

BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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Native Americans BUILT ASSOCIATION'S STRENGTH

By **JIM BURTON** | Baptist Press

In 1881, Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, an association of Native American Baptist churches, was established. From its humble beginnings of three churches in Robeson County – two of which still exist – the association now includes 70 churches in 10 North Carolina counties and two neighboring states.

Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Pee Dee, Tuscarora and Waccamaw Siouan make up the multi-tribal association's membership, which was distinctively Baptist from its beginning.

"As far as we can tell, it's the first organization of an association set up by Indians for Indians," said Mike Cummings, a Lumbee who, since 1988, has led what may be Southern Baptists' first affinity-based association.

Associational strength and community gave the southeastern North Carolina tribes perseverance to battle harsh realities in a segregated South.

At its first meeting, the association appointed a Domestic Board to evangelize Native Americans and established Indian education as a core concern of its churches.

The association aggressively raised money to develop elementary schools, often planting churches in the same communities where schools were built. The association also engaged in a larger effort to raise funds for a high school for Indians.

"This was the only place we could come; [we] couldn't go to black or white

meetings," Cummings said. "We were on the fringe of North Carolina Baptist life.

"Burnt Swamp was us. That's ours. Association pride has been strong because of that factor for one thing."

Early on, Indians could vote and share the rights of other citizens, but in 1835 the North Carolina Constitutional Convention removed those rights for "free persons of color," including Native Americans.

According to *The History of Burnt Swamp Baptist Association* by Tony Brewington, the association's director of missions from 1969-86, this had a devastating effect on Indian communities and contributed to an extended resentment between the races.

"In every community where there are Indians, they have suffered through discrimination just like blacks have," Cummings said. "I was a 10th-grader [before] Indians could go to white schools. I felt the brunt of that rigid prejudice against Indians."

In 1921, Burnt Swamp Baptist Association sought admittance into the Baptist State Convention of

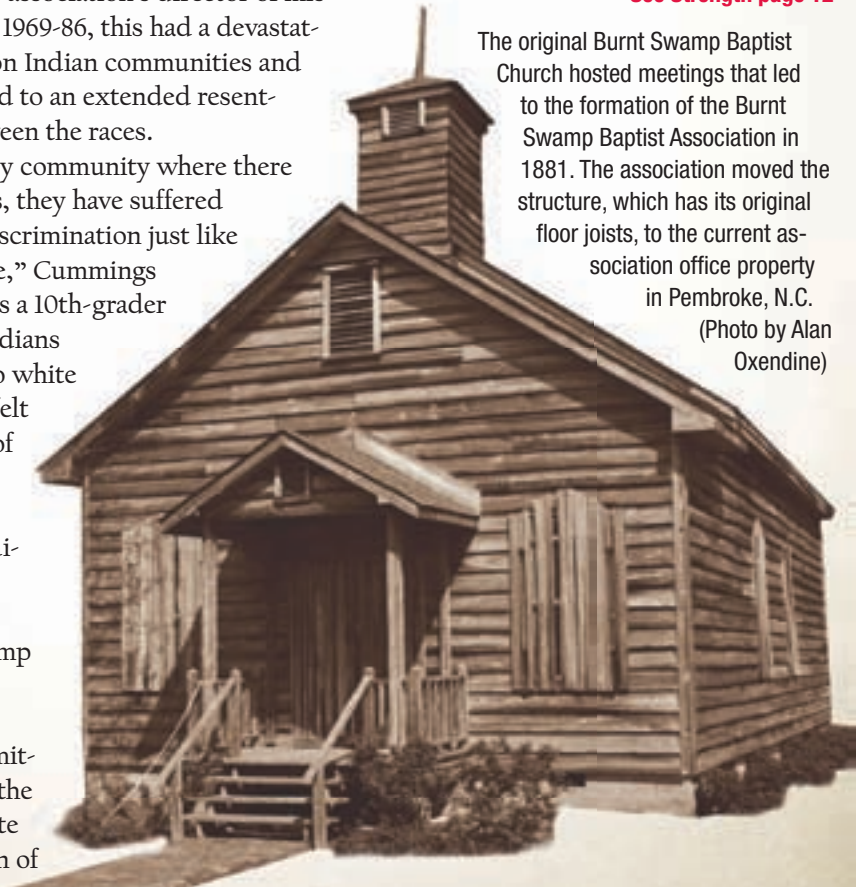
North Carolina (BSC). From the outset, associational leaders had supported and promoted BSC programs, and the two groups often received and sent representatives to each other's meetings, but they had no formal relationship.

After languishing during the 1920s, the association's petition was greatly assisted when Mary Livermore, an Anglo who worked with Native Americans, wrote a long plea that included the following:

"They feel so isolated, and are losing their young people especially because

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The original Burnt Swamp Baptist Church hosted meetings that led to the formation of the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association in 1881. The association moved the structure, which has its original floor joists, to the current association office property in Pembroke, N.C. (Photo by Alan Oxendine)



Military chaplain brings soldiers to God, God to soldiers

By **RUDY GRAY** | Baptist Courier

Lt. Col. Derrick Riggs, serving in Afghanistan as command chaplain for North American Treaty Organization Special Operations and the Special Forces Joint Task Force, was beginning a series of Bible studies based on Psalm 91, which he calls "David's Fearless Warrior Psalm."

There was a visitor for the first Wednesday study, Jan. 28. "Normally the new guy just sits there and listens," Riggs said, "but not Jason."

He jumped right in, not just giving his perspective on the psalm that speaks of the security of one who trusts in the Lord, "but explaining sections and helping to make the complex easily understandable," Riggs said.

"I quickly realized Jason had a personal relationship with God, and it was refreshing to have another believer in the group."

The following evening, Riggs received word of an attack at the Special Missions Wing. Three Americans were dead, shot by an Afghan soldier or someone dressed in an Afghan uniform. The chaplain reported for duty and talked to four men who had witnessed the attack.

"Three of them were hunkered down in a bunker when the shooting started," Riggs recounted. "The other guy was the one who killed the Afghan that turned on our guys."

The Taliban later claimed responsibility for the killings. Riggs, 44, now on his fifth combat tour in his 18 years of



DERRICK RIGGS

See Chaplains page 20

IMB, churches to send ‘limitless missionary teams’

International Mission Board (IMB) exists to partner with churches to empower limitless missionary teams who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places for the glory of God.

In order to see “limitless” missionaries working among the unreached, IMB is exploring multiple pathways through which more men and women from Southern Baptist churches might serve overseas. When you hear pathways, think possibilities – all the possible ways that ordinary Christians might serve overseas: as church planters, doctors, teachers, accountants, lawyers, fitness instructors, rickshaw drivers, retirees, students and the list goes on and on. God has providentially arranged a multiplicity of avenues through which His people can take the gospel around the world, and as the IMB, we want to help Southern Baptists go through as many of those pathways as possible.

Up until this point, IMB has had a certain number of pathways for career, apprentice, Journeyman, International Service Corps and Masters program missionaries. In addition to separate policies for each of these pathways, IMB has had additional policy regulations covering issues like level of education, history of divorce, teenage children in the home, the practice of tongues and/or a private prayer language and circumstances surrounding baptism. Each of these policies was put in place at various times for good reasons.

However, as we look toward the future and the limitless number of missionaries we want to mobilize from Southern Baptist churches, we know that this will likely involve many new pathways through which men and women might serve on missionary teams through the IMB. Each of these pathways may carry unique qualifications, involve various types of training and include different levels of support from IMB. For example,

a lead church planter in the remote deserts of the Middle East may require different qualifications, training and support than an Information Technology expert in London, a student in Shanghai, a business professional in Dubai or a retiree in Bangkok. Nevertheless, all of them may be IMB missionaries, and thus all of them need to meet a base level of quali-



DAVID PLATT
Guest Column

fications. In light of this, we have seen a foundational need for a simple, clear statement of qualifications that not only unifies all IMB missionaries together, but also unifies IMB with the churches and entities of the Southern Baptist Convention.

For this reason, IMB trustees voted this week to approve a policy that creates a single, unitary statement

of qualifications that will characterize every missionary serving through any pathway created by IMB. Further, this single policy now replaces all of the other policies mentioned above that address specific qualifications for different pathways. In order to be as clear as possible, I have inserted the new policy below, and then I want to explain it further below. The policy states:

An IMB missionary is a disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit, sent out from the church, and affirmed by the IMB to cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers as part of a missionary team focused on making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places. IMB exists to empower limitless teams of missionaries made up of different men, women, and families with distinct roles and responsibilities. IMB provides multiple pathways in which missionaries may serve on one of these teams, each of which carries unique qualifications. However, any IMB missionary serving through any pathway created by IMB leadership is required to meet the following qualifications:

Spiritual qualifications

- Vibrant personal discipleship: As

they abide in God’s Word and walk in step with God’s Spirit, IMB missionaries bear fruit of an intimate, growing relationship with Christ.

- Evident personal disciple-making: IMB missionaries are meaningfully involved in a local church in which they participate in leading people to faith in Christ, seeing new believers baptized in the church, and showing believers how to obey Christ, all with a view toward reaching the nations with the gospel.

- Call: The call to serve as an IMB missionary has been discerned within a local church and affirmed by that local church alongside IMB leadership.

- Commitment: IMB missionaries are devoted to the vision, mission, values, and beliefs of the IMB.

Southern Baptist identity

- Currently a baptized member of a Southern Baptist church
- Commitment to and identification with Southern Baptists
- Conviction of truth as expressed in the current Baptist Faith and Message statement of the Southern Baptist Convention

Health

Good physical, emotional, and mental health.

Family

IMB missionaries model a godly family life and/or personal relationships.

Citizenship

Service is open to U.S. citizens and permanent residents of the United States.

A few comments and clarifications regarding what this policy does and does not mean are extremely important.

First, this policy means that when it comes to specific IMB pathways for service like career, apprentice, Journeyman, International Service Corps, or Masters, IMB no longer has official policies detailing additional qualifications for each of these pathways. Nevertheless, this policy does not mean that just anyone can now

serve through any of these pathways created by IMB. We will still have clear expectations and qualifications, which accompany every pathway created by IMB (whether the ones mentioned above or new pathways we create in the days ahead). This policy simply allows IMB leadership the opportunity to evaluate and revise the expectations and qualifications for those pathways in order to continually strengthen them in the days ahead.

Second, this policy does not mean that current principles governing the selection of missionaries may not apply to particular pathways in the future. For example, we have had a policy prohibiting missionaries with teenage children from being selected for certain pathways. This policy was established for good reason in light of challenges for children (and their families) moving overseas at certain ages. As a result, there may be some pathways through which IMB continues to not appoint missionaries with teenage children. At the same time, this new policy does leave open the possibility for IMB pathways to exist in which missionaries with teenage children might serve through IMB. Certainly we will approach a family with older teenage children who are considering moving their lives permanently to a remote area in sub-Saharan Africa differently than a family with younger teenage children who are considering moving their lives for a one-year assignment in London.

Third, this policy does not signal a change in practice regarding how the IMB works in relation to Southern Baptist doctrine and practice. The purpose of this policy is actually to ensure that every potential IMB missionary is a meaningful member of a Southern Baptist church and believes and works according to the current Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M). This policy asserts that this statement of faith, which unites over 40,000 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, is sufficient for us.

Moreover, this policy states that the [BF&M] is significant for us in the sense

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Remember the sacrifices made for the freedoms we enjoy

It is so easy to go throughout our day without pausing to reflect on all the freedoms that we enjoy in this great nation. But on Memorial Day, we are encouraged to take the time to remember that these freedoms came with great sacrifice.

Since the founding of this country, men and women have paid the ultimate price so that we might have the privilege of living in a state of freedom and be active participants in our government and society.

In these United States, we are blessed to enjoy many opportunities and the freedom to make our own choices. We are fortunate to be citizens of a nation where our Constitution guarantees some liberties that aren't available in many other countries.

