctor of divinity degree in 2000.

Quae Cummings grew up in the Coharie Indian community of Clinton, N.C. She attended the East Carolina Indian School until it closed in 1964, then graduated from Clinton High School in 1972. She graduated from UNC-Pembroke in 2007 with a degree in sociology.

She became the office secretary for Burnt Swamp association in 1979. She has been responsible for the administration office, coordinating its schedule and activities and leading the communication work for the association with its churches. She has also been called upon to speak for women's ministries, earning superior regard across the Baptist State Convention.

Married since 1972, the Cummings have three children and three grandchildren.

• Chowan University – Ernest Leroy and Austine Odom Evans

Married for 50 years, the Evans of Ahoskie,

N.C., have faithfully served a number of state Baptist institutions, including Chowan.

A native of Martinsburg, W.Va., Austine spent 31 years in education, first at Peace College in admissions, then as a high school counselor in Hertford County, and ultimately as a senior administrator and vice president at Chowan, where she now serves on the Board of Trustees. She serves with the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and Meals on Wheels and is a past member of the Committee on Nominations of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Austine attended Wake Forest University for her undergraduate and master's degrees.

Born in Norfolk, Va., Ernest began his career as

a lawyer, working first as a research assistant in the N.C. Supreme Court, then as assistant attorney general, and finally as a partner at Cherry, Cherry, Flythe, and Evans in Ahoskie. He then turned to agriculture, first as vice president of E.R. Evans and Sons, Inc. and then as president of ELE, Inc., in Ahoskie. He

has been a trustee of the North Carolina Baptist Hospital for 25 years, serving as chairman for six of those years. Ernest attended Wake Forest University for both undergraduate and law school.

They currently work alongside each other as president and vice president of ELE, Inc. The couple have been active members of First Baptist Church Ahoskie since first moving to the town in 1972, both serving as deacon and Sunday School teacher. Together they sponsor the Evans Poteat Scholarship for N.C. Baptist students at Wake Forest University and the Evans Family Scholarship at Chowan University.

• Gardner-Webb University – C. Lorange and Betty Ledford Henderson

The couple's distinguished tenure of service to the community, the church and Gardner-Webb University embodies the university's motto – *pro Deo et humanitate* – for God and humanity. Few have contributed more to the field of deaf education than the Hendersons. Teaching and directing programs across the country, C. Lorange ultimately served as the superintendent and director for the N.C. Schools for the Deaf. She also served there as teacher and principal of the early childhood program.

Betty has been active in the Morganton



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Podcast

Continued from page 1

The rise of Apple's iPhone and mobile data networks triggered a second wave of attention in 2008, as listeners gained the ability to download podcast episodes on the go.

The latest and largest popularity boom began around 2014, which some attribute to Apple's release of a dedicated podcast app on the iPhone, in addition to the breakout success of an investigative journalism program called Serial.

In 2017, the daily reach of podcasting grew by 46 percent among Millennials (ages 18-34), faster than any other audio medium, according to Edison Research.

While traditional radio still owns the largest share of total listener time, a Pew Research report said more than 21 percent of Americans over the age of 12 listen to podcasts regularly.

A trio of Southern Baptists kicked off an "almost weekly" show in 2017 called "The Potluck Podcast, SBC," which features commentary on Southern Baptist issues.

"We started the podcast to talk about something we all love – the SBC," said co-host J.R. Parks, a deacon at Front Street Baptist Church in Statesville, N.C. "During the last year, I've been excited to find myself more involved with the SBC at various levels. I hope we can inspire other people in our age group to engage more with the SBC."

Podcast episodes vary in length, usually ranging from 15 minutes to more than an hour.

Many podcasts release new episodes on a daily or weekly basis. Sometimes they are categorized by seasons, depending on the show's content. A small number of podcasts have experimented with releasing entire seasons at once, hoping to mimic the success of binge-watched Netflix shows.

Whitfield and co-host Jonathan Howe, director of strategic initiatives at LifeWay

Christian Resources, started podcasting in 2015 not knowing how long they would continue, Whitfield said. They wanted to talk about news in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and thought others would share their interest.

"We are two Southern Baptists who have chosen to be engaged in the process, and we wanted to invite others to be engaged as well," said Whitfield. "But engagement has to begin with information, and we decided to bring it in the form of a conversation."

Throughout the week, Whitfield and Howe monitor religious and mainstream news outlets for content, relying heavily on Baptist Press (BP) and Baptist state newspapers. They typically record on Thursdays, edit the episode and then post the next day.

For a segment called "This Week in SBC History," Whitfield looks back at archived material from BP and the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. "I just look at the same week in a number of years and tell the story that interests me," she said.

J. Allen Murray, pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church in Lake Toxaway, N.C., and Jared Cornutt, student pastor of First Baptist Church in Alabaster, Ala., co-host The Potluck Podcast, SBC with Parks.

Although news often enters the discussion, the Potluck Podcast hosts do not claim to be reporters.

"Other places do a better

job at that than us, but we love giving our commentary about those things," said Murray. "Sometimes we hit things hard on the political issues and sometimes we're joking around."

"We talk about the Southern Baptist Convention – whether it's theology, politics or current events – and give our perspectives. The three of us have different perspectives. One is a pastor, one a youth pastor and one is a deacon. And we just love talking about Southern culture. We love where we live and the things that make up the South."

Since the first episode in February 2017, listeners have heard from a wide variety of Baptist leaders including two seminary presidents – Jeff Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary and Danny



Amy Whitfield and Jonathan Howe, center, interview Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, on the podcast "SBC This Week," which reached its 100th-episode milestone April 28. (Baptist Press file photo)

Podcasts with Southern Baptist hosts:

- **The Briefing:** Daily news and cultural commentary by Albert Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
- **Signposts:** Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), answers questions about theology, ethics and issues concerning the church, and features various guests
- **The Way Home:** Weekly conversations with Christian leaders and Dan Darling, vice president for communications at the ERLC
- **Not Another Baptist Podcast:** New Mexican pastors Kyle Bueerman and Matt Henslee host weekly, sometimes humorous discussions about ministry topics related to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"We want this to be informational and funny," said Cornutt. "A lot of the humor comes out in our 'Southern Culture' time, which we close every episode with. It is a listener favorite and where some of the best banter happens."

Whitfield said her favorite episodes to produce for SBC This Week are those around the new year.

"We always take the first episode of January to focus on questions that we have for the year ahead in the SBC. Then at the end of the year, we do the typical

reviews, top 10 lists, but we also look back at those questions to see if they have been answered. It's a great way to keep a bigger picture of developments in the SBC."

Howe said he enjoys the SBC annual meeting wrap-up episodes in June.

"Amy and I are both absolutely exhausted at the end of the annual meeting."

"But when we meet to record, it's so satisfying because we've just finished the high point of our year, and there's always so much to process."

"It's like giving an interview in the locker room after playing in the Super Bowl."

Hosts for both SBC This Week and The Potluck Podcast encourage listeners to be involved in Southern Baptist life. Recent news reports suggest that podcast listeners are more engaged with audio content than listeners of other platforms, such as AM/FM or satellite radio.

Multiple podcast networks told *Wired* that listeners are getting through 80-90 percent of episodes on average, while skipping relatively few ads.

"There's a level of dedication that comes from podcast listeners that you otherwise don't find," a podcast network executive told *Wired* magazine.

Podcasts are available on Apple's Podcasts app, Google Play, Stitcher, Overcast, TuneIn Radio and other digital media outlets. **B3**



Hosts of The Potluck Podcast, SBC, from left, J. Allen Murray, J. R. Parks and Jared Cornutt, offer different perspectives on Southern Baptist life and Southern culture in their "almost weekly" episodes. (Contributed photo)

Ministry-related podcasts:

- **No Campus Left:** A podcast about current issues relating to collegiate culture and ministry
- **N.C. Asian American Ministries:** Highlights Asian American leaders and their ministries to impact lostness among Asian populations in North Carolina and beyond
- **The Front Pew:** North Carolina pastors Chris Griggs, Ben Rudolph and Matt Capps discuss life, ministry and mission
- **Rainer on Leadership:** Twice a week, Jonathan Howe and Thom Rainer provide practical

training for leaders and pastors of local churches

• **From the Lectern:** Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's Office of Kingdom Diversity hosts conversations and interviews about serving others across cultural lines

• **Pastor Talk:** Marty Duren, executive editor for LifeWay Pastors, asks ministers about issues that matter in the local church.

Many churches and other ministries use podcasts to distribute sermons and other ministry related content.