Because of the sacrifices soldiers of these United States have paid since our beginning as a free nation, we have enjoyed the freedom to worship our God according to the dictates of our own conscience without fear of oppression. This is a right that Christ-followers are convinced was given to individuals by the Almighty Creator.

As Christians and also as American citizens, we must be vigilant and always stand ready to do our part in making certain that this generation and the generations to come do not lose this freedom in America. Although we love our nation and the form of democratic government that has enabled these United States to become a strong, powerful and wealthy nation by the grace of God, we must never forget that our ultimate allegiance is to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

While we may be tempted to take our freedoms and liberties for granted, I hope that on this Memorial Day, our hearts will be filled with gratitude to our God, to our soldiers, our veterans and even their families who sacrificed so much.

Even those soldiers who survived their tour of military duty without injury lived with the knowledge that their service to our country might cost them their life. Multiple thousands of brave men and women who donned the American military uniform and placed themselves in harm's way for the sake of others live today with significant physical limitations and deep-seated emotional scars they incurred while fighting for the cause of freedom.

Take the time to express gratitude for those Americans who served and those who gave their lives in service to the United States of America.

Don't forget that there are some individuals from other countries living in America today who fought bravely alongside of U.S. soldiers for the same cause of freedom. These individuals also paid a high price as a result of the horrors of war. Express appreciation for them too.

The Scriptures tell us that Christ humbled Himself on our behalf and came to earth to die a sacrificial death for us. Our spiritual freedom cost Christ everything. May our hearts be filled with gratitude for the freedoms we have been granted, not just on Memorial Day, but all year long.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." – John 15:13 (NKJV) **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

How a dying church can glorify God

Two truths: A dying church robs God of His glory. Yet it doesn't have to.

Each year about a thousand churches disappear from the Southern Baptist database, the majority of them closing. God gets no glory when that happens.

Three-fourths of those churches are in metro areas. That means in the areas where we as Southern Baptists have identified we need churches the most, we must start even more churches every year just to catch up with the church death rate.

The answer isn't just better strategy, nor better preaching or even telling more people about Jesus.

You turn around a struggling church through a passion for the glory of God in all things. This alone must be the beginning and primary motivation for intervening in a dead church, even over worthy goals such as reaching the community, growing the church and meeting needs.

While a new church plant could reach the community and meet needs, replanting a dying church glorifies God by reclaiming a church near death as it does those same things. The purpose of all creation is the glory of God. This is exactly why He created the church. Romans 11:36 proclaims, *"Everything is from Him and by Him and for Him. Glory belongs to Him forever!"*

But I believe declining churches can once again project the glory of God to their community.

Just ask the people who once made up Birchwood Baptist Church in Independence, Mo. Struggling through years of decline, the church reached out to LifeConnection Church, a six-year-old church plant in the same Kansas City suburb, to see if they might be interested in merging the two churches. Birchwood would provide the building. LifeConnection would provide the young, energetic leadership.

LifeConnection Church had been looking for a per-

manent location to put down roots in the community, but they were located in another part of the area. Still both churches prayed through the potential merger and late last year voted to merge.

I had the privilege to walk with them through this journey a bit and had a front row seat to what God is doing in this merger. It wasn't always an easy journey.

For new life to come, leadership has to be handed off. A church that faced years of decline has to be humble enough to follow new leaders. Ministries have to come to an end. Traditions have to cease.

If you've ever walked with an aging parent through the last stages of their life, you've got a glimpse of what this is like. It's a painful, confusing, transformational time for your relationship with your parents. It's

similar for a struggling church that merges with a new church plant.

But it's a process that has to happen. Churches in decline are perfectly designed to get the results they're getting: Without a change in leadership, decline will continue. It's a forgone conclusion.

That's not what's happened at the church formerly known as Birchwood Baptist Church. Just three months after that merger, the church averages around 300 in attendance. What makes that number particularly impressive is that it's more than the sum of their parts – the attendance of both churches prior to the merger was less than 300.

What happened? God brought life to a struggling church. People want to be a part of places where transformation isn't just a word in the sermon but a personal and institutional reality.

And God gets the glory when that happens.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Mark Clifton is the national legacy church strategist for the North American Mission Board. Learn more about legacy church planting at namb.net/Legacy.) **BR**



MARK CLIFTON
Guest Column

Only God could use a chicken to make a church

This is a story about how a chicken became a church and a bag of change helped build multiple churches. I never cease to be amazed at the astounding ways God shows off His glory. I hope this story encourages your faith and inspires your efforts to participate in God's global disciple-making mission.

A couple of years ago, Mud Creek Baptist Church sent a mission team to Kisumu, Kenya. We participated with North Carolina Baptist Men in their Houses of Hope project. Teams partner with local Kenyan pastors to build houses in rural villages. The village selects a widow or widower in need of a home. The team supplies the funds and labor to build the home. And the new home becomes a base for local Bible studies with the hope of planting a church in the village. As a missions pastor I love the partnership because local pastors return to the village regularly for follow-up and Bible studies with the hope of beginning a new church. It is a project where a mission team can successfully meet a need, engage in one-on-one evangelism, and begin a ministry built upon by indigenous pastors.

During that first trip, our team was sent to build a home for a widow named Irene. Irene had a number of children and one chicken whose eggs she used to feed her children. Some days, all she had to give them to

eat was the eggs her chicken produced. In Kenya it's customary for the hostess to feed guests. In this situation, the guests were our team.

She insisted on killing and cooking her chicken for our mission team. The team, understanding her situation, tried to talk her out of it. But she would not be dissuaded. That afternoon she fed our mission team the only source of guaranteed food she had.

The mission team could not get over her sacrifice and was equally burdened for Irene's situation. They felt led of the Lord to return a gift to Irene. The next morning, our team bought seven chickens for Irene and gave them to her. Communicating very clearly that the gift was from the Lord, they used the opportunity to preach the gospel to the village.

A year later, we sent another mission team to Kenya. Upon arriving we discovered that the house church in



CHRIS HEFNER
Guest Column

N.C. Leaders

assess upcoming Supreme Court decision



Jeremy Evans
PASTOR

*Wendell Baptist Church, Wendell;
associate professor of philosophy,
Southeastern Seminary*

The most pressing concern deriving from the upcoming Supreme Court decision pertaining to same-sex marriage is religious liberty. More specifically, is the government going to force institutions that have a moral objection to the practice of homosexuality to recognize a same-sex marriage as a legitimate marriage? Since the *Biblical Recorder* has already addressed that issue, then I would like to focus my few comments on what Christians should do as we await the decision.

First, pray for the people of our country as well as our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3). It's important for us to remember that prayer causes things to happen, and that God can turn the hearts of those in positions of responsibility (Proverbs 21:1).

Second, remember that the issue of same-sex marriage is derivative of another issue – homosexuality; as such it is primarily a biblical/theological issue and only secondarily a political issue.

The traditional Christian view is that homosexual acts are sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:24-28). Accordingly, Christians should be advocating for change at the source of the problem and less on the periphery. Such is not to say that Christians shouldn't be involved in government, or concerned about legislation. Instead, it is to keep our eye on the ball.

Just as *Roe v. Wade* provided legal grounds for abortion, the upcoming legislation could provide legal grounds for same-sex marriage (notice, I did not say moral grounds). However, when people's hearts change, so do their values. Abortion could be both legal and non-existent because people value life as created in the image of God. The same can be said for the current discussion: same-sex marriage can be legal and there be no same-sex marriages. So, in the event that the Supreme Court finds in favor of same-sex marriage, there is still the work of sharing the gospel and allowing it to reform lives.



Bruce Ashford
PROVOST

*dean of faculty and professor
of theology and culture,
Southeastern Seminary; lay elder,
The Summit Church*

On April 28, the U.S. Supreme Court entertained arguments about same-sex marriage, and whether or not the Equal Protection Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution applies to same-sex marriage. The Equal Protection Clause declares, "No State shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

This case is significant for several reasons. First, the Court has tended to locate its protection of same-sex relationships in due process rather than in equal protection (e.g., *Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003). This case could signal a major shift.

Second, this case is significant because, as Christians, we believe that marriage by definition is between a man and woman. We believe the Court would not be discriminating by denying marriage to same-sex couples because marriage is an entirely different category, a category for procreative unions.

Third, this case is significant because society is built upon the family unit, and the allowance of same-sex marriage will foster a further weakening of an already-deteriorating American family unit. Sociologists such as Harvard professor Carle Zimmerman have demonstrated that societal health is directly linked to familial health. We believe that familial health is fostered by marriages of one man and woman, in covenant marriage under God.

Christians should be concerned about this decision because the stakes are high. While we are waiting for the Court's decision, Christians should make their voices heard on this issue, but should do so with grace and joy rather than with anger or fear. We should love our homosexual neighbors and colleagues, affirm their dignity as humans and their value as citizens, and at the same time make the case that marriage is reserved for the union of one man and one woman.

The nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on April 28 related to the question: Does the 14th Amendment – which ensures “equal protection of the laws” for all citizens – require states to license and recognize same-sex marriages?



Kevin Clubb
PASTOR

*Cape Carteret Baptist Church,
Cape Carteret*

The short answer to whether Christians should be concerned about the decision of the Supreme Court regarding same-sex marriage is yes. There are at least two reasons that make this the obvious answer.

First, this is an issue that deals with God's design for His creation and another example of exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man (Romans 1:23). Second, this decision has the potential for changing the way we practice our faith in Jesus, making our land more like first century Israel and less like 20th century America.

What should we do in the meantime? First, we should pray for all those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-8). Second, we should model the beauty of marriage between a man and a woman as God designed (Ephesians 5:22-33). Third, we should prepare for the difficulty that is coming to the Church in America (1 Peter 2:11-17). And finally, we should rest in the sovereignty of our great God Who is still redeeming a people for Himself.



Kelly Bullard
SENIOR PASTOR
*Temple Baptist Church,
Fayetteville*

Supreme Court justices will render what will prove to be one of the most important judicial decisions in the history of our nation.

While I firmly trust in the sovereignty of God, I also believe as Christians we have a biblical mandate to "pursue righteousness." In regards to the forthcoming decision from SCOTUS, I believe pursuing righteousness looks like this: we pray like we have never prayed before for SCOTUS and that the Holy Spirit of God would move upon their hearts to render a decision that is honoring to Him and to the historical tradition of our nation.

I also believe we must "fight the good fight of faith." We must be concerned about this decision and its implications for the church. Regardless of the outcome we must stand firmly upon God's Word. We must echo the words of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521, "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other."

**Do you believe Christians
should be concerned about the
court's decision?
What should Christians do in
the meantime?**

**Scott Davis**

PASTOR

*Pitts Baptist Church,
Concord*

Should the court act to redefine marriage, it will have unavoidable consequences for all believers. Al Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, recently wrote a piece on this, quoting a source from 2005, "The legalization of same-sex marriage would represent the triumph of an egalitarian-based ethic over a faith-based one."

If same-sex marriage becomes the law of the land, religious liberty will be crushed concerning this issue. Christians will not have a right to operate contrary to a Constitutional provision except under the threat of penalty. We will find ourselves where the believers in Acts were when they said, "We must obey God rather than men."

More tragic still for believers are the theological implications. The scripture says the marriage relationship of husband and wife is a visible image of the relationship of Christ and His church. I recently read a profound statement by Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, where he said, "Likewise, the destruction of a Christ-imaging, gospel-announcing family order is as antichrist as desecrating the temple of God."

I had never heard it put so forcefully, but theologically speaking, he is absolutely right. The deliberate undermining of the biblical image of Christ and His church ought to be the most offensive aspect of this whole debate to Christians.

**Richard Mills**

SENIOR PASTOR

*Faith Baptist Church,
Youngsville*

I think we have two particular concerns as we await the Supreme Court decision.

The first concern was voiced when Chief Justice [John] Roberts addressed Mary Bonauto, an attorney arguing on the side of same-sex marriage. The chief justice noted that extensive research has convinced him that, throughout history, marriage has always been a heterosexual union and told Bonauto, "if you succeed, that definition will not be operable." Roberts then stated, "You are not seeking to join the institution. You are seeking to change the institution." At stake is a fundamental changing of what marriage has always been.

The second concern is the religious liberty of those refusing to celebrate homosexual marriage. It was obvious from questions raised by justices that if the religious liberty of those who refuse to provide housing for homosexual couples is endangered, then religious organizations that will not hire homosexuals as staff may soon find their religious liberties in danger.

When asked about issues of religious liberty, responses suggested such matters will be left up to the states. Yet, we have seen already what happens when the federal government disagrees with matters that have supposedly been left to the states; the federal government exerts authority over and against the states.

As believers, of course, we are to give ourselves to prayer. And we are also to educate our members so they can intelligently and carefully address issues while refusing to compromise the truths to which we are bound.

**Richard Land**

PRESIDENT

*Southern Evangelical
Seminary, Charlotte*

The upcoming SCOTUS decision will be a landmark and historic moment for America.

Everything that defines who and what America is rests upon the foundation stone and bedrock of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. This may be the most important religious liberty and freedom of conscience decision since the adoption of the First Amendment.

Defining same-sex marriage as a basic civil right will provoke a religious liberty crisis. We have already seen repeated attempts to hijack the consciences of Americans and use government as a weapon to coerce people to participate in same-sex marriage ceremonies. If the Supreme Court deems same-sex marriage a basic right, then government at every level will increasingly strong-arm business owners to violate their consciences – and let's not fool ourselves, churches and religious schools would be next in line to be required by the government to affirm the homosexual lifestyle and to perform same-sex ceremonies.

Recent headlines remind us of bakers, florists and business owners whose religious liberties have been trampled already in direct attacks on their First Amendment rights.

We must all pray fervently that the justices will make the right decision for our country and for our basic American freedoms.*

**Bruce Martin**

SENIOR PASTOR

*Village Baptist Church,
Fayetteville*

Christians should be very concerned about the upcoming decision by the Supreme Court on same-sex marriage. The decision hinges on whether same-sex marriage will be a federally sanctioned constitutional right, or a right that remains under the purview of the individual states. If it becomes a federally sanctioned right, then it becomes a right that is federally enforced.

When hearing the case, some justices pointed out that if same-sex marriage is federally sanctioned, then some Christian institutions which oppose same-sex marriage and gay rights, could lose tax exempt status, and face federal penalties. Religious colleges were mentioned. There was also the hint that this could lead to churches losing tax-exempt status.

It was pointed out by one justice that if the marriage decision stays in the hands of the individual states, then states could more easily determine these issues by the vote of the people, and not by the decision of a court.

This decision could let "the camel into the tent." This decision might be the vehicle that allows the federal government to intrude into our church life, and begin to penalize Americans for their beliefs.

**Mike Whitson**

PASTOR

*First Baptist Church Indian Trail,
Indian Trail*

The upcoming Supreme Court decision should be of extreme importance to all Christians everywhere. The impact of a decision in favor of same-sex marriage will have an immediate effect not only on churches, but also on all faith-based organizations.

Consider the plight of ministries, like ours, that have a Christian school. Failing to hire a teacher or other employee because of their sexual orientation would be against the law, regardless of our scriptural convictions.

Recently an attendee of First Baptist Church Indian Trail was instructed that as a magistrate, if she did not perform same-sex marriage ceremonies, then she would lose her job – and did. That decision was on this side of the Court's ruling. Imagine how it will be if there is a ruling that all states would be required to recognize the union of same-sex couples.

Churches, bakeries, florists and other businesses would be required to accommodate their services and facilities for the use of events surrounding those unions. Church staff would be required to conduct the ceremonies regardless of convictions.

Faith-based organizations as we know it today would be a thing of the past. They would be replaced by an equal opportunity, governmental system.

Yes, we should be concerned and prayerful because persecution will increase on those who stand on biblical convictions.

**I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
– 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV)**

The high court is expected to reach a decision in June or July.

* Text taken from press release

Olympic swimmer offers hope

Amy Van Dyken is a former world-record competitive swimmer, six-time Olympic champion and national radio sports talk show co-host. She won four of her gold medals at the 1996 Summer Olympics, making her the first American woman to accomplish such a feat. She was also the most successful athlete at the 1996 Summer Olympics.

Recently Amy was in a severe all-terrain vehicle accident that severed her spinal cord, leaving her paralyzed from the waist down. It was an honor to sit down with this great champion. I came away blessed because of her incredible faith, positive outlook and relentless drive to help others through her difficult challenge.



ROMAN GABRIEL III
Sports Q & A

Q: What is it like to be an Olympic champion?

A: It was an amazing experience to represent our country. To be able to say that I'm an Olympic champion for my country is so cool.

Q: You recently suffered a potentially life-ending accident. What happened?

A: Yes, I was in an ATV accident 10 months ago. My husband found me, and I wasn't breathing. It took about four minutes to get me to breathe, and then I went to the hospital. The doctor said, "One of your vertebrae is right up against your aorta." They said to say goodbye to my husband, and I did.

I know how to overcome obstacles, and I know how my mind works. I know that my mind can tell my body to do just about anything. You can say I walked through hell with a smile on my face, so maybe your Monday morning meeting isn't really as bad as you think it is. It gives you perspective.

Q: As difficult as this has been, what have you taken from this challenge?

A: It's been amazing. I'm an ambassador for the Reed Foundation. They are looking for a cure for spinal cord injuries. I'm also working with Cure Paralysis Now that is trying to do the same thing.

I was sitting in a hospital in Colorado with a bunch of paraplegics and quadriplegics. They tell you that you're never going to walk again, and you're going to sit in the chair for the rest your life and not move or feel anything.

Just to take a shower you need a special chair that costs \$2,500 and insurance may not pay for it. There's a statistic out there that says when you're newly injured, that first year could cost up to \$1 million in medical bills alone, that you will have to personally take care of.

Q: You have stepped in to help find a solution. Tell us about it.

A: We formed the Amy Van Dyken Foundation. An arm of our work is called "Amy's Army." What we do is provide necessary medical equipment for people with spinal cord injuries who can't afford it. I feel this is my calling. All of this happened to me for a reason.

Q: As Christians, we wonder how people without God go through tragedy like this. Obviously, your accident has given you a real heart for suffering people.

A: You have to smile about it; every day is a blessing. You have to look at life like you do not know what is around the corner. Sometimes we don't tell our loved ones that we love them. We think, "Oh, I will tell them later." Tell them now, because we never know what could happen. This has really given me the freedom to tell my loved ones how I feel.

Q: You have a famous husband, Tom Rouen, who punts for the Denver Broncos. How has he responded to your injury?

A: Tom has been such a big help through this challenge. He is there every single day as a shoulder to cry on. He's there to help me when I fall out of my chair. He's absolutely amazing, and you talk about inspiration – he helps me wake up every day.

Q: Tell me what faith, family and sports means to you?

A: Faith, family is sports, right? I mean it is the Olympics. You have to have faith, because God gave you the gift to do what you're doing. You need family to help you get where you're going; you need faith, also.

When I tell people I saw the light, they kind of start shaking. "Oh, she didn't say that, right?" But on your



Amy Van Dyken, seen here upon her release from the hospital after her accident, said it has been a tough battle but her faith and family have helped. (Contributed photos)



show, Sold Out, you can be open, and talk about these things. There are so many negative stories out there, and we don't hear [enough] about the good stories. Let's focus on some of the positives that go on.

Q: Tell me a personal story from the Olympics that no one has heard.

A: Amanda Beard was a multiple Olympic gold-medal swimmer. She was 14 years old at the time that we were getting ready to do a relay. Before getting ready to go, she takes me aside and says, "Amy I've never done a relay." I'm like, "You're kidding me, right?" She said, "No I don't know what to do." So I said, OK, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to stand when it's your turn, and I'll scream "GO!" Even if it doesn't look like you're supposed to go, GO!

So the swimmers are coming in, I scream "Go!" We win the gold medal and the media goes nuts. They say, "Amy, you were so supportive of Amanda and cheering her on." I said, "Yes, we love each other." What was so funny is they did not know that I was literally telling her to go.

Q: Amy Van Dyken, you're a six-time Olympic gold medalist. What do you want to do moving forward?

A: Right now I want to walk again. I would like to help people to live the best life they can live, letting them know that their day isn't as bad as they thought it was, and help them to live their life to the fullest.

Visit amyvandyken.org.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Roman Gabriel is an evangelist and motivational speaker. Hear his Sold Out Sports Talk Radio program on American Family Radio in 200 cities nationally or streaming live at afr.net. Visit soldouttv.com; Facebook: Roman Gabriel III; connect on Twitter: @romangabriel3rd. Contact at (910) 431-6483 or email: soldoutrg3@gmail.com.) **BR**

"... every day is a blessing. You have to look at life like you do not know what is around the corner. Sometimes we don't tell our loved ones that we love them ... Tell them now, because we never know what could happen."

Prayer conference calls for more ‘Elijahs’

By RICK HOUSTON | Special to the Recorder

Marty Jacumin was back home again, leading off the May 1-3 North Carolina Foothills Prayer Conference at First Baptist Church of Icard in Connelly Springs.

It was at Icard where Jacumin, currently the senior pastor at Bay Leaf Baptist Church in Raleigh, was licensed into the ministry in 1997. This was his turf, the place where his ministry began nearly two decades ago.

Jacumin took to the pulpit to begin the conference with a sermon based on James 5:13-18, emphasizing the ways Christians are called upon to pray.

“Sometimes, we have this mentality that, ‘You know what? God told me in His word that I’m just supposed to pull up my bootstraps and I’m supposed to get after it,’” Jacumin said. “I don’t know what translation you’re reading, but that’s not in my Bible. God says to call on Him. Someone said meekness is not weakness. We’ve got to humble ourselves and say, ‘God, I can’t do this without You.’”

There are prayers of intercession, Jacumin said during his sermon. There are many kinds of prayers including prayers for holiness, prayers for peace, prayers for healing, prayers for salvation, prayers of confession and prayers of praise, he added.

The bottom line is the need to draw nearer to God, he said, emphasizing the conference theme, “Draw Near 2” based on James 4:8, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.”

“We come into this place with different needs,” Jacumin said.

“What are ways we can pray for ourselves and pray for one another? Maybe you feel alone, and that’s why you’re here tonight, because you just wanted someone to draw near with you.

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone among you having

troubles and turmoil in your life? If that’s the case, let him pray. For the abused, let them pray. For the downhearted, let them pray. Those who are struggling now, those who’ve got bad news, let them pray.”

Jacumin was followed by Richard Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International. He challenged those in attendance about their prayer life, asking if people in need come to them for prayer and if Satan feared their prayers.

His text was 1 Kings 17-18, in which Elijah’s prayers resulted in a widow’s son being brought back to life. That prepared the way for the prophet to have the faith necessary to bring down fire during a showdown with the prophets of Baal.

“We need Elijahs in America today,” Blackaby said. “We don’t need namby-pamby, wimpy praying, ‘God, if it be Your will.’ We need people like Elijah who can stand up against the government, against evil society, against wickedness and pray with confidence [and] when they pray, the fire is going to fall. In this room alone,

if we became fire-falling, rain-stopping pray-ers, America would feel the impact.”

That kind of powerful prayer was something Blackaby recommitted himself to following the births of his three grandsons.

“I don’t want to see temptation, pornography on the Internet and worldliness coming after these innocent little babies, and think my prayers are not even getting past the ceiling,” Blackaby said. “They have to know that when grandpa prays, Heaven hears.”

Blackaby returned to 1 Kings the following night, asking what happens after momentous events like the one Elijah ex-

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone among you having troubles and turmoil in your life? If that’s the case, let him pray

For the abused, let them pray.

For the downhearted, let them pray.

Those who are struggling now, those who’ve got bad news, let them pray.”