SEBTS aiding Cuban convention's momentum

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

The Cuban church planting movement has been on the move for nearly 30 years as house churches have grown in number and people have come to Christ by the thousands.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) is joining what God is doing through the Eastern Baptist Convention and its Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Santiago through theological training to equip leaders for ministry.

SEBTS's involvement comes at a "very unique period in Cuba's history," said Miguel Echevarria, director of Hispanic Leadership Development at SEBTS, an arm of the seminary's Global Theological Initiatives (GTI).

SEBTS is training 40 professors, convention leaders and lay missionaries (church planters) toward earning master of theological studies (MTS) degrees. In this 48-hour program, students have the

opportunity to write and publish a thesis with the goal of having their work available at SEBTS's campus library.

"We're training trainers. That's the whole idea," said John Ewart, associate vice president of GTI and ministry centers at SEBTS.

SEBTS President Danny Akin, Ewart and Echevarria traveled to Cuba last November.

Akin and Ewart welcomed new students to the MTS program and Echevarria taught a course on the Gospels. They also spent time at First and Fourth Baptist Churches in Santiago. In-person training is scheduled a couple times a year while the remainder of the teaching is online.

Most of the students currently are teaching at the Cuban seminary, its two extension centers and 34 lay missionary training centers, where many lay missionaries are trained for two years.

SEBTS is the only school currently



Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, addresses a class of Cuban seminary students as part of SEBTS' partnership with the Eastern Baptist Convention on the island nation. (SEBTS photo)

working with the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, which has 995 students in its bachelor's and graduate programs as well as its extension centers. The institution offers numerous programs, including a master's in counseling, bachelor's degrees and a lay missionary course.

Pastor's wives also can receive special training through the Janet Hunt Pastor's Wives Course.

Janet Hunt, wife of pastor Johnny Hunt of First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Ga., provides a scholarship fund for Cuban women to be trained and equipped for their continued ministry. Charlotte Akin, Wendy Urbanek, Susie Hawkins and Kathy Litton also are among those involved in the training.

Church planting blossoms

Even though Cuba was introduced to Christianity in the late 1800s, it was not until the 1990s that the church planting movement occurred.

While there were and are other evangelicals in Cuba, Baptists were divided into two groups geographically – the Eastern Baptist Convention under American Baptists and the Western Baptist Convention under Southern Baptists by 1898 comity agreements made in a meeting in Washington D.C. From 1886-1989, the Western Baptist Convention worked with the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board); in 1989, and the Home Mission Board passed the responsibility to the SBC Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board). More recently, SEBTS partnered with the Eastern Baptist Convention in 2017, but the two have had an ongoing relationship since 2011.

Kurt Urbanek, author of *Cuba's Great Awakening: Church Planting Movement in Cuba*, wrote that Cuban church leaders during the '90s did not initially realize

a church planting movement was taking place, only that Bible study attendance had increased. In 1990, the Eastern Baptist Convention had no house churches but had 132 established churches with a total of 7,254 members.

In 2016 those numbers had grown to 622 local churches and 4,830 house churches, and in 2017 the total number of churches, missions and house churches had grown to more than 6,208 (648 churches, 777 missions and 4,783 house churches).

In 2017 alone, the growth among believers was explosive as Eastern Cuban Baptists recorded 43,072 professions of faith. The total number of professions of faith since 1990 was 519,911 within the Eastern convention largely as a result of special evangelistic events. These conversions did not include the further increased number of people coming to faith through house churches, local churches and missions.

"There's a movement of God going on in Cuba right now. People are coming to faith in droves; churches are being planted in droves," Echevarria said, comparing it to the Great Awakenings America saw during the 18th and 19th centuries.

"I am impressed with their theology. It's a reproduction that I want to see happen," Ewart noted.

"If I could take some of the theology that these guys have and put it in some of the other partnerships we have around the world, it would be a strengthening effect."

Ultimately, the goal of the SEBTS partnership in Cuba is to train up reproducible leaders who can continue to advance the movement of the gospel in recent decades.

"We hope to have an influence in the classroom [so that] they would then take what they are being taught and then teach it to others," Echevarria said. **BR**

ARE YOU FLIRTING WITH A 'DANGEROUS PARTNER'?

Attraction to someone other than one's spouse is a rampant problem, and those in ministry are not immune. I learned through years of counseling clergy couples that most have no idea why they act on those feelings. They can't see the roots of an ugly tree. That's how deception works.

Author and Pastor Dave Carder spent 30 years as an associate pastor in large West Coast churches. During that time, two of his pastors left with female parishioners. Carder's two books, *Close Calls* and *Torn Asunder*, are the outcome of his research into why pastors would risk everything – their marriage, family, friends, their ministry and their reputation. He developed "The Dangerous Partner Profile," a list of high-risk behaviors that lead to infidelity:

- Saving topics of conversation for your "special friend."
- Sharing spousal difficulties with your friend.
- Anticipating seeing this person more than your spouse.
- Comparing the friend and your spouse.
- Fantasizing about marriage to your friend.

- Not allowing your spouse full access to all your modes of communication, including email, texts and phone messages.

- Spending money on your friend without your spouse's knowledge.
- Arguing with your spouse over the relationship with the friend.
- Lying to spend time with the friend.
- Allowing sexual content in your conversations with your friend.
- Corporate dating (taking advantage of business trips to spend quality time together.)

Remember, God never told us to fight sexual temptation. He told us to flee! So if you don't pay attention to warning signs, you're not really fleeing. And just in case you need a reminder, you'll never be sorry for doing the right thing.

"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" – 1 Corinthians 6:18.



EDDIE THOMPSON

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

Heritage

Continued from page 5

Women's Club, Burke County Association for the Education of Young Children and Daughters of the American Revolution. He has served on the Piedmont Council for Boy Scouts of America, NC Clean Water Fund, Board of Directors for the NC Partnership for Children and founded the Friends of Lake James State Park. In 2008, he was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.



BETTY HENDERSON

He received an honorary doctorate from Gardner-Webb in 1979 and has been a member of the Board of Trustees since 1980. He was instrumental in the creation of the Noel Center for Disability Resources, which provides access to higher education for qualified students with disabilities.

In addition, Betty, a member of Gardner-Webb Junior College's class of '53, and C. Lorange have established the Dr. Rance and Betty Henderson Endowed Scholarship Fund and the Henderson/Ledford Endowed Scholarship Fund.

They are members of First Baptist Church of Morganton, where they have both served faithfully as deacons, Sunday School teachers and members of various committees.

They have two children, David and Julie, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

• Mars Hill University – David Costner

Costner never underestimates the Sunday School lessons one experiences as a child. Cultivated and reinforced by his parents, the late Robert and Ruth Yates Costner, both Mars Hill College alumni. In 1966, Costner entered Mars Hill College, just like his sisters before him. He met the love of his life, Rebecca Sluder, on the first day of class. They have been best friends for 52 years and daughters – Jennifer, Laura, and Julie – and nine grandchildren.

Upon graduating from Mars Hill, he taught and coached in Buncombe County while also serving in the U.S. Army Reserves. By 1975, a new career was launched in the transportation industry, which saw him ascend to positions ranging from sales manager to vice-president of national accounts. Throughout their many moves, the family always sought out loving churches, with David often serving as a deacon, Sunday School teacher, Royal Ambassador leader and youth coach. Upon retirement in 2013, David and Becky returned to the mountains and originally settled back in the church where they were married, with David again stepping forward as chair of the properties committee, chair of the capital funds campaign, and a deacon. And since 2014, he has been a passionate member of the Mars Hill University Board of Trustees.

• **North Carolina Baptist Foundation – Ray and Girtrue Talley**

The Talleys love for and commitment to Christ

and His church, their involvement in ministry in Jesus' name and their devotion to each other, define Ray and Girtrue Talley. Both have served on the Baptist Foundation Board of Directors, Girtrue three terms totaling 12 years and Ray for four years. As board members they made significant contributions to the foundation's mission.

Girtrue, a native of Haywood County, had a



GIRTRUE TALLEY

long and distinguished career in banking from which she retired after 32 years. While she was excelling in her banking career, she and her late husband Cecil Young owned and operated The Community Superette in their hometown of Etowah. Still she had time to be active in her church, teaching Sunday

School, singing in the choir, serving as WMU director, among many other responsibilities. On the Foundation Board she served in practically every capacity, including vice president. The computer lab at Fruitland Baptist Bible College was donated by Girtrue and Ray in memory of her late husband Cecil.

Ray has distinguished himself as a pastor in Georgia and North and South Carolina churches. He has served on the Board of Directors of both the N.C. and S.C. conventions. He is a Clemson Tiger and a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. For 14 years Ray was the pianist for the Kingsmen Quartet, and for years he and Girtrue have shared their musical talents in ministry. Ray has participated in 23 mission trips to Romania and is always in great demand as an interim pastor.

After both lost spouses the Lord brought this power team together on New Year's Eve, 1997.

• Baptists on Mission – Lynn Tharrington

Tharrington has served on the staff for North Carolina Baptist Men/Baptists on Mission for the past 47 years (since 1971). She has served as the administrative assistant for the last 46 years.

When she was 12 years old she went to missions week at Ridgecrest and after hearing all the missionaries she decided that she wanted to be a missionary. Since she was 18 years old, and began working for Baptists on Missions, she has ministered to thousands of people along with our board, staff, mission volunteers, her family, her church and others. God has used Tharrington and her call to missions, to impact thousands of people.

She married Bobby Tharrington on Aug. 29,

1972. He died in August 2017. She has two children and five grandchildren. Tharrington is a member of Red Bud Baptist Church where she teaches Sunday School, plays the piano and is a servant leader for that church.

• Wake Forest

Baptist Hospital –

Kathryn H. Hamrick

Kathryn H. Hamrick, of Boiling Springs, N.C., is a native of Asheville and daughter of a Baptist minister and a high school history teacher. She graduated from Wake Forest University with a degree in Spanish. She married Cline Hamrick in 1970 and for the next 16 years she and her husband and their four sons operated a dairy farm in Boiling Springs. Hamrick began work at MetLife in the Shelby office, retiring as branch manager in 2013 after 25 years. For 30 years, she wrote a weekly humor column for the *Shelby Star* and in 2015, she published a book, *The Farmer's Wife*, which contains favorite humor columns from decades of farm life. Kathryn has served N.C. Baptists as president of the General Board and vice president of the Baptist State Convention. She also served on the Coordinating Council of N.C.'s Co-operative Baptist Fellowship. Hamrick has taught a ladies' Sunday School class for more than 20 years and has served as a deacon of Boiling Springs Baptist Church. She is an active member of the Friendship Force and Boiling Springs Rotary and serves on the boards of the Cleveland County Community Foundation and the Noel Program for Students with Disabilities at Gardner-Webb University. She has served multiple terms as a trustee of North Carolina Baptist Hospital and served on the Hospital's Faith and Health Ministries Committee and Foundation Board, and she served on Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center's Community Benefit Advisory Board. Throughout her service to Baptist Hospital and the Medical Center, she has been an advocate for maintaining a productive relationship with N.C. Baptists and the Baptist State Convention. The Hamricks have 10 grandchildren.



DON SCARBOROUGH

They serve as Girls in Action Leader, Sunday School Director, Sunday School Teacher, Nursery Committee Chair, Long Range Planning Committee, etc. Don is a faithful Alumni of Wingate University. He has worked for the economic development of the most challenged communities.

Elaine has served Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina: trustee since 2002; executive committee, chair of programs and services,

strategic planning committee.

Don's grandmother Minnie Harrington Pope and her sister Hyla Harrington were early residents of Mills Home (now part of Baptist Children's Homes) due to death of their father and mother's inability to care for them.

Elaine is retired as Anson County Partnership for Children executive director and now provides care for her grandchildren.

Don continues as owner of Plank Road Realty and active service to the university and community.

• Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina – Sandra Dunlap James

James and her husband, Leo, live in Whittier and are involved in First Baptist Sylva where she leads Women on Mission and serves as WMU di-



SANDRA JAMES

rector. A past president of WMU-NC, her heart for leading women of all ages to know God's will for their lives and to develop a missions worldview was foremost in this role. James is a former member of the Executive Committee of the Baptist State Convention.

Sandra has affected many lives through her missions travels including Durban, South Africa, and Myanmar, and by leading her GA's to make pillowcase dresses for impoverished children in Africa.

Sandra and Leo spend several months each year serving as volunteers at the Hawaiian Baptist Conference Center. She has "mothered" hundreds of internationals as they have come to the U.S. to work in restaurants owned by Sandra and Leo, providing a livelihood as well as an opportunity for ministry. They have two married sons and six grandchildren. **B3**

Bill Hybels resigns amid misconduct accusations

Baptist Press

Bill Hybels, the pastor who grew Willow Creek Community Church into one of the nation's most influential megachurches, stepped down April 10 amid accusations of a pattern of sexual misconduct.

Hybels, who has denied all of the accusations, called some of them "misleading" and others "entirely false." Hybels' announcement comes 18 days after the *Chicago Tribune* published a long but inconclusive account of allegations against him by a handful of former church members. **B3**

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MLK50: Christians must sacrifice for racial unity

Compiled from Baptist Press reports

Evangelical Christians must be willing to pay the price to gain racial unity, speakers said at a conference on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

The two-day event, “MLK50: Gospel Reflections From the Mountaintop,” held in Memphis, Tenn., occurred as the country remembered King, who was shot down April 4, 1968, in this Mississippi River city.

The conference – co-hosted by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and The Gospel Coalition (TGC) – coincided with many memorials for King, including a ceremony at the Lorraine Motel, where he was killed.

In the first keynote address, ERLC President Russell Moore said King “preached to a beloved community, but he was not a beloved preacher in an awful lot of communities.”

Now, King “is relatively noncontroversial in American life, because Martin Luther King has not been speaking for 50 years,” Moore told the audience of nearly 4,000 registrants. “It is easy to look backward and say, ‘If I had been here, I would have listened to Dr. King, even though I have not listened to what is happening around me in my own community.’”

King is long dead, “but Jesus Christ is not dead,” Moore said in remarks based on Matthew 23:29-39.

“[T]ime and time again in the white American Bible belt, the people of God had to choose between Jesus Christ and Jim Crow because you cannot serve both,” he said, “and tragically many often chose to serve Jim Crow and to rename him Jesus Christ.”

In a world of racial injustice, hatred and bigotry, “the answer is not to rebrand but to repent,” Moore told the diverse audience. He questioned why the evangelical church is so white and middle class. Jesus will build His church, he said, the question is whether it will happen with evangelicals.

“God does not need an American evangelical movement,” Moore said. “God does not need a Southern Baptist Convention. God does not need a Presbyterian Church in America. God does not need a Gospel Coalition. All of these things are good and right so far as they remind us of the purposes of God. But even if they do not, God will still build His church.”

Conference leaders announced on the second day of the event that nearly \$1.5 million had been raised for the “MLK50 Dream Forward Scholarship Initiative,”

which will allow Christian colleges and seminaries to invest in the education of minority students.

The central focus of the initiative will be a number of full and partial scholarships at participating Christian colleges and universities across the country for minority students from Memphis.

“We believe there are multiple reasons for Christian colleges and seminaries to participate in this program and we are grateful to these schools who have so generously joined this effort,” Brent Leatherwood, ERLC director of strategic partnerships, said in a press release.

“The city of Memphis was the scene of a brutal murder of the leading figure of the Civil Rights Movement. Unfortunately, even to this day, shockwaves from that terrible moment still reverberate in the community. But pastors, church leaders and local activists are resolved to make racial unity a reality. This initiative reflects that good work being done and offers a way to come alongside and support it.”

A broad range of financial aid resources will be given to selected minority students from Memphis who demonstrate a heart for Christ and a potential for academic excellence while meeting basic admission requirements.

Participating institutions include several Southern Baptist seminaries and colleges.

Attendees gave an offering of more than \$16,500 for the Memphis Christian Pastors Network, a multi-ethnic coalition seeking to foster racial unity and meet needs in the city.

Charlie Dates, senior pastor of Progressive Baptist Church in Chicago, said in his talk, “the sting of evangelicalism’s compliance with segregation is still felt” 50 years after King’s death in its seminars, radio stations, podcasts, publishers and churches.

“By choosing to conform to the world, Christians have created a segregated church,” Dates said. While exceptions exist, “today’s segregated brand of American evangelicalism is largely unrepentant of the sin of segregation,” he told the audience.

“This segregated brand of evangelicalism seems unready and unwilling to file divorce papers with white privilege and systemic injustice,” Dates said. “[African Americans] can sense evangelicalism’s unwillingness to tear away from the perks of segregation and slowness to prepare future leaders for a unified church.”