– Marty Jacumin



perienced on Mount Carmel. He encouraged attendees to earnestly pray leading up to an event such as a church revival, but in the aftermath as well.

The time to know whether an event has been productive is not the day after, Blackaby said, but six months later.

“How much do we pray after the meetings, after the revival?” Blackaby asked. “I’ve known people who prayed three years for a revival meeting, but they didn’t pray one day after the revival. Isn’t that kind of unusual to you? What’s happened to all the seeds that have been planted? What about the fact that Satan is marshalling his forces to put that fire out?”

Steve Ellis, senior pastor of First Baptist in Leland, spoke on the story of God calling Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. He focused specifically on verse 10 in which Samuel told the Lord, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Ellis told those gathered to allow the Lord to speak, even when the news isn’t good. “Would you still want to hear from God if the news was bad?” he asked. “Would you still want to hear from God if He had something negative to say about somebody you actually cared a great deal about? See, I think the reason a lot of people don’t hear from God directly is because we’re content not to.”

That kind of complete abandon to God’s will, that willingness to hear what God has to say was Ellis’ main point and the focus of the conference.

“If God wanted to change your life forever, would you be willing to let Him do that?” he asked. Moments later, Ellis concluded with one of the most power-

ful moments of the conference. “If you’ve ever had that feeling that God is doing something important, if God’s saying something to you and you just don’t know what it is, can I tell you how to pray? Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening”

The Office of Prayer for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina sponsored the event in Icard along with similar gatherings across the state. Chris Schofield, director of the Office of Prayer, is encouraged by the response to the series of prayer events. “You can sense in a deepening work of God’s Spirit in hearts with regard to revival and spiritual awakening,” he said.

Pastors and church leaders are responding to the calls for prayer according to Schofield. With the major shifts in culture, he believes it is more urgent than ever that Christians stand together and pray together. “Shallow Christianity will blow away. People are not going to stand up or stand firm if they are not going deep with the Lord.

“We’ve got to get serious about the Lord these days,” he added.

The next prayer conference is set for Sept. 11-12 at First Baptist Church in Richlands, N.C. Speakers include Steve Griffith, senior pastor of Osborne Baptist Church in Eden, and Richard Owen Roberts, the founder of International Awakening Ministries of Wheaton, Ill. Visit ncbaptist.org/prayer to learn more about prayer movements and events.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Rick Houston is a freelance writer living in Yadkinville. He has covered NASCAR extensively and written books on NASCAR and the Space Shuttle program.) ■■



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Immigration award presented to ERLC’s Duke

Baptist Press

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) presented the inaugural Robert Gittelsohn Immigration Advocacy Award to Barrett Duke April 29 during its national convention in Houston.

“It was a tremendous honor to receive an award named after my good

friend Robert Gittelsohn,” Duke said.

Duke has advocated for a just immigration reform plan for years in his role as vice president for public policy and research with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Gittelsohn, 54, died in August after years of traveling from California to Washington, D.C., to promote a legislative solution to the country’s illegal immigration problem. ■■

Platt

Continued from page 2

that we will hold missionaries to it, not only in what they believe but in how they live and work as IMB missionaries. In sum, this policy states that every meaningful member of a Southern Baptist church who has been baptized (by immersion) as a follower of Christ, whose belief and practice both align with the [BF&M], and who meet all of the spiritual qualifications mentioned above may potentially serve as an IMB missionary.

Fourth, simply because we replace other policies addressing more specific doctrinal distinctives beyond the [BF&M] does not mean that such distinctives are now unimportant to IMB. For example, replacing the policy that addresses tongues and private prayer language does not mean that the issue of tongues is unimportant to IMB work around the world.

We will continue to train and work as missionaries in ways that faithfully represent Southern Baptist churches and conviction, and we will continue to have as part of our “Manual for Field Personnel” allowance for termination of employment for any missionary who places “persistent emphasis on any specific gift of the Spirit as normative for all or to the

extent such emphasis becomes disruptive” to Southern Baptist missions work. In a similar way, replacing the policy that addresses believer’s baptism does not in any way mean that IMB will in any sense dilute the way we select, train and work as missionaries in complete accord with the statement on baptism in the Baptist Faith and Message.

Fifth, this policy does not mean we are lowering the standards for missionaries. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. Some may see the replacement of policies dealing with divorce or tongues, for example, as efforts to “lower the bar” regarding expectations of missionaries. One might imagine a man or woman with multiple divorces who is also engaged in harmful charismatic practices and wonder if this policy revision now opens the possibility for that person to serve as an IMB missionary.

But this is most definitely not what this policy means. As you see in the new policy, the baseline qualification for missionaries includes men and women who “bear fruit of an intimate, growing relationship with Christ” and are “meaningfully involved in a [Southern Baptist] church in which they participate

in leading people to faith in Christ, seeing new believers baptized in the church and showing believers how to obey Christ, all with a view toward reaching nations with the gospel.”

Further, prospective missionaries must evidence a missionary call that is both “discerned within their local church and affirmed by that local church alongside IMB leadership.”

Finally, they must be “devoted to the vision, mission, values, and beliefs of the IMB.”

We hope that if all of these characteristics are evident in a member of a Southern Baptist church, and that church affirms with us God’s call for that member to work as a missionary, then pathways for service as an IMB missionary may be a possibility (whether as a church planter or support worker who receives full financial support from the IMB, as a business professional who receives no financial support from the IMB or anywhere in between).

In conclusion, what this policy means is that IMB wants to open wide the door for Southern Baptist churches to send thousands upon thousands of biblically qualified members in the days ahead to

serve as IMB missionary team members who are making disciples and multiplying churches among the unreached. These members will serve in many different positions with many different responsibilities, ranging from lead church planters to vital support roles, from business professionals to college students to active retirees. From a variety of different backgrounds with a variety of different skills and a variety of different qualifications, they will join together to spread the gospel to people who have never heard it. The ultimate aim of this policy revision is to enable limitless God-exalting, Christ-following, Spirit-led, biblically-faithful, people-loving, high-quality Southern Baptist missionaries to serve with IMB through a multiplicity of pathways in the days ahead.

For an International Mission Board frequently asked questions link on the new policy, visit imb.org.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – David Platt, president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, amplifies a new policy to streamline guidelines for appointing new missionary personnel. The policy was adopted by IMB trustees during their May 12-13 meeting in Louisville, Ky.) ■■

Church

Continued from page 3

Irene’s home was growing, and that God had continued to bless Irene. In between the trips, she wanted to give back to the Lord for blessing her.

So she deeded some of her property to the Kenya Baptist Convention to build a church building.

Recently, Pastor Shem Okello, the general secretary of the Kenya Baptist Convention and coordinator of Houses of Hope Project in Kisumu, came to North Carolina to visit. He shared at our church with our Awana children.

We discovered from Shem that the church, on Irene’s property, had not yet been built. So, our pastor, Greg Mathis asked if we could take up a special offering to construct the church. It would take \$2,200 for the materials.

Aidan, one of our Awana kids could not make it the night Pastor Shem was to share, so he sent a bag full of change to make sure he could participate in the offering. Aidan’s gift became the foundation for an almost \$6,000 offering for the church on Irene’s property and other projects in Kenya.

To make the story even better, Mathis was honoring a lifelong friend and fellow pastor, Jerry White, on the night Pastor Shem was with us.

White had surrendered to preach 50 years ago under the ministry of Mathis’

father, and was instrumental in recommending Mathis to Mud Creek Baptist Church. So, to honor White’s influence in his life, we have an opportunity to dedicate the construction of a Baptist church in a village in Kenya to White.

Now Kenya will have a new church because a pastor 50 years ago was instrumental in a teenager’s surrender to ministry, because Jerry White recommended Greg Mathis to Mud Creek Baptist Church, because Mud Creek sent a mission team to Kenya, because a godly widow gave her chicken, because a mission team gave back seven-fold, because that widow gave her property, because God will use a series of everyday events and situations to make disciples across the nations. God will use a chicken to plant a church. God will use a bag of change to build multiple churches.

What mission story is God writing through your church today?

Be sensitive to His leading and look for God working in and through your ministries. As for us at Mud Creek, we can’t wait to see what happens at White Memorial Baptist Church in Kenya.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Chris Hefner is pastor of missions and evangelism at Mud Creek Baptist Church in Hendersonville. This column originally appeared at the LifeWay pastor’s blog at LifeWay.com/pastors.) ■■

— Don’t bury the talent —

During the wrap-up meeting of my weekly Bible study, our Bible study leader asked which parable of Jesus we had studied was most impactful.

For me, this question was easy. Jesus’ teaching on the parable of the talents has impacted my life greatly this year. In the passage in Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells the story of a master who went on vacation. To three servants, he left talents in the denominations of five, two and one talents. The talents were given according to the servants’ abilities.

The servants given both five and two talents doubled their talents, while the one servant given one talent buried his. When the master returned, he commended the servants who multiplied their talents. However, to the one who buried his talent, the master responded he was a “wicked, lazy slave,” and if he wasn’t going to invest the talent, he could have at least put it in the bank. Then, his lone talent was taken away from him.

While it seems easy to look at this passage and think, “I need to use the talents God has given,” for the first

time this year it struck me the master doesn’t compare the servants’ outcomes with each other. He holds them accountable only for what he has given them and how they individually used it.

In this parable, the master is God. God gives us, His servants, unique resources, and He is the One who holds

us accountable for how we use them. Yet, He doesn’t compare my outcomes with yours, and He doesn’t compare your outcomes with mine. He holds each of us accountable for what He has given us as individuals.

So the next time you think, “Wow. I wish I could teach the Bible like that lady.” Or “I wish had that much money.” Or “I wish I could do what ____ does,” remember the Lord has given you your own talent according to your ability, and He wants you to use it to multiply it. Don’t bury it.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Ashley Allen is consultant for Embrace Women’s Ministry for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. For more information you can reach her at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5559. Read her blog at worthyofthecalling.com.)



ASHLEY ALLEN

Merger gives new church, old church new life

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

Is it possible for a five-year-old church and a 155-year-old church to effectively merge and grow? Michael Ester, associational missionary for the Liberty Baptist Association, believed the time was right for First Baptist Church of Thomasville (FBC) to take such a bold step.

Last year in a conversation with Barry Surratt, the pastor of a church plant in Lexington, Ester raised the idea of a merger with FBC. “Mike [Ester] and I became friends a few years ago, not long after I started Centerpoint Church,” Surratt said. “If we ever organized as a denominational church, I always said I wanted to join be a Southern Baptist (SBC) church.”

A friend had encouraged Surratt to talk to Ester about organizing Centerpoint Church. After two years of discussions, the church did not have a constitution and was not prepared to constitute.

But last summer Ester told Surratt that the pastor at FBC resigned. Ester said, “The attendance is down and they’re looking for a new pastor. You’re looking for a location. This might be something we want to talk about.”

“I won’t say I was positive about it at the beginning,” Surratt said. “I was willing to listen, but I just didn’t know what would go along with the merging of two churches.

I wasn’t sure if I was up to that, ... but I was open to whatever the Lord wanted.”

Surratt’s hesitation was based on the confidence he had in Centerview’s growth, combined with his lack of familiarity with FBC. “I knew we had a really great group of people, and we had a good spirit in the church,” he said. “The only thing we didn’t have was a building. We had good growth, a willingness to work, good outreach and ministry. I didn’t want to do anything to hurt that.”

By merging with FBC, the people at Centerpoint would not only be moving to another facility, they would move to another town 10 miles away. As a seasoned pastor of more than 20 years, Surratt imagined all of the things that could go wrong. He was concerned about losing good people and upsetting the dynamic of the church.

“I didn’t know anybody at First Baptist,” he added. “I had no history or relationships with anybody there. I knew that my style of preaching and my direction would be in agreement with the church. I just didn’t know the way they have done things in the past.”

This was not the first time Centerpoint had considered a merger. “We had been approached three times about merging with other churches, and we considered it,” said Surratt. “But it never got to the point where we felt like it was something the Lord

wanted us to do. So merging with FBC was the fourth time we considered merging. But this one was a whole different mindset, even though it was farther away than the others.”

Blending the two churches has eliminated Centerpoint’s monthly rental and utilities, saving more than \$36,000 a year just in facility-related expenses, according to Surratt. They deposited their bank balance into FBC’s account and merged two groups of worshipers into a larger congregation. Seventy-one of Centerpoint’s members joined FBC, more than doubling the 50 regular Sunday attenders.

“It’s been a real good fit and gone very well,” Surratt said. “We only lost a few people from Centerpoint. They came to me and said they supported the move and voted for it, but they didn’t believe it was right for them. There were no hard feelings at all.”

Bynum Orr is a third strategic leader in the merger of the two congregations. He has been involved with FBC for more than a decade. In 2002 Orr began serving as the church’s interim pastor.

In its best days FBC saw 500 people attending, but an unfortunate disagreement created a split in the church in the ’90s, he said. Several pastors came and left.

Orr stayed with the church for five years until a younger pastor was called. Again, that did not work out well for the aging congregation. The pastor left, and Jay Lambeth was called to serve as the interim pastor last year.

“Lambeth and the church asked me to come back and serve as a pastoral care associate because I knew all of the older people,” Orr said.

His familiarity with the people at FBC and the church’s downward spiral, prompted Orr to join the discussions between Ester and Surratt. They served as a transition committee that met weekly for three months to work out the details.

“I know that merging is not something that happens frequently simply because both churches are usually afraid they will lose control,” Orr said.

“But we emphasized that everybody only gets one vote anyhow. Our church was not afraid of them coming in ... it’s worked very well and God’s blessed us. I’m excited about it.”

The merged congregation officially launched on March 15 and is seeing from 130 to 200 people each Sunday, according to Orr. There were 198 people in the Easter Sunday service.

Surratt is the senior pastor. Orr is preaching once each month and providing pastoral care to the church family. A music director and youth director serve the church. Six deacons, three from each church, serve with the staff.

Surratt is bi-vocational, working as a bailiff and a part-time, deputy sheriff for Forsyth County.



When two churches joined together in Thomasville it brought new life to the congregations. (Contributed photo)

Orr has been a strategic connecting point for the people. “The people ask me, ‘What do you think about this?’ God has allowed me to be a connector in this merger and tell people that I support it,” he said.

“It’s pretty hard for older people to change, but they have a good attitude,” Orr added. “Pastor Barry Surratt is an excellent preacher and their people are wonderful people. I don’t think I’ve ever seen any group of people that were willing to change, to do what needs to be done and to accept what needed to be accepted in order to be successful.”

After 15 years as the associational missionary for the Liberty association and three pastorates, Ester has helped a lot of struggling churches. He said many churches don’t see the problems and don’t realize that the director of missions (DOM) in their local association is a valuable resource.

“There are a lot of good DOMs across the state that want to be involved in helping churches,” he said. “Churches that are struggling don’t see the problems,” but a DOM can help church leaders talk honestly about the future of the church.

“When you haven’t baptized but one [new Christian] in a year, you’ve got some problems,” Ester said. “People can grow complacent, they don’t see the need to change and they are not healthy. Folks who have been there 20 or 30 years are doing the best they can, but they don’t see the barriers that are there.”

When a church is in decline, Ester said, “everyone wants to blame someone else.” Churches need to rediscover their vision and ask, “Why are we here, and how are we going to be proactive in ministry?”

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Our Vision "By God's grace, we will become the strongest force in the history of this Convention for reaching people with the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Church Strengthening

WHAT MAKES A CHURCH STRONG & HEALTHY?

by Chad Austin

The apostle Paul is widely considered the greatest missionary who ever lived.

Paul is known for the many churches that he planted and established during his missionary journeys. Sometimes overlooked, however, is Paul's work in strengthening the churches he helped start.

Acts 15:41 says Paul "*went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*"

Following the example of Paul, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) disciple-making strategy is focused on not only planting new churches, but strengthening existing churches, as well.

That's why there's a group of consultants at the convention who serve on the Church Strengthening Team. They work with churches to help them become stronger and healthier as they seek to carry out the Great Commission. Antonio Santos leads the Church Strengthening Team, which is a part of the convention's Evangelism and Discipleship Group.

"Our main thrust and our main goal is disciple-making," Santos said. "We seek to strengthen churches by helping them develop a disciple-making culture. We are all about making disciples."

The Church Strengthening Team works with churches in a number of areas, including leadership, stewardship, pastoral ministry, worship, renewal and special ministries. A key component of the Church Strengthening Team's work is in the area of church revitalization.

Although the numbers vary, recent

statistics cited by the North American Mission Board report that 70-75 percent of Southern Baptist churches have either plateaued or are in decline. Add to that another estimated 10-15 percent that are considered at risk, and that means up to 90 percent of churches across the country are struggling.

Helping churches change course and reverse these trends is not an easy fix.

"Often times we believe these issues can be addressed through programs and processes," said Lynn Sasser, the BSC's

**Acts 15:41 says
Paul "*went
through Syria
and Cilicia,
strengthening
the churches.*"**

executive leader for evangelism and discipleship. "This is not a mechanical fix."

That's why Santos and his team work hard to help churches first realize that their challenges are spiritual rather than physical or material.

"A major aspect of our work is related to spiritual warfare," Santos said. "This is a spiritual battle. We first want to help churches develop an understanding of where they are, spiritually speaking."

To assist churches in this self-discovery, the Church Strengthening Team has developed a helpful resource for pastors and church leaders titled "Revitalize." This brochure is designed to help leaders assess their church through a series of questions that are undergirded by prayer, fasting and repentance.

The "Revitalize" resource is designed so that pastors and church leaders may work through the assessment themselves or in consultation with a member of the Church Strengthening Team. The resource is available at ncbaptist.org/revitalize (pictured below). Download your free copy today.

Members of the Church Strengthening Team are available to assist you and your church to evaluate your current situation and make recommendations. You may contact the team by emailing Santos at asantos@ncbaptist.org or by calling (800) 395-5102, ext 5642.



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Our love for Jesus is often demonstrated in our love for others.

In fact, Jesus Himself explained this truth to His followers in John 13:34-35 when He said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The Lord’s words contained in these verses establish the theme for this year’s North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) – “So They Know.” Each year, the NCMO supports various ministries that help spread the gospel through tangible expressions of God’s love toward others.

“Some people must see the gospel before they will hear the gospel,” says Richard Brunson, executive director of N.C. Baptist Men.

In addition to Baptists on Mission, the NCMO supports church planting, missions camps, associational projects and mobilization ministry projects. Numerous people have come to know Christ through these ministries because of your faithful prayers and financial support of NCMO.

The goal of this year’s offering is \$2.1 million. When you give to NCMO you are directly involved with treating the sick, feeding the hungry, restoring lives and delivering hope.

Visit ncmissionsoffering.org for more. Also find us at [facebook.com/northcarolinamissionsoffering](https://www.facebook.com/northcarolinamissionsoffering) and follow us on Twitter @NCMissions_Give.

If your church received NCMO printed materials last year, you will receive the same materials this year. Watch for those items in the mail in June or July.

Hispanic Young Adult Conference

May 29-31

ncbaptist.org/hyac15

Happiness Retreat

Western: June 5-7; Caraway: July 24-Aug. 2

ncbaptist.org/happiness

Church Weekday Education Seminar

Aug. 7-8

ncbaptist.org/cwe

Hispanic Youth Retreat

Sept. 4-7

ncbaptist.org/hyr15

Suddenly: Eastern Prayer Gathering

Sept. 11-12

ncbaptist.org/easternprayer

The Story: Regional Trainings

Burlington: Sept. 14; Hendersonville: Oct. 26

ncbaptist.org/thestory

Embrace Leadership Training

Sept. 18-19

ncbaptist.org/elt

ncbaptist.org



2015 Events



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family.

Also, visit the newsroom section of ncbaptist.org and subscribe to our news feed to have the latest articles and updates delivered right to your inbox.

Be sure to check out the latest videos on our Vimeo page (vimeo.com/ncbaptist).

Learn more at

ncbaptist.org

50 Days of Intercession: Next steps

God has moved during the recent 50 Days of Intercession for Hispanic Church Planting prayer emphasis. There have been testimonies of new commitments to Christ, changed lives and a renewed passion for the gospel.

Since prayer is the foundation for any church planting effort, we are excited to see how God will continue to work in the lives of those who have been impacted during this prayer emphasis.

Here are a few ideas to consider as God leads you in taking

next steps beyond the 50-day prayer focus.

- **Keep praying.**
- **Seek someone to disciple.**
- **Reach beyond your own culture.**

Find out more about these next steps at ncbaptist.org/50dias.

Learn more at

ncbaptist.org/50dias

Obedience by Faith women’s retreat

Scripture instructs us to walk by faith and live in obedience. Living such a life can be challenging because it’s often contrary to what we see taking place around us in culture.

This fall, explore what the Bible says about walking by faith and be encouraged by modern-day examples of women living in obedience to God at the annual N.C. Baptist women’s retreat Oct. 23-24 at the Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro.

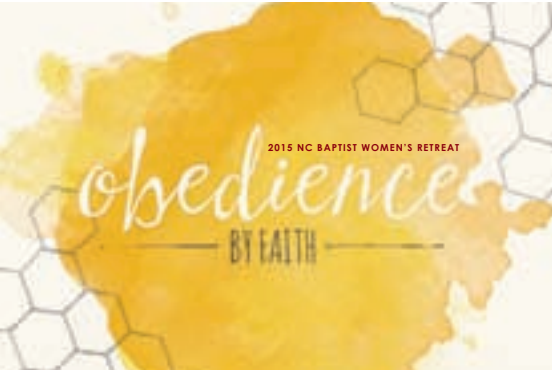
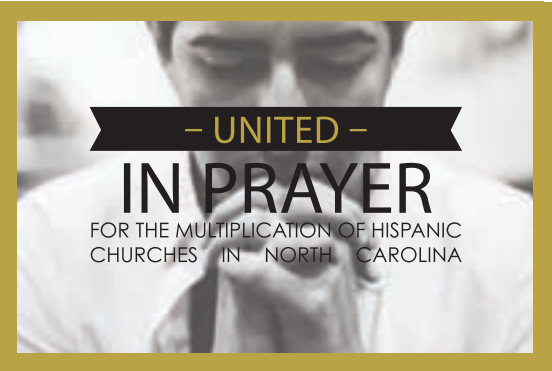
The retreat theme for 2015 is “Obedience by Faith,” and the

event includes speakers and breakout sessions. Speakers include Naghmeh Abedini, wife of imprisoned pastor Saeed Abedini, and Teresa Brown, who served alongside her husband Joe during his 26-year tenure as senior pastor at Hickory Grove in Charlotte.

Registration is available on a first-come, first-served basis through Oct. 9.

Learn more at

ncbaptist.org/womensretreat15



Strength Continued from page 1

they had asked the convention before and been refused, and the Indians resent such rebuffs.”

When the state convention approved the membership petition in 1929, Burnt Swamp received a “bittersweet” response, as Brewington described it: the association was accepted as an associate member of the convention, meaning its churches participate in BSC programs but their messengers could not vote.

Though disappointed, associational leaders responded cordially to the decision.

Soon, relationships with the broader Southern Baptist family began to strengthen, first through joint missions endeavors with Woman’s Missionary Union and the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board), then with the seminaries through Seminary Extension.

A new day

In 1999, 70 years after being initially accepted as a BSC associate member, Cummings was elected as the convention’s president, the first Native American to hold the office, serving two and a half terms.

“That did us a lot of good to see ourselves recognized by this convention,” Cummings said of his tenure. “We were basically fringe participants for years because it was like we were going to somebody else’s meeting.”

Not only did Cummings preside over the annual meetings in his role as president, he later served as BSC interim executive-director before Milton Hollifield began his tenure in 2006.