What has frustrated African Americans about white evangelicals who have a clear understanding of orthodoxy and the gospel, Dates proposed, is: “We have expected you to be our greatest allies in

the struggle against injustice. We wanted you to tell your churches and your congregations that God was never pleased with segregation and the systems that segregation has created. We have wanted you to use your influence with your governors and your politicians to end the long night of systemic injustices.”

In an ongoing series of examples that brought increasing cheers, Dates said, “We wanted you all to unflinchingly denounce the politics of fear and the alt-right racism that elected playboys while denouncing a black man who was loyal to his wife all his years in office and took care of his kids and did not disgrace America.

“[B]ut instead of finding allies in the fight for justice on the grounds of righteousness, we have encountered antagonists,” he told the crowd. “Instead of understanding our plight, we have been met with demands to justify our sentiments.”

Black and white evangelicals don’t have to agree, but they must love one another, Dates said. “Lovelessness is godlessness.”

White pastors must address the issue, Dallas-Fort Worth area pastor Matt Chandler told conference attendees.

“You have got to say something,” Chandler said. “There is no way forward if white pulpits won’t talk.”

Quoting King, the pastor of The Village Church said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”

He had a difficult time sleeping the night before because he knew what he was asking of some of them, Chandler told pastors. They might be criticized,

bullied and fired, he acknowledged.

Chandler encouraged them to begin by preaching on the Bible’s view of ethnicity and unity.

“Ethnic harmony is one of the great themes of the Bible. This is the refrain of the Bible over and over and over again,” he said, adding, “Jesus consistently confronted broken thinking about ethnicity.”

Veteran pastor Crawford Loritts, an African American pastor of a predominantly white church, said on the final panel of the conference the question is not so much, “Where do we go from here?” but “Why haven’t we gone from here?”

The need is courage, he said. “This issue is going to cost us.

“Are we willing to pay that price? Love is expensive, and commitment is expensive.

“And I think God is standing back and saying to the church: You all know what to do here. You really do know what to do,” said Loritts, senior pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Roswell, Ga. “It’s the courage and will to do it and to be it and to pay that price.”

Chandler and other speakers pointed to the need for cross-ethnic relationships – and not ones in which white Christians only find African Americans who agree with them.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam participated by welcoming attendees to the state and Memphis at the start of the conference.

Leading music at the event were the worship team of Fellowship Memphis and the Tennessee Mass Choir.

Archived videos of the event may be viewed at mlk50conference.com/live. **BR**

Call for diversity resonates at event

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

Multiple speakers at the MLK50 Conference in Memphis, Tenn., made calls to action for racial unity in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), but Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas, specifically charged two of the denomination’s entities to make definitive progress toward ethnic diversity in coming months.

“Right now we have two major entities in the Southern Baptist Convention that have vacancies at the leadership level,” Pitman said in a breakout session on racial problems and progress in the SBC. “It is imperative that at least one of them be filled with minority leadership.”

His words were met by a wave of applause.

The International Mission Board’s David Platt announced Feb. 12 that his resignation as president was forthcoming so he could return to full-time pastoral ministry, and the SBC Executive Committee’s Frank Page exited the entity’s lead role March 27 following the disclosure of a moral failure.

Making his point more directly, Pitman turned attention to a fellow panelist on the stage, Kevin Smith, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

“Something is seriously wrong if the brother sitting to the left of me – with his experience, dedication and understanding of Southern Baptist life – is not strongly considered to be the CEO and president of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

See Diversity page 11

Memphis pastor: Go ‘all in’ for ethnic unity

By SETH BROWN | BR Content Editor

As many churches strive to achieve more ethnic diversity in their pews, they often discover that maintaining unity in a multicultural congregation means hard work.

Jason Cook, associate pastor at Fellowship Memphis, told the *Biblical Recorder* in an interview that all people have “tribal tendencies” and church leaders must continually “push Christians toward each other.”

Recent studies by LifeWay Research reveal that 93 percent of Protestant pastors believe churches should work toward racial diversity, while more than half of people in the pews did not agree their church should become more diverse.

Cook, who was a speaker at the MLK50 Conference April 3-4 in Memphis, Tenn., said churches should expect obstacles to multicultural unity around the topics of musical preferences, preaching styles, interpersonal relationships and all other areas of congregational life. Being a multiethnic church is the “first hurdle to cross” in being a cross-cultural church, he said. “I prefer the term cross-cultural because that implies people are bumping into one another and getting some of me on you, and you on me, rather than still being segregated within the church.”

Cook said developing a cross-cultural church is not like a software update, where minor details are upgraded to add the desired features.

“This is like the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk,” he said. “It has never been seen before. ... What you create in that space will borrow from cultures but it doesn’t center on one culture.”

“The cross-cultural church is born, not out of the adjustment of periphery issues. ... It is built and born out of a genuine concern to see people come together. We have to change not just what we do, but how we see.”

Cook added that “interracial conflict” is inevitable, and he encouraged congregations to have the “will and resolve” to be strengthened by disagreements, not destroyed by them. “Many people are so squeamish about conflict, that at the first sign, they bolt,” said Cook. “I believe sometimes you have to make war in order to have peace.”

Addressing musical preferences, Cook said, “In a multiethnic church, there is a mandate for everyone to feel at home, and no one to feel at home. If we are a true multi-ethnic church, then there are aspects of the service where you are going to feel at home ... and there will be other parts of that service where you will feel wildly uncomfortable and outside of your cultural experience.”

He also said “mono-cultural” preachers can hinder progress toward achieving ethnic diversity.

“That means everything from stage presence, to voice inflection and intonation, sermon points, how you arrive at those points



Jason Cook shares about multicultural congregations at the recent MLK50 event. (ERLC photo)

and how you make those points, illustrations, pictures and how you think through your sermon holistically, has to be at the very least bi-cultural.”

Interpersonal relationships, or community, can also be affected by unspoken cultural expectations. Cook said visiting coffee shops as recreation or venues for spending time together was one example of a white cultural preference, adopted by many churches and ministries, that is often not held by non-white Christians.

“The fact that white people paid money for coffee at a coffee shop was weird to me until as recently as six years ago. ... Five bucks for a cup of coffee – to do what? To talk? Brother, that’s odd,” he said with a laugh.

“Where I’m from, you go get a big can of Folgers, Maxwell House or Community, then you brew a pot at home, and you drink your coffee and talk.”

He also said the location and ethnic make-up of church small groups are important, but often overlooked. “We’re all essentially looking for a place where we belong and where we feel safe ... because, after all, the church is a heavenly outpost on earth that is a reflection of a heavenly reality,” Cook said.

“But far too often, many of my white brothers and sisters have sought that emotion and feeling so strongly that it is to the neglect of many who don’t look like them.”

Cook encouraged churches and church leaders to consider four expectations as they strive for ethnic diversity among their congregations: (1) “Representation matters. Qualified, high-level, decision-making leaders that are non-white matter ... The [ethnic] ratio among leadership needs to look like your congregation.”

(2) “Developing a cross-cultural church will be the hardest thing you ever do in your ministry, so if you don’t sell out to it, it won’t happen. There is no dipping your toe in this water. You have to go all in.

(3) “Expect attrition. Expect people to not be with the program, but also expect [other] people to come to your church and feel at home.”

(4) “Do not give up, because it’s worth it. From cover to cover, scripture boasts of a multicultural reality in heaven that is fostered because of what God does through us here on earth. Don’t quit. Keep going, but gird your loins, because it’s hard, man.” **BR**

Diversity Continued from page 10

Smith is African-American and has formerly served within the SBC as pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., faculty member at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

“I believe it’s an Esther-type moment – ‘*for such a time as this*’ – that God has raised up a statesman in our denomination that can lead us into the next generation,” Pitman said.

The breakout session was one of many at the April 3-4 event, co-hosted by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and The Gospel Coalition to mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr.

Pitman and Smith were joined in the panel discussion by Byron Day, senior pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Laurel, Md. and president of the SBC National African American Fellowship; and Jeff Dodge, teaching pastor of Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa. ERLC Chief of Staff Daniel Patterson moderated the talk, entitled “The SBC and Race: Problems and Progress.”

Day said there is a growing desire in the SBC to see deeds match the words found in a 1995 resolution that denounced and apologized for historical Southern Baptist participation and support of racial oppression.

“One of the things I’m hearing is that it is time to stop talking and start doing,” he said. “We need to see diversity at every level.”

In an earlier part of the panel discussion, Pitman called white Southern Baptists to humbly consider the concerns of their black brothers and sisters, and then join them in pursuing racial unity.