Cummings held those positions “not because of his ethnicity, but rather because of his ability as a leader,” Hollifield said.

“Although Mike Cummings has great pride in his Native American ethnicity and rich Indian heritage, North Carolina Baptist people looked beyond that positive attribute and recognized his love for God, his wisdom, his commitment to Kingdom building, his love for this state convention, and they believed that Brother Mike would lead with a spirit of integrity and fairness toward all ethnic and language groups in North Carolina,” Hollifield said.

The churches of Burnt Swamp Baptist Association take pride in the national leadership of former SBC President Johnny Hunt, who is a Lumbee Indian.

Timmy Chavis, pastor of Bear Swamp Baptist Church in Pembroke, is chairman of the SBC Executive Committee’s Multi-Ethnic Advisory Council.

Cummings and Chavis know that

Native Americans have some advantages when propagating the gospel among their own people.

As Chavis puts it, “Indigenous people need to be reached with indigenous people.”

Burnt Swamp Baptist Association is “guided by its vision to be churches in fellowship and on mission together with God,” according to its website.

To that end, the association began engaging in short-term mission projects in 1986 when they helped a Native American church in New Mexico with construction. The next year, a team went to South Dakota.

Those ventures “launched us into understanding the impact we can make,” Cummings said. Soon, that impact reached overseas.

Mannie Mintac, a Filipino, married a Lumbee girl and, in 1993, he showed up in Cummings’ office and shared the call of God in his life.

“God wants me to go back and plant churches in my home,” Mintac told Cummings, regarding a remote region of the Philippines with no evangelical church.

Since 1997 when Burnt Swamp volunteers first went to the Philippines, they have built 10 churches and a school. Routinely, the association sends 10 missions teams annually to provide a variety of services, including medical missions.

Meanwhile, they continue to minister to North America’s native people, with Cummings noting, “We see our identity with these people.”

After 400 years of Anglos evangelizing Native Americans, only 10 percent have become Christians, said Emerson Falls, who serves as a Native American specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and is chairman of the SBC Fellowship of Native American Christians.

Burnt Swamp is a story of the success of home missions as Indians were once the objects of home missions, Cummings said. A subsidy from the then-Home Mission Board to support the director of missions ended when Cummings started in 1988.

Now, there’s a new message to the North American Mission Board, which replaced Home Mission Board and two other SBC entities in 1997.

“This association is not part of your mission field,” Cummings said. “It’s a part of your missions force.”

With an estimated 75 percent of Native Americans living in urban areas, Burnt Swamp is looking to turn its “missions force” to church planting there.

Though forward-looking, the association continues a tradition that started in its earliest days. Its churches gather four

times a year on the fifth Saturday of a month for preaching and singing at their Union Meeting.

“Those guys preach like it’s nobody’s business,” Cummings said of the Indian pastors. “Indians like to sing and get happy when they worship. You would think we were Pentecostals.”

Passionate preaching is a reflection of their theology.

“This is a community that takes the demands of the Gospel literally,” Cummings said. “Someone has to agonize in response to gospel preaching. Almost every church here believes you have to have a come-to-Jesus meeting to be saved.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Jim Burton is a photojournalist living in Cumming, Ga. This article first appeared in SBC Life, journal of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee.) BR



Mike Cummings has served full-time with the multi-tribal Burnt Swamp Baptist Association since 1988. His wife Quae (pronounced kway) has served the association in administration support since 1979. (Photo by Alan Oxendine)

Go to NYC, impact the world!

After four vision trips to New York City, my wife, Sheryl, and I have discovered that we can impact the whole world by serving in this world-class city.

The bustling mega city is the fourth largest urban center in the world. Some 22 million people call the region their home. All the nations of the world live in the neighborhoods of greater New York City.

Approximately 60 percent of all residents were born somewhere else or are the children of recent immigrants. On any given Sunday, nearly 40 languages can be heard in the churches.

The Metropolitan New York Baptist Association is a collection of some 250 churches within a 75 mile radius of Times Square. These churches are located in parts of three states (N.Y., N.J. and Conn.) and 26 counties. They reflect the diversity of the region.

People ask us, “Why do you keep going back to New York City on these vision trips? Don’t you have that vision thing down yet?”

The answer is simple. We want to recruit others to go to where ministry is urgently needed. With less than four percent of metro New York’s people attending an evangelical church, many new churches are needed. Our N.C. Baptist churches can help extend the work of these new church plants.

Church plants in this city need help in three key areas: intercessors, individuals and income. They need those churches who will pray earnestly, participate

eagerly and pay expectantly, trusting God to multiply their efforts – for the fame of His Name.

Every time we go, Sheryl and I learn more about the amazing work of God in dark places there. For example, in a recent trip, we heard of an Eastern Euro-

pean woman coming to Christ through the creative coffee shop outreach by new church. This woman, transformed by Christ from another world religion, “Skyped” her family back in Europe and led some of them to Christ.

Another couple, recently separated and not going to any church, began attending a church plant and were soon reconciled and radically

changed by the power of the gospel.

They renewed their marriage vows and began to reach out to their many unchurched friends, inviting them to come along with them to this new church in their neighborhood.

We want to encourage other N.C. Baptist churches to send volunteer teams to this urban metropolis and impact the world. Our God is a global God and He wants us to be global Christians. Work in New York City can and will help reach many of the nations of the earth.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Bill Greenwood recently retired after pastoring Baptist churches in North Carolina for 30 years. He can be reached at sgreenwood2@juno.com. For more information on the partnership between the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association, please contact Steve Hardy at shardy@ncbaptist.org.) BR



BILL GREENWOOD
Guest Column

Event to equip Christians after court ruling

Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) will hold a conference to equip pastors and churches for the legal and cultural landscape in place after the U.S. Supreme Court rules on same-sex marriage.

The ERLC will conduct the event, Equip Austin, July 29 at the Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas. The conference – sponsored in partnership with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention – will be held about a month after the Supreme Court is expected to rule on gay marriage.

The justices heard oral arguments April 28 to decide whether same-sex marriage will be legal throughout the country or states will retain the authority to define marriage as only between a man and a woman. The high court is expected to issue a closely decided opinion by the end of its term in late June or early July.

The Supreme Court's decision likely will have major implications for religious liberty and Christian ministry in America. Austin's event speakers will try to equip followers of Christ and their churches to engage a "post-marriage society" with gospel faithfulness, according to the ERLC.

Russell Moore, the ERLC's president, called it "a watershed moment in our nation's history. [R]egardless of whether our land's highest court recognizes the unchangeable or not, we will hold steadfast," he said in a news release. "Even more, regardless of the decision, the church will have to learn to engage a culture with the gospel in which we cannot assume people share our same understanding of marriage. As we seek to equip churches for this task I'm thrilled

to partner with this exceptional band of leaders at this event to think through what gospel faithfulness looks like in our ever-changing culture."

In addition to Moore, the speakers for "The Gospel and Same-sex Marriage: Equipping the Church for a Post-marriage Culture," will include:

- Rosaria Butterfield, author of *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, which describes her journey from a lesbian lifestyle to Christ.

- Matt Carter, lead pastor of Austin Stone Community Church.

- Matt Chandler, lead pastor for teaching of the Village Church in the Dallas metropolitan area.

- Jackie Hill Perry, a poet who came to Christ out of a lesbian lifestyle.

- Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

- Mike Goeke, associate pastor of First Baptist Church in San Francisco who was delivered from homosexuality.

Registration is available for attendance at the event, which will be from 6 to 9:30 p.m., but it also will be broadcast live online.

This year's Southern Baptist Convention meeting also will focus on preparation for ministry after the Supreme Court's decision. Panelists during the June 17 afternoon session will include Moore; Butterfield; Carter; R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Ryan Blackwell, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in San Francisco. Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd, who invited the panelists, will lead the discussion. "We must respond to the issue and toward those who may have differing opinions in a way that would represent our Lord Jesus Christ in the



highest manner," Floyd wrote April 26 in a first-person piece for Baptist Press.

"Unquestionably, things are changing, and the way we address this issue must be done with the truth of God in one hand and the love of God in the other hand."

Same-sex marriage is legal in 37 states and the District of Columbia. The state total has nearly tripled from the 13 states where gay marriage was legal in mid-2013.

The expansion of same-sex marriage has resulted in a growing clash between

the rights of gay couples and the religious freedom of individuals and organizations. Florists, bakers, photographers and other business owners who have conscientious objections to providing their services for same-sex ceremonies have been penalized or are facing penalties for their refusal. The potential threat to institutions arose in the April 28 arguments at the Supreme Court when U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli said the tax-exempt status of universities and colleges that oppose gay marriage would be an issue.

Registration and information on Equip Austin is available online at erlc.com/equip-austin. Live streaming of the event will be at live.erlc.com. ■

Gospel, politics to draw focus of August ERLC conference

Baptist Press

Engaging politics from a gospel perspective will be the focus of the second national conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention's ethics entity.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) will present "The Gospel and Politics" as a one-day event Aug. 5 in Nashville. The conference, scheduled for the downtown Music City Center, is designed to equip pastors, other church leaders and church members in preparation for the 2016 presidential election.

Addressing politics from a scriptural basis is needed, said ERLC President Russell Moore.

"Many churches and church leaders are tired of the screaming and warring that too often characterizes conversations about politics," Moore said in an April 2 news release from the ERLC. "Some are asking if we cannot just bow out of contentious political debates and focus on teaching the Romans Road of Salvation. But Christian engagement of politics is about much more than winning arguments: it's also about loving our neighbors and winning them to the kingdom of Christ."

Moore added, "Christians often instinctively know that politics matter but don't know how to respond in a way that is faithful to the gospel. What we want to talk about is how Christians can understand the way the truths of the Bible intersect with social and political needs. We want to empower pastors and church members to lead out in their communities with a Jesus-centered and neighbor-loving vision of public policy."

The announced conference speakers



so far are Moore and Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

The ERLC conference will be held the day after the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) SEND North America Conference, which is set for Aug. 3-4 at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena. The International Mission Board is partnering with NAMB this year on the SEND Conference.

The ERLC is continuing its pattern since Moore became president in 2013 of hosting both a leadership summit and a national conference each year. The entity sponsored a leadership summit on racial reconciliation March 26-27. While the spring summit targets church leaders, the national conference held later in the year addresses a wider Christian audience. Last year, the ERLC sponsored a leadership summit on human sexuality in April and a national conference titled "The Gospel, Homosexuality and the Future of Marriage" in October.

Next January, the ERLC will join Focus on the Family as primary sponsors of Evangelicals for Life, a major evangelical, pro-life conference in conjunction with the annual March for Life. The event – which will be co-sponsored by other organizations – will be held Jan. 21-22 in Washington, D.C.

The main sessions of the ERLC conference in August will be live-streamed at erlc.com. ■

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Google update could decrease churches' web traffic

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

A change in Google's formula for prioritizing search results could keep churches without mobile-friendly websites from being as visible online to potential visitors.

Starting April 21, Google updated its algorithms for searches done from mobile devices to give higher placement in the results to websites that are compatible with such devices. That means churches with older, more basic websites may not appear among the top results when, for example, mobile phone users search for "Baptist church" and their city.

"Why is this a concern?" asked Michael Magruder, director of *LifeWay.com* for LifeWay Christian Resources.

"Google estimates that over 60 percent of search queries currently originate from mobile devices. The biggest question businesses and organizations ask is, 'How do I know if my website is mobile optimized?'"

Tony Boes, the Missouri Baptist Convention's (MBC) webmaster, told Baptist Press (BP) there are simple ways a church can determine whether its website qualifies as mobile-friendly. First, pull up the site on a mobile phone. If it fits the screen well and has buttons that are a clickable size, the site likely is mobile-friendly.

For a definitive answer to the question of whether a site is mobile-friendly, a church can visit Google's "Mobile-Friendly Test" website, Boes said. Simply enter the URL of your congregation's website on that page, and Google will tell you whether it is mobile-friendly as well as provide links to information about how to improve the site.