“Sometimes white Southern Baptists say, ‘OK, we made our apology, can we not move past that?’ But that’s a gross misunderstanding of the severity of the issue,” Pitman said. “Every time there is an opportunity to drive a nail in the coffin of racism, every white Southern Baptist should be quick to grab the hammer.”

Smith recounted the checkered legacy of Baptists and other evangelicals on racism and ethnic diversity.

“Pastors have historically been silent or provided the fences for the sin of racism in whatever form it manifested, or historically have been faithful pastors and paid the cost for it,” he said.

Smith said conversations around racism must be considered as topics of missions and evangelism, not politics. “What are the missiological costs of not pursuing Christian unity?” he asked, alluding to the faults of both major United States political parties.

“Are there any missiological costs of being in a ‘browning’ country and being on board with a candidate that demonizes Mexicans?” Smith continued. “Younger generations are happy to be here and be alive, so are there any missiological costs of being connected to a candidate who is in the hands of Planned Parenthood?”

Smith also explained why he values racial unity in the SBC, even when it is difficult to achieve. “I am thankful for the resources and opportunities we have. Most American denominations can’t put a \$1 million mobile dental clinic in poor neighborhoods, while church planters reach out to the communities and provide love-your-neighbor type ministries.

“Even as [the International Mission Board] downsizes to get our budget right, most denominations can’t field the largest global missions force around the world. Most denominations don’t have the particular focus [of the North American Mission Board] to plant churches in the 32 largest metropolitan areas of America. Most denominations don’t have the largest seminaries in the world.”

He said the Cooperative Program enables the SBC to sustain broad support across ethnic lines.

“Ultimately we do this for Kingdom purposes, to obey Jesus’ command that His people would be one, but missiologically, why do we do this?”

“Being the largest Protestant denomination in America, that since 1925 has had this way of putting our resources together, it allows us to strategically approach missions and ministry in a way that other denominations just aren’t able to.”

The panel discussion also covered topics such as leaders being continual learners, avoiding short-sighted cultural trends, broadening race discussions to include Hispanic and Asian ethnicities and equipping younger Christians and future pastors to prioritize ethnic diversity. **BR**

TFNG apologetics conference tackles tough issues

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

Alex McFarland's annual Truth for a New Generation (TFNG) apologetics conference recently drew hundreds to the facilities of Life Community Church in Greensboro. The event called on Christians to address changing cultural issues.

The conference opened March 23 with Abraham Hamilton III, general counsel and chief policy analyst for the American Family Association (AFA). He also hosts a daily radio program, "The Hamilton Corner" on the AFA network.

Hamilton began with the question, "How many of you have heard that Christianity is a white man's religion?"

As an African-American, Hamilton said he is sometimes criticized for being a Christian. Wrongly believing the Christian faith is a white man's religion, some say he is not true to his heritage and should turn away from his faith in Christ.

Beginning with the New Testament, he set out to disprove that idea.

He said Acts 2:41-47 describes the day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God was poured out on 120 believers.

"Those who comprised the church in that day were people from modern day Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Greece, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria – and it included Arabs and Romans," Hamilton said.

Four of those are African countries, he noted. "At the birthday of the church, there were Africans there from the beginning."

Hamilton said, "The point of this conversation is not to Africanize Christianity, but to enable you and I to stand against the forces that could potentially hinder the advancement of the gospel in our day."

Acts 8 tells the story of an Ethiopian eunuch that Phillip baptized. Hamilton said this African eunuch's story shows "a continual outflowing of the Lord getting the gospel to all people in the first century. This Ethiopian ... became one of the principal founders of the Christian church in Ethiopia, according to Eusebius and other church historians."

In Acts 11, believers were scattered because of the persecution of Stephen. The scripture lists men of Cyprus and Cyrene. "Cyrene is a Roman province in Libya – that's Africa," Hamilton explained. "So the Bible is telling you, ... some of the first people to ever proclaim the gospel to people other than Jews included Africans."

At Antioch the disciples of Christ were first called Christians, according to Acts 13:1. "It was the largest and earliest gentile church with apostolic oversight. ... It included African evangelists.

"Some of the leadership of the church at Antioch are identified including Barnabas and Simeon, who is called Niger. That refers to his skin color. He's black."

The early church historian Tertullian was one of the first to pen Christian literature in Latin, the language of the Roman empire. Tertullian was an African theologian, and a dedicated apologist who "defended Christianity against pagans and heretics. ... He was the first to use the word 'trinity' to describe the godhead," said Hamilton.

Another early church patriarch, Athanasius, was mocked by his enemies as "the black dwarf." This bishop of Alexandria, defended the divinity of Jesus against the prevailing Orthodox church of his day.

Augustine was born in the North African country



of Algeria, "He singlehandedly, through his writings, shaped the entirety of Western Christian tradition through the Middle Ages. His book, *City of God* literally shaped Western political philosophy," Hamilton stated.

Popular Christian author and apologist Josh McDowell's message addressed the need to understand current social changes.

"Culturally, we have gone through a total epistemological shift," he said. The word epistemological means "the source and nature of truth."

It deals with what truth is and where it comes from. "We've had a total shift in what truth is and even where it comes from."

Two very different cultures are at play in relationships – the adult culture and the youth culture. "Even in Christian homes there are two cultures," he said. "The problem is, the parents don't know it, but the kids do."

McDowell believes the differences grow out of two different understandings of truth. To the adult culture, truth is objective, external and discovered.

"But the youth culture would say, 'That's ridiculous. All moral truth is created. It is personal opinion,'" he added. "This generation has no reference point for truth."

He said, for the first time in history, we may be living in an age when feelings trump science, history, facts and truth.

"The same-sex debate has nothing to do with science, facts or biology. It has to do with how you feel," he explained. This is the shift away from objective truth.

Dictionaries add new words every year. In 2016 Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" as its international word of the year, reflecting what it called a "highly-charged" political year. McDowell said Oxford's definition reads, "Relating to or denoting circumstances which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion, that appeals to emotions or personal belief."

"We are now living in a totally post-truth culture," he said, which eventually shapes all conversations, even the fake news culture in media.

Conference organizer Alex McFarland challenged believers to think critically so they can evaluate the issues and learn to think for themselves. He said Christians must pray for government leaders according to 1 Timothy 2:1-3 to "endeavor for a culture most conducive for the spread of the gospel."

"The backbone of this country, only hope for this country are those two blessed entities initiated by God Himself – the family and the church," he added.

Believers cannot hand off to others the personal responsibility to live faithfully for Christ. McFarland said, "It is now necessary that each of us live at the height of our times."

God is calling today's followers of Christ to "Stand up for what is true, prioritize your life, jettison some cargo, reorder your priorities so that Christ is number one." Often in debates with atheists, McFarland said the influence of individual Christians is challenged and even mocked. The question is raised, "Does the voice of one Christian matter in the face of media giants and the powerful influence of Hollywood and television?"

"Absolutely," he affirmed. Biblical truth will remain standing in the end. Truth will never fail, he said.

Another conference speaker was former actress and pop culture expert, Tina Marie Griffin. Her message reviewed how pop culture and media is glamorizing harmful behaviors without showing the consequences and how these messages are eroding the foundational development of today's youth. She discussed current TV shows, movies, video games, magazines and music, focusing on how wise media choices impacts relationships and self-worth.

J. Warner Wallace, a cold-case homicide detective and best-selling author, spoke to conference attendees from his experience as detective. He was a conscientious and vocal atheist until the age of 35, when he took a serious look at the evidence for the Christian worldview and determined that Christianity was demonstrably true.

Wallace earned a master's degree in theological studies from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (since renamed Gateway Seminary).

His Cold-Case Christianity website, blog and podcast are platforms for evidence supporting Christianity.

Lauren Green, chief religion correspondent for the Fox News Channel, recalled the political and religious turmoil in Jesus' day, and the way religious leaders used political leaders to do their dirty work – like crucifying Jesus. Pilate was a powerful man politically, but confused when faced with the meaning of truth.

"Truth complicates things because we like to live in gray areas," Green said. Jesus was saying, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." To follow Jesus is to follow the one who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

"The truth can be known," she continued. "In fact you can have a relationship with the truth. That's what Christianity is."

Other popular speakers included former Muslim Kamal Saleem, apologist Juan Valdes and Fox News contributor Todd Starnes. **BR**

In historic move, SEBTS names female trustee chair

Baptist Press

The election of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee officers, during their April 8-10 meeting, marked a historic moment in the Southern Baptist Convention, with Becky Gardner believed to be the first female trustee chair for a seminary, according to the institution's examination of SBC Annuals.

Gardner, a trustee since 2010, is superintendent of Peoria Christian School in Peoria, Ill., and a member of Woodland Baptist Church in Peoria. Scott Hildreth was installed April 10 as the George Liele Director of the Lewis A. Drummond Center for Great Commission Studies, the first endowed directorship at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Full story available at BRnow.org. **BR**

Gaines names SBC Committee on Committees

Baptist Press

Appointments to the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Committee on Committees have been announced by SBC President Steve Gaines, pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn.

The Committee on Committees has 68 members, two from each of the 34 states and regions qualified for representation on boards of SBC entities.

The Committee on Committees will assemble in Dallas just prior to the SBC's June 12-13 sessions to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations who, in turn, will nominate trustees for the boards of SBC entities in 2019.

Gaines named Emir Caner, president of Truett McConnell University in Cleveland, Ga., as chairman. Gaines announced the appointments April 6 in accordance with SBC Bylaw 19, which calls for providing notice to Southern Baptists of the appointees at least 45 days in advance of each year's annual meeting.

Committee members are:

ALABAMA: Chad Burdette, Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne; Tim Cox, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea.

ALASKA: Shirley Bearce, CrossCountry Church, Palmer; Steve Kim, Sunset Hills Baptist Church, Anchorage.

ARIZONA: Pete Barker, Royal Palms Baptist Church, Phoenix; James Harms, First Baptist Church, Sierra Vista.

ARKANSAS: Jeff Paxton, First Baptist Church, Dover; Manley Beasley Jr., Hot Springs Baptist Church, Hot Springs.

CALIFORNIA: Raymond Lee, See World Baptist Church, San Diego; Lyman Alexander, St. John Missionary Baptist, Richmond.

COLORADO: Doug Lohrey, First Baptist Church Black Forest, Colorado Springs; Jeff Gibson, Ken Caryl Baptist Church, Littleton.

FLORIDA: Benny Reynolds, Peniel Baptist Church, Palatka; Geoffrey Prows, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Baker.

GEORGIA: Emir Caner, First Baptist Church, Helen; Javier Chavez, Amistad Cristiana International, Gainesville.

HAWAII: Jerrell Tate, Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, Ewa Beach; Rick Lazor, OlaNui!, Honolulu

ILLINOIS: Scott Nichols, Crossroads Community Church, Carol Stream; Randy Plunkett, First Baptist Church, Eldorado.

INDIANA: Rick Hillard, Foot of the Cross Church, Bloomington; Randall Forsythe, Grace Baptist

Church, Portage.

KANSAS-NEBRASKA: Eric Franklin, CrossPoint Church, Salina, Kan.; Chue Herr, First Hmong Baptist Church, Kansas City, Kan.

KENTUCKY: Samuel Schmidt, Edgewood Baptist Church, Nicholasville; Jerry Huffman, Bates Creek Baptist Church, Richmond.

LOUISIANA: Reggie Bridges, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston; Marc Taylor, Cook Baptist Church, Ruston.

MARYLAND-DELAWARE-DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Joshua Phillips, Pleasant View Baptist Church, Port Deposit, Md.; Kent Phoebus, LifeHouse Church, Middletown, Del.

MICHIGAN: James Jones, First Baptist Church, Trenton; Jerome Taylor, Eastgate Baptist Church, Burton.

MISSISSIPPI: Doug Broome, First Baptist Church, Natchez; Gregory Warnock, First Baptist Church, Brookhaven.

MISSOURI: John Forsythe, Concord Baptist Church, Jefferson City; Wesley Hammond, First Baptist Church, Paris.

NEVADA: Harry Watson, Green Valley Baptist Church, Henderson; Frank Bushey, Fellowship Community Church, Reno.

NEW ENGLAND: Richard Clegg, FaithBridge Church, Manchester, N.H.; Gary Rowe, Island Pond Baptist Church, Hampstead, N.H.

NEW MEXICO: Larry Evans, First Baptist Church, Cloudcroft; Manny Montaño, Del Norte Baptist Church, Albuquerque.

NEW YORK: Pete Shults, Cross Point Fellowship, Hurley; David Sera Josef, Grace Christian Fellowship, Middlesex, N.J.

NORTH CAROLINA: Kara Barnette, Faith Baptist Church, Faith; Jeff Dowdy, First Baptist Church, Swannanoa.

NORTHWEST: Nancy Hall, First Baptist Church, Beaverton, Ore.; Garry Benfield, Finley First Baptist Church, Kennewick, Wash.

OHIO: Steve Renfrow, West Side Baptist Church, Hamilton; Steven Brown, Park Heights Baptist Church, Cleveland.

OKLAHOMA: Vern Charette, Trinity Baptist Church, Yukon; Ray Griffin, Quail Springs Baptist Church, Oklahoma City.

PENNSYLVANIA/SOUTH JERSEY: Larry Baker, The Bridge, Shillington, Pa.; Larry Walker, West Hills Baptist Church, Moon Township, Pa.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Mitch Crow, Duncan First Baptist Church, Duncan; Ryan Pack, Riverland Hills Baptist Church, Irmo.

TENNESSEE: Josh Lancaster, Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga; Jessica Mintz, First Baptist Church, Sevierville.

TEXAS: Amy Speight, First Baptist Church, Waskom; Thomas Melton, First Baptist Church, Merkel.

UTAH/IDAHO: Jerry Martin, Restored Community Church, Eagle, Idaho; Mike Palmer, Salmon Valley Baptist Church, Salmon, Idaho.

VIRGINIA: Joey Anthony, Mount Pleasant Church, Colonial Heights; Tony Ghareeb, Arabic New Life Church, Fairfax Station.

WEST VIRGINIA: Todd Hill, Grace Baptist Church, Parkersburg; Chengyu Li, West Virginia Chinese Baptist Church, Huntington.

WYOMING: John Constantine, Story Community Church, Story; Lynn Nikkel, Sunrise Baptist Church, Casper. **BR**

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

JOSEPH HENRY SCALF JR., 91 of Port St Lucie, Fla., died March 27.

A Tennessee native, Scalf was a World War II veteran serving in the U.S. Navy. He was an optician for more than 50 years and a preacher for more than 60 years, including in the Hertford, N.C., area.

He is survived by his wife, Peggy Scalf; his children, Lynn Benton and Vicki Barrera, both of Elizabeth City, N.C.; Terry Axley of Port St Lucie, Fla., and Debbie Brown of Hertford, N.C.; 13 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; and four great great grandchildren.

Memorials to: Dogs & Cats Forever, 4600 Selvitz Road, Ft. Pierce, FL 34981.

MYRA ESTES WILLARD, 67, died March 28.

A Tennessee native, Willard was married to Mike Willard and ministered with him in several churches, including one in Indiana, one in Tennessee and four in North Carolina: Calvary Baptist Church, Elizabeth City; Griffith Baptist Church, Winston-Salem; Main Street Baptist Church, Kernersville; and First Baptist Church Pilot Mountain.

She is survived by her husband, Mike Willard; two daughters, Melissa Edwards and Megan Sargalis; and one granddaughter.

Staff changes

JUSTIN CROUSE has been called as pastor to Forbush Baptist Church, Yadkinville, beginning April 15. He earned a bachelor's degree from Piedmont International University and previously served as youth pastor at Richmond Hill Baptist Church, Boonville, for over four years. He and his wife, Jessica, have two daughters.

South Elm Street Baptist Church, Greensboro, has called **ZACHARY MC-CRAW** as student minister. Zachary will graduate from Liberty University in May with a bachelor's degree and plans to pursue a master of divinity at Southeastern Seminary in the fall. He previously served as youth director at Badin Shores Chapel, New London.

RYAN BURRIS has been called as senior pastor at Baptist Temple, Reidsville. He previously served as pastor of Social Plains Baptist Church, Zebulon, for over two years. He earned a bachelor of arts from Wingate University and a master of divinity from Southeastern Seminary. Ryan and his wife, Andrea, have two children.

South Elm Street Baptist Church, Greensboro, has called **JAMIE ELMORE** as director of children and preschool ministries. She earned a bachelor of arts from Wingate University and a master of arts from Southeastern Seminary.

Anniversary

Pastor **ALVIN "AL" THOMAS** will celebrate 50 years of service May 6 at Mary's Chapel Baptist Church, Wake Forest. Thomas was licensed to preach in 1965 and ordained to the ministry by Macedonia Baptist Church, Charlotte. He received a bachelor's degree from Campbell College (now university) and a master of divinity from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Kelly, have one son and two grandchildren.