Mobile-friendly sites, according to Google's Webmaster Central Blog:

- Avoid using software that is not common on mobile devices, like Adobe Flash Player;
- Use text that is readable without zooming;
- Size content to the screen so users don't have to scroll horizontally to view the site; and
- Place links far enough apart that the correct one can be tapped easily.

Because as many as 40 percent of websites fail to meet Google's mobile-friendly criteria, some experts predicted the algorithm change would have a major impact, a scenario they dubbed "Mobilegeddon." But Baptist tech experts said several facts mitigate the change's effect on churches.

For one, churches in small towns with unique names in those towns should still be relatively easy to find in a search. If someone searches for such a church's name and its town, "Google is probably going to want to give you what you're looking for more than they want to give you something that's just mobile-friendly," Boes said.

In addition, the change only affects Google searches done from smart phones and some Android tablets. "If you are searching from a desktop or most tablets, the search results are not expected to change," Magruder told BP. He noted that searches in Apple Maps and Google Maps will still display results in order of proximity regardless of whether a church's site is mobile-friendly.

Finally, Chris Thurman, a Kentucky-based web designer who works with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and churches across America, told BP he

has "not noticed a huge difference in the [Google] rankings from some of our clients [in the business world] who did not optimize for mobile." He speculated, however, that Google may be rolling out its update gradually in a way that does not affect all industries simultaneously.

Still, experts agree that some congregations will be affected by the change and church websites ought to be mobile-friendly. Boes said a knowledgeable staff member or volunteer should be able to make a site mobile-friendly "relatively fast."

Churches that used a content management system like WordPress to design their websites need to make sure the "theme," or template, they have chosen is mobile-friendly, Boes said. A potential theme can be tested by viewing it on a smartphone or entering it in Google's Mobile-Friendly Test. If a site generated through a content management system is not mobile-friendly, a simple change of theme should fix the problem, he said. Another option is to use LifeWay's Twenty:28 content management system, in which all themes are mobile optimized.

Regardless of the change to Google's search algorithm, Boes said it is important for churches to optimize their websites for mobile traffic. Since MBC made its website mobile friendly in October, Boes said mobile traffic to the site has doubled and the number of users who leave the site without clicking on any links has decreased.

Becoming mobile-friendly "is only going to get more important for any website that's out there, whether or not you're a church, as more and more people look to the cell phone as their primary Internet device," Boes said. ■■

July 1 deadline looms for some churches

By ROY HAYHURST | GuideStone Financial Resources

Churches and ministries that reimburse their employees for individual health coverage may soon find themselves facing stiff penalties of up to \$36,500 per employee, per year, under the federal health care law commonly known as Obamacare, as a grace period expires June 30.

The penalties on employers who maintain employer payment plans were to begin in January, but the Internal Revenue Service granted a six-month reprieve.

Organizations that offer GuideStone health plans are not at risk of these penalties. GuideStone's health plans – both its personal and group plans – are church health plans and are considered group health plans under federal law and thus are not affected by these penalties.

"Fortunately, GuideStone health plan participants and the churches and ministries that employ them can rest assured that they can continue to pay for coverage as they have in the past and will meet the guidelines under the current law," said Donna Lively, managing director of insurance plans at GuideStone Financial Resources. "Organizations that don't utilize GuideStone should consult with their legal and tax advisors to determine how to comply with the letter of the law."

GuideStone has developed new health coverage options that may be appropriate for smaller churches. Additionally, churches with only one employee can apply for coverage for that lone staff member during the employee's first 60 days of employment. For more information on how GuideStone may help churches with their health coverage needs, call (888) 98-GUIDE (1-888-984-8433).

GuideStone encourages churches and ministries to remain vigilant about the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the related administrative policies that can create significant challenges for churches.

GuideStone has made available resources on its website to help churches and ministries understand the health care reform law and its requirements on employers and employees. More information can be found at *GuideStone.org/HealthReform*. GuideStone has updated its popular resource, Reimbursement Vehicles and the ACA: Impacts for Employers. It is available free online at *GuideStone.org/HealthReform/ReimbursementVehicles*.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Roy Hayhurst is department head for denominational and public relations services at GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.) ■■

SEBTS trustees hear of record enrollment, OK faculty

SEBTS Communications

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's Board of Trustees heard reports April 19-21 on the seminary's projected sixth year of record enrollment and elected two new faculty members.

The seminary's annual events included chapel services featuring Chuck Quarles, professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology and James Merritt, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Ga. "I hope every graduate from Southeastern will be characterized by passion, tears, holy boldness, evangelistic zeal and deep conviction," Quarles said. "Paul's ministry was a tearful ministry, and God seldom blesses a tearless one."

Daniel Akin, president, recognized recent accomplishments of the seminary, including a projected sixth year of record enrollment. Unduplicated headcount has increased to 3,305 through the spring semester, up from 3,118 in the spring of 2014. In addition, trustees elected Jim Shaddix, professor of preaching, and Stephen Eccher, assistant professor of church history and reformation studies.

They also approved faculty promotions of Bruce Ashford to professor of theology and culture; Brent Aucoin to professor of history; David Jones to professor of Christian ethics; Scott Kellum to professor of New Testament and Greek; and Mark Rooker to senior professor of Old Testament and Hebrew. The 2015-16 proposed budget was approved at \$25.9 million, up 1.68 percent from the current budget. Trustees approved the purchase and renovation of the Paschal House, a historic house built in 1908 by G.W. Paschal, who taught Latin, Greek and the classics and served in a variety of administrative roles at Wake Forest College (now University). Considered by many as the premier historian of North Carolina Baptists, Paschal authored several books, including the two-volume *History of North Carolina Baptists* and a three-volume *A History of Wake Forest College*. He also served as interim editor of the *Biblical Recorder* from 1938-40, the first two years in which the Baptist State Convention took ownership of the paper. The purchase of the Paschal home concludes the acquisition of a total of 15.5 acres from the Paschal family. This land completes a multi-decade goal of purchasing the property contiguous to the southwest corner of campus.

Full story is available at *BRnow.org*. ■■

Mount Zion's story wins BSC historical award

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Mount Zion Baptist Church had *A Story to Tell* about its history, so the church did what any good Baptist church would do – formed a committee.

“It was a joint effort by a lot of people,” said Floyd Annas, chairman of Mount Zion’s history committee.

Annas, along with several others, recruited information from current and former members. He said they were inspired after Caldwell Baptist Association, the association in which the church is involved, published its history. A couple of Mount Zion members were involved in the publication of the association’s history and suggested the church, which was founded in 1889, do so as well.

The church’s history, published in *A Story to Tell: The History of Mount Zion Baptist Church Hudson, North Carolina*, won the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) award at the 2014 annual meeting held in Greensboro. The BSC Historical Committee chooses a winner each year for the historical writing competition.

Having a good author like Bill Kincaid, Mount Zion member and former editor of three newspapers, “helped an awful lot,” Annas said. Compiling the church’s history took time and included all the minutes from the very beginning. The book even includes a copy of the deed filed in 1889, lists of previous staff members and reports from various ministries of the church throughout the years. The book also calls attention to the present-day staff and former members called out to various ministries.

Annas’ family has a long history in the church.

“My mother brought me in her arms to Mount Zion when I was real small,” he said. He was saved and baptized in the church in 1937 at age 12. Reading through *A Story to Tell* finds the family name mentioned several times.

Now, Floyd Annas is one of the church’s oldest members. He and Kincaid have also interviewed some of the older members and keep the audio recordings at the church’s library for people to check out.

“Oral history is very important,” he said. “Sometimes it is overlooked.”

Annas remains excited about his church. He shared that Mount Zion gives 16 percent to the Cooperative Program and that they recently finished studying Ezekiel in small groups at people’s homes. They have started a study on discipleship.

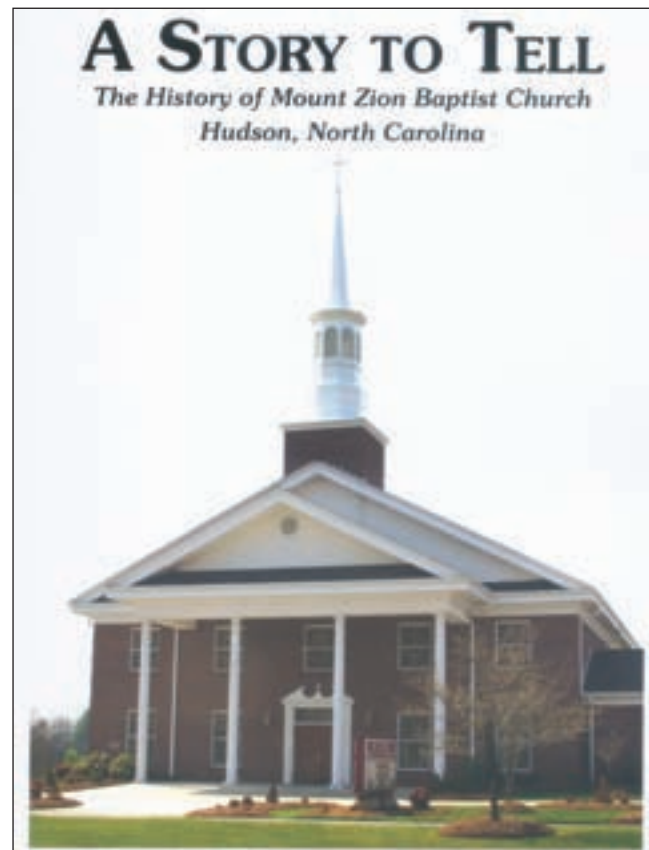
“It’s really strengthening our church,” he said.

Much of the church’s early history is available at the Z. Smith Reynolds Library at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. The library houses the North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection (also known as the Ethel Taylor Crittenden Collection in Baptist History).

The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (sbhla.org) offers resources and information to help churches preserve and protect historical documents.

There are three categories in the BSC historical writing competition: church history,* association history (includes agencies and institutions); and biography, autobiography, memoirs and personal reflection. For the 2015 competition, the entries should have been released in 2014 or 2015.*

To enter, mail two copies to: BSC, Historical Committee, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512-1107.



The deadline for submission is June 30. Winners will be recognized at the 2015 Baptist State Convention Annual Meeting in Greensboro.

Contact Norma Jean Johnson at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5618, or njohnson@ncbaptist.org.

*Older church histories can qualify if additional work has been done to bring them current to this date, and have not been previously submitted. **BR**

Yadkinville man shares Christ through gift of cross

By JESSE MILES | Special to the Recorder

Witnessing to complete strangers can be intimidating, but not for Mickie Reavis. He has a story to tell and doesn’t hesitate to let others know how God spared his life.

Reavis grew up in the Lone Hickory Community of Yadkin County, N.C., where he and his wife, Ann, still reside. They are active members of Bethel Baptist Church in Yadkinville.

In 2010, while working on his truck in the shop behind his house, Reavis was overcome by carbon monoxide fumes. He was rushed to a local hospital and later transported to Duke University Hospital where he was placed in a hyperbaric chamber to rid his body of the poisonous fumes.

In the months that followed his breathing continued to deteriorate. A lung biopsy revealed he had a severe lung disease known as Pulmonary Alveolar Proteinosis. T

he treatment placed him back in a hyperbaric chamber at Duke. It was the

only treatment available at the time short of the last option, a lung transplant.

After three separate hospital stays involving extended procedures and multiple battles with infections, Reavis was released to go home. He credits his recovery to determination, answered prayers and “God’s amazing grace.”

Reavis said he has always been able to witness to people, and doesn’t mind asking, “Are you saved?” But after his recovery he had a desire to do more.

He doesn’t work full time, but Reavis never seems to run short on things to do.

He serves on the building and grounds committee at Bethel and spends countless hours doing small repairs on the church property.