AL THOMAS

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Rocky Hock Baptist Church in Edenton, and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) are sponsoring "The Bible and Spiritual Awakening," a Northeast N.C. Bible Conference on June 2.

Speakers include Michael Cloer, senior pastor at Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount; James Horton, senior pastor at Rocky Hock Baptist Church in Edenton; Chuck Register, BSC executive leader of church planning and missions partnerships; Chris Schofield, BSC director of the office of prayer; and Tyler Cone, associate pastor of worship and



education at Rocky Hock Baptist. Conference fee is \$30 per person and includes registration, lunch, a book and prayer resources. Visit rhbce.org or call (252) 221-4133 to register.

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April 29

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

May 6

Stand with Conviction

Focal Passage: Esther 2:21-3:6

Mordecai, though a Jew in a foreign land, was loyal to his king. Overhearing a plot against the ruler, he promptly informed Esther who reported the planned crime.

Mordecai's loyalty to the king came from a deeper source. He would not compromise his faith in God.

When Haman was paraded through the streets, Mordecai would not bow. He would not worship a man. He would only worship God.

These two mini-narratives in the book of Esther remind us that it is always right to do the right thing.

Mordecai's conviction reminds me of another man a few centuries later, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Not content to stand idly by under Adolf Hitler's evil Third Reich, Bonhoeffer actively opposed the Nazis. Bonhoeffer held his Christian faith firmly and even served as a spy for the German resistance.

Eventually, Bonhoeffer was captured and sent to prison. While at Flossenbergs prison, Bonhoeffer was executed. He was only 39 years old.

The doctor at the prison commented about his execution, "Through the half-open door in one room of the huts, I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer, before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor, praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer."

"At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the steps of the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost [50] years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."

How was Bonhoeffer able to die with solemnity and peace?

I believe the clue is the same as Mordecai's strength.

Standing with conviction begins by kneeling in prayer.

We can pray with that same boldness and conviction because Christ died to give us the right to pray.



CHRIS HEFNER
Pastor,
Wilkesboro Baptist Church

Focal Passage: Esther 4:1-3; 10-16

Haman was angry at Mordecai's refusal to bow down. But not only did Haman hate Mordecai, he hated all the Jews as well. Wanting to rid himself of Mordecai's dishonor and the Jewish people, Haman plotted to have all the Jews killed.

Mordecai and Esther messaged back and forth about the proper course of action. From this passage comes the most famous phrase in the book of Esther, "Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (4:14).

To readers looking backward at the sovereign intervention of God over and over again for the protection of His people, Mordecai's statement is obvious. But Esther was the one who had to act. The future of the Jewish people depended, at least in part, upon her action. And yet, if the king did not receive her, she could be immediately killed.

Remember how quickly the king dealt

with her predecessor, Vashti. But Esther did not act immediately. Notice what she ordered Mordecai to do. She insisted that the Jewish people fast for three days. While the word prayer is not included in the narrative, fasting in Jewish faith nearly always included prayer.

It is safe to assume Mordecai, Esther and the Jewish people fasted and prayed over this dilemma and over Esther's opportunity.

They stood down. They paused their planning in order to pray. They waited in faith-filled fasting rather than in worry and fret.

Why? I think Esther and Mordecai knew it was entirely possible she had been ordained for this moment, but that did not mean they would act in brazen self-confidence. They stopped to pray.

I think sometimes we are not wrong in our assessments of situations, but we are often wrong in the bravado of our actions. Instead of praying, we plot. Instead of waiting, we work. Instead of trusting, we talk.

Esther and Mordecai give us an example we would be wise to follow – stand down, fast, pray and trust.

April 29

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

May 6

Enjoying God's Comfort

Focal passage: 2 Corinthians 1:3-14

Enjoying God's comfort – what an interesting combination of words. We know what it means to enjoy something. We can think of our favorite activity, or our favorite ice cream, and how much we "enjoy" those things. When we think of comfort, we might think about a faithful friend's shoulder to cry on.

So when we think the comfort is from God, well ... who wouldn't want the comfort of the Lord? But it is about that time we realize the painful truth about comfort – we only recognize true comfort when it comes alongside suffering and pain.

So, even if the best way for us to experience God's comfort is to be in the midst of suffering of some kind, I doubt we, as Christians, are simply looking for opportunities to suffer. Quite the contrary, we often are seeking to get out of a painful situation as soon as possible.

Author and pastor John Piper says that Christians often miss opportunities to allow God's glory to shine through them in their time of distress. Rather than allowing for God to manifest His strength in our weakness, we allow our weakness to

be on display as we squirm like a worm in hot ashes, trying to find the quickest way out of our immediate uncomfortable situation.

In so doing, we miss out on a great opportunity to demonstrate God's faithfulness as we "enjoy" or rest in God's comfort, even in the midst of very painful circumstances.

My buddy Bryan is a great example of one who enjoys God's comfort – even in the midst of painful circumstances – because he knows that during those times God is working to demonstrate His power and glory.

During a recent hospitalization where Bryan's heart stopped seven times in 24 hours, he was immediately seeking to testify of God's comfort and goodness as soon as the breathing tube could be taken out of his throat. Did his circumstances change? No. Was God's comfort on display in Bryan's situation for others to see? Absolutely!

May we enjoy God's comfort in our suffering – for God's glory!



RANDY MANN
Pastor,
Central Baptist Church,
Henderson

Focal passage: 2 Corinthians 4:5-18

Just a few weeks ago we celebrated the awesome power of God on display as He raised Jesus from the dead. God's desire is not, however, for that resurrection power to be highlighted and talked about once a year in a Sunday morning church service in late-March or early-April.

God's desire is for that resurrection power to be put on display all day, every day, everywhere.

God has ordained that our lives, as followers of Jesus, should be living displays of the resurrection power of the gospel.

Paul begins by telling the Corinthians that we are to proclaim Christ, not ourselves.

We aren't saying, "Look at me and be like me." Rather, we are saying, "I am throwing the spotlight on Jesus Christ – the resurrected and living Lord – to help you see that He is what you and I need."

While we are imperfect displays – Paul calls us "clay pots," which are fragile

vessels – we are nevertheless the objects through which God has chosen to put His gospel and resurrection power on display.

The fact that this power and this gospel is displayed in "clay pots" says the value is not in the container but rather what is on the inside. As God works in and through us, His glory is put on greater and greater display (v. 15).

In general, clay pots were used for simple, practical, temporal purposes. What is amazing about the power of the gospel is that God has chosen to do His eternal, spiritual work through us. So, what do people see when they look at you?

Do they see a simple clay pot, satisfied, in your own strength, to do practical, temporal tasks that won't last for eternity? Or, do they see a weak, cracked, imperfect clay pot filled with the resurrection power of the living Christ being used by God for His eternal purposes for the sake of His glory?

As a Christian, God has saved you through His Son and empowered you by His Spirit to be a beautiful display of His glory and power. Let's be faithful displays!

Displaying the Gospel

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

Sr. Pastor Position Open Enon Baptist Church – Salisbury, NC. Send résumés to: enonoffice@enonchurchsalisbury.org or 1875 Enon Church Road, Salisbury, NC 28147; ATTN: Search Committee.

Lawings Chapel Baptist Church, Maiden, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative body of believers who enjoy a traditional to blended style of worship. We are affiliated and support the SBC, BSCNC and the South Fork Assoc. We adhere to the 2000 Baptist Faith Message. Applicants should have pastoral experience with some degree of Bible college and/or seminary training. Send résumés: c/o Pastor Search Committee, Lawings Chapel Baptist Church, 4637 Lawing Chapel Church Rd., Maiden, NC 28650, or pastor@lawingschapel.com.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Shelby, North Carolina, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative, mission-minded, Southern Baptist church. Established in circa 1870's, our church has traditional Sunday School and worship services with an attendance of 75-80. The pastor will lead 2 services each week (Sunday morning and Wednesday evening). He should believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God. We are requiring 5-10 years of pastoral experience with a master's degree from an accredited seminary. Submit résumés, including details of your salvation experience and calling by God to be a pastor to: Pastor Search Committee at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, 3932 Pleasant Grove Church Road, Shelby NC 28150, OR submit by email to our church office at: pgbc3932@gmail.com. Résumés will be taken through May 31, 2018.

New Grace Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC, is prayerfully searching for a **Pastor** to lead our small and traditional congregation. We are mission minded with a heart for people and a desire to grow and serve our community together. We are seeking a Pastor who is gifted in preaching, teaching, pastoral care and discipleship. Please send résumés to: Pastor Search Committee, 12325 Old Creedmoor Rd., Raleigh, NC 27613, or electronically to ngbcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church, Florence, S.C., is prayerfully seeking the **pastor** God has called to lead the revitalization of our church. We are seeking a shepherd of Southern Baptist faith with a minimum of six (6) years of senior pastor experience. The position requires a BA, BS or equivalent degree from an accredited college or university and a master of divinity or equivalent degree from an accredited seminary. Please contact us for our church profile to determine if you would like to submit a résumé. Contact: First Baptist Church Florence, Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 13687, Florence, SC 29504.

Church Staff

Wilkesboro Baptist Church is seeking a **Worship Pastor** who will oversee both contemporary and traditional worship services. Our worship ministry includes various adult ensembles, an established choir and skilled musicians that make up our praise team. The ideal candidate will have at least five years ministry experience along with a B.A. in music or sacred music. Post-graduate education preferred. Wilkesboro Baptist Church seeks to fulfill our God-given mission by making disciples of our neighbors and the nations. More details about this ministry position can be found at <http://www.wilkesborobaptist.org/Music-Minister-Applicants>. Please send a resume to info@wilkesborobaptist.org.

Cub Creek Baptist Church, Wilkesboro, NC, is seeking a **part-time youth director**. This person must be a committed Christian and will direct and lead spiritual growth through educational, mission related and recreational programs for youth. Must have strong leadership skills, be a team player and possess a passion to teach and communicate God's Word. Please send résumé by May 12, 2018, to Search Committee Chairman, Cub Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 86, Wilkesboro, NC 28697; or to brian.sampson@cubcreekbaptistchurch.com.

Full-time Youth Minister desired for New Home SBC in Peachland, NC. If interested, send a letter of application and résumé to Bob Wells, P.O. Box 467, Peachland, NC 28133.

Green Street Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time Pastor for Disciple-Making**. Responsibilities include: assimilation, administration and small groups. Interested candidates may send résumés to kristi@greenstreet.org.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church of Creedmoor, NC, is seeking a **part-time Children's Pastor**. This person will serve as an integral member of the pastoral ministry team as they oversee all programming and ministry for children ages birth-6th grade. They will create environments, activities and programming for each age group that will facilitate learning and encourage spiritual growth. An undergraduate degree is preferred with prior experience in children's ministry desired. Please send résumés to office@pgbccreedmoor.org.

Miscellaneous

NCBAM needs teams to build wheel chair ramps for aging adults in need during *Rampin' Up!* April 28 and May 5. Call North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry at 877.506.2226.

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Open

Continued from page 1

open hands. “God can’t work if we don’t give Him what we have.”

‘Not where I once was’

Loritts said to look for fruit in people’s lives.

“Just because you hang out in the same environment as Christians doesn’t make you saved,” he said. “If I hang out in a garage, it doesn’t make me a car.”

Struggling with the flesh continues to be a battle throughout life, he stressed.

“Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet,” Loritts said. “I should also be able to conclude that I am not where I once was. I am a work in progress. When the Spirit of God moves into your soul, He begins to change you.”

He warned against confusing philanthropy with love.

“You can write a check but not love,” he said. “You can serve out of a sense of duty and obligation and not love.”

For a real picture of love, believers need to review the pastor and prostitute story of Hosea 3.

“If it doesn’t go through seasons of strangeness, it ain’t love,” he stressed, talking about the tribalism of churches today.

He mentioned Fox News Church, CNN Church, Republican Church and Democrat Church.

“It’s not the church of Jesus Christ,” he said. “If our churches look that way, our dinner table looks that way. To emancipate the one who wronged him cost [Hosea] everything he had (Hosea 3). If it doesn’t cost, it ain’t love. If you ain’t paying a price, it ain’t love.”

He mentioned a son that is making some awful choices but he and his wife are trying to help any way they can. The couple doesn’t “expect claps of affirmation because that’s what you expect parents to do.”

Loritts said many believers “want Nordstrom quality community at thrift store prices,” adding that “we don’t want to be inconvenienced.”

But that’s not how God works.

“[Hosea] doesn’t give [Gomer] the standard before he redeems her,” Loritts remarked. “If he did it would have been conditional on her works.”

“This is the gospel: God always rescues and redeems us before He gives us the standard.”

Strength through fire

Rothschild recently lost her father. She talked about things that shake you in life. “Blindness is the most difficult thing I deal with,” she said, but there are other things that can cause you to shake ... when your child makes tough choices that terrify you or when you lose a loved one.

“We feel shaken for all sorts of reasons,” she said. “When God allows something to shake you ... it’s because He wants to use it to shape you, shape your understanding of who He is, shape your future.”

Last fall, when she was involved in a busy speaking schedule and balancing visits to see her sick father, she was feeling overwhelmed. “I needed to be in too many places, and I was running on empty,” she said. “I was spent. If we are so fixated on our present situation we may miss His presence.”

Two praying ladies on either side of her middle plane seat helped, as did a cup of coffee sent by her husband with another passenger boarding the plane.

“When God’s glory comes down, our issues come



Kyle Idleman, left, shares about how his wife prays for him, especially when he’s dealing with anxiety over a message for Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Ky., where he is pastor. At right, Richard Brunson, right, executive director of North Carolina Baptists on Mission, presents the volunteer of the year award to Scott and Janet Daughtry. (BR photos by Steve Cooke)

up,” she said. “When we really see who God is, we really see who we are.”

Before her dad’s illness, she would proclaim self-reliance and emotional self-control as strengths of hers. She doesn’t let her blindness keep her from many things. She brags about putting together her furniture that came in pieces. “Our strengths can be our greatest liabilities,” she exclaimed. “Our strengths can keep us away from God.”

In scripture, there are references to purification through fire. God uses fire to purify His followers.

She mentioned the Manzanita tree that grows in western North America. The tree rarely flowers until there is a forest fire. “The heat of the fire breaks open that hard shell and then the beauty is revealed. You may feel shaken,” she added. “It’s fire that makes us flower. It’s that difficulty that helps us see God.”

God will carry you

Having to preach and speak often, Idleman admits to sometimes dealing with anxiety. If he “messes up” a message on Saturday night, “it gets in my head,” he said. He will wake up early Sunday morning, and he asks his wife to pray over him before he preaches that morning. “She will put her hands in my hands,” he said, and “she will pray God’s courage into my life. God’s strength [is] more important than what people might think. She’ll pray me out the door.”

Much of the anxiety people experience “comes because we were caught off guard,” he said. “God, as a Father, just wants to say to you, ‘Can I get that for you ... that weight that you’re carrying?’ And if you need Him to, He’ll carry you as well.”

God is ‘on the loose’

Richter spoke of the woman, who with open hands, poured out perfume on Jesus’ feet (John 12).



“The reaction of the people is, ‘What a waste!’” Richter stated.

The perfume used represented “the very best Mary had,” he said, calling it an heirloom worth \$45,000. It was a one-time use container. She broke it open to use it on her Jesus. The best could take so many forms, challenging college students, retired people or those with money. “How much perfume is in the sanctuary? When it’s your child, grandchild. When you bless that, that’s perfume,” Richter stressed.

Richter recounted Jesus’ triumphal entry, the “messianic fervor boiling over,” the trumped up charges, crown of thorns, the whipping, mocking, the nails, etc.

“Messiah’s kingdom was supposed to have no end,” he said. “The disciples are terrified. They didn’t know it was Easter.”

Richter’s favorite verse follows the women arriving at the tomb. The angel speaks to them, saying, “He is not here.”

But the angel doesn’t clarify where Jesus is.

“It seems we have a deity on the loose,” Richter said, stressing that whether it’s a closed country of a closed heart, God can find a way to get past a locked door.

“That’s why you keep preaching,” he said. “That’s why you keep disaster reliefin’. You don’t know which heart He’s going to touch next. When [Mary] got her moment, she took it with open hands.”

As one of the final parts of the conference Brunson recognized Scott and Janet Daughtry as volunteers of the year. Both have served in numerous capacities with NCBM. Currently Scott is serving as disaster relief logistics team leader and Janet is international ministry projects coordinator. They have four children and five grandchildren.

Next year’s Missions Conference will be back at Hickory Grove April 5-6. Brunson confirmed Richter was returning to speak. **BR**



Bryan Loritts, left, and Jennifer Rothschild, spoke at the Baptists on Missions Conference April 6-7 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Loritts serves as pastor of Abundant Life Christian Fellowship in Mountain View, Calif., while Rothschild is a speaker and author living in Missouri.