In his spare time, he serves the “Good Lord” by hand crafting small wooden crosses that he offers to everyone he meets.

The small cross measures about one inch by two inches. He draws the pattern on a plank of walnut wood, Reavis’ wood of choice, and skillfully cuts the cross with a scroll saw. After the sand-



Mickie Reavis sands one of the crosses he plans to give to someone as he shares Christ with others in his daily life. (Contributed photo)

ing process he drills a hole for a chain or ring. The final step is to hand a cross to a stranger, something he enjoys.

Reavis estimates he has given away over 1,000 crosses. He carries them tucked away in the front pocket of his jeans and hands them out in restaurants, stores or wherever life takes him.

The crosses serve as a reminder that “our Savior is waiting for anyone who will accept His saving grace. When you

are going through a difficult season in life, you are never alone – God is with you every step of the way.”

Reavis keeps a journal of responses from people to whom he has witnessed. He also hands out a tract on “How to be saved.” It’s his way of witnessing; his way of serving.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Jesse Miles, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Yadkinville, N.C., submitted this story to the Biblical Recorder.) **BR**

Individuals have responsibility to make disciples

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

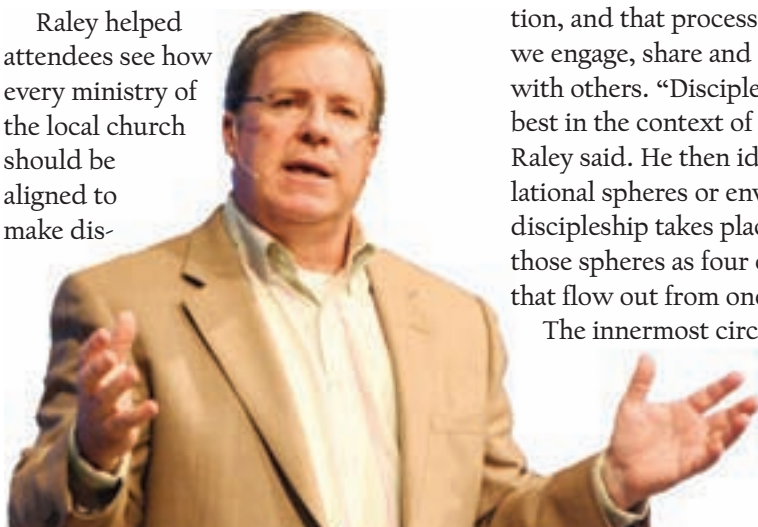
Making disciples isn't just the responsibility of pastors and church leaders. Every individual believer has a part to play in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

"God is not going to ask our church to do something that He's not asking us to do," said Bruce Raley, director of church partnerships with LifeWay Christian Resources, to a recent gathering of church and lay leaders in High Point.

Raley was the keynote speaker for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's "One Day" training event for church leaders and volunteers, held May 2 at Green Street Baptist Church. The event brought together more than 600 attendees representing 102 churches, who received equipping and training in all aspects of church ministry.

Attendees spent much of the day in various breakout sessions on an array of ministries, ranging from children's to senior adult ministry and everything in between.

Raley helped attendees see how every ministry of the local church should be aligned to make dis-



ciples. He also led sessions with pastors to help them create, cast and implement a vision for making disciples within their churches.

The mandate to make disciples is often viewed as a responsibility of pastors, Sunday school teachers or other leaders in the church, Raley said. But since

the church is made up of people who are known as disciples, we are all called to make disciples. "Scripturally, it's disciples making disciples," Raley said. "We are to reproduce ourselves. Disciples reproduce disciples."

Raley said discipleship is not about information or behavior modification. Instead, discipleship is about transformation, and that process happens best when we engage, share and invest our lives with others. "Discipleship takes place best in the context of relationships," Raley said. He then identified four relational spheres or environments where discipleship takes place. Raley described those spheres as four concentric circles that flow out from one another.

The innermost circle where discipleship begins is the relationship that Raley described as "God and me." "Discipleship



Pastors discuss some points made by Bruce Raley, below left, director of church partnerships with LifeWay Christian Resources, during One Day training May 2 in High Point. (BSC photos by Chad Austin)

takes place when a child of God is in the Word of God with God on a daily basis," Raley said. He also cited several long-range studies that indicated that the No. 1 indicator of a person's spiritual growth is whether or not they spend time reading and studying the Bible on a daily basis. "If we don't help people read the Word, know the Word and listen to the Word of God, all the rest of these environments are going to be very difficult to penetrate," Raley said.

The next sphere of discipleship is in the area Raley calls "my family and me." This involves accepting the biblical instruction to be a disciple-maker in the home as described in Deuteronomy 6.

Raley added that family discipleship doesn't end when one's children are grown. He described how he continues to disciple his adult children even though they live in different parts of the country.

Each week, Raley writes a handwritten letter to his son and daughter, which

includes biblical truths that God has taught him. Additionally, Raley and his son are reading a book together and discussing it during weekly phone conversations.

"We need to help our families know how to disciple one another," Raley said.

The third environment is what Raley calls "other Christians and me." Raley said this sphere is where most of the emphasis on discipleship has taken place. We must be careful, however, not to neglect other areas, Raley said.

"The Bible clearly teaches that we are to be in community with one another," Raley said. "We are to do life together, and this is an integral part of discipleship, but it's not the only part."

Raley said the final sphere is with the "lost and me," adding that the multiplying aspect of disciple-making involves helping others come to faith, grow in their faith and reproduce that faith in others.

"I do not believe that we are true disciples of Christ unless we are investing our lives in people who are without Christ," Raley said. "When we are at work, in our neighborhoods or in our schools, we should be looking for opportunities to invest our lives in people who are without Christ."

Raley compared these four spheres of discipleship to the ripples that form when a pebble is tossed onto a pond. The illustration underscored why the discipleship process must begin at the inner sphere of spending time alone with God each day. "The ripples go all the way across the pond," Raley said. "But the outer ripples don't occur unless those inner ripples do first." **BR**

NCBAM director receives leader award

NCBAM

Sandy C. Gregory, director of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM), was awarded the Leadership Excellence Award from the North Carolina Association on Aging (NCAOA) at its annual conference May 1.

The award recognizes individuals for leadership to their organization and to the state's aging network represented by NCAOA's 100-plus community-based aging service providers who advocate for quality programs that enable adults to live as independently as possible.

In presenting the award to Gregory, NCAOA Treasurer Brad Allen, remarked, "Sandy's ability to develop partnerships and to facilitate successful teamwork are key reasons that NCBAM has been successful and continues to grow."

Nina Walters, spokesperson for NCAOA added, "Sandy's impact on our network is far reaching, and we are fortunate to have him as a leader in our efforts to support the older adult population."

Since 2009, NCBAM has connected thousands of

N.C. Baptists to assist aging adults in maintaining their independence.

NCBAM has also been recognized by the Council on Accreditation (COA) as an "exemplary program that should go nationwide." COA is an international, independent, nonprofit, human service accrediting organization.

Gregory recently attended the Leadership Institute held during the annual conference of the American Society on Aging. Gregory stated, "As a faith-based organization, NCBAM was unique among the 3,000 attendees. There was a tremendous amount of interest in the NCBAM model. I realize now, more than ever, that NCBAM is in the right place for the age wave and that North Carolina Baptists have got it right."

As the "age wave" appears on the horizon, Gregory constantly reminds others of the necessity for faith-based groups to establish strategic cooperative partnerships with government and community agencies and work together to create quality programs that will enable aging adults to live as independently as possible. "No one group will be able to do it all," Gregory said.



Brad Allen, right, treasurer of N.C. Association on Aging and president of N.C. Senior Games, presents the Leadership Excellence award to Sandy Gregory of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry. (NCBAM photo)

"Not today, and especially not in the future. But together, we can make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for aging adults."

(EDITOR'S NOTE - N.C. Baptist Aging Ministry connects the aging and their families with resources to meet needs and coordinates practical ministries. Visit ncbam.org.) **BR**

John Meador announced as Pastors' Conf. nominee

Baptist Press

John Meador, pastor of the Dallas-area First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas, will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors' Conference, according to an announcement by Tennessee pastor Steve Gaines.

Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., stated in a May 5 announcement to Baptist Press: "John Meador is a man of God and a very capable leader in his church, his state and in the SBC. In this crucial day when our Southern Baptist churches are seeking to be a catalyst for revival in America, John Meador brings seasoned leadership as a veteran pastor. He has led the historic First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, to be an epicenter for prayer, personal evangelism and spiritual awakening. He loves the Lord, he loves people and he loves Southern Baptists."

Gaines said Meador will lead pastors from various streams of Southern Baptist life to unite for the cause of evangelism.

Meador "is rock-solid in his commitment to keeping 'the main thing' of evangelism/revival as the focal point



JOHN MEADOR

of his tenure as president of the SBC Pastors' Conference," Gaines said. "Our culture is running away from Jesus and is in a state of moral and spiritual decline. Meador will help lead Southern Baptists to engage our culture with the gospel of Jesus and will follow SBC President Ronnie Floyd's lead by focusing on spiritual awakening and fulfilling the Great Commission."

The Pastors' Conference, which features messages from key leaders and inspirational music and worship, will be June 14-15 in the Greater Columbus Convention Center preceding the SBC's June 16-17 annual meeting there.

St. Louis will be the site of next year's Pastors' Conference and SBC annual meeting.

Meador, who preached the convention sermon at the 2014 SBC annual meeting, has pastored First Baptist since 2006, leading the congregation to "launch a gospel-centered

compassion organization that has become a model across the nation for partnering with businesses, schools and churches in meeting the community's needs," Gaines said. That ministry, known as the 6 Stones Mission Network, recently helped renovate nearly 400 homes.

Over the past 18 months, an evangelism training program at First Baptist known as "Can We Talk?" has resulted in 500 adults sharing the gospel with nearly 2,500 people.

A childhood illness left Meador 80 percent deaf, and his hearing loss has since increased to 95 percent. Though he cannot hear his own voice, he preaches to thousands each week, according to his website.

Meador is a trustee for the International Mission Board and previously served as chairman of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention's executive board.

Before serving in Euless, Meador pastored churches in Oklahoma, Texas and Tennessee, most recently serving at Woodland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Meador earned an undergraduate degree from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Okla., and a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Meador and his wife Kim have six children.

"One of the most appealing aspects about John Meador," Gaines said, "is his love and respect for all Southern Baptists."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Compiled by David Roach, chief national correspondent for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service.) **BR**

N.C. Baptists named to SBC executive, other committees

Baptist Press

Nominees to serve on the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee (EC), the four denominational boards – International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board (NAMB), LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources – the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business have been selected by the 2015 SBC Committee on Nominations.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 16-17 in Columbus, Ohio.

Below is the list of N.C. nominations.

- Joe Knott of Raleigh has been nominated for a second term on the EC.
- Andy Davis of Durham has been nominated for a second term for the IMB.
- Steve Hardy of Winston-Salem has been nominated for a term that will expire in 2019 replacing a trustee ineligible for re-election: James S. "Bud" Parrish of Gibsonville.
- Amy Mielock of Cary has been nominated for a term that will expire in 2019 replacing a trustee ineligible for re-election: Simeon "Lee" Childs of Garner.
- Clint Pressley of Charlotte has been nominated to replace T. Scott Eanes of Statesville as a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee. Pressley's term will expire in 2020 because the trustee he is replacing is not eligible for re-election.
- Bill Bowyer of Wake Forest has been nominated for a second term as trustee for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The full list of nominees is available at BRnow.org. **BR**



Southern Baptist Convention information

If you want to keep tabs on the Southern Baptist Convention, visit sbcanualmeeting.net and BRnow.org for information about how to watch a live stream of sessions as well as the latest news from the meeting. There will be tweets from @biblicalrecord and @BRnow. If you are going to be a messenger from your North Carolina church, please let the *Biblical Recorder* know (editor@BRnow.org) and keep us informed of your feedback before, during and after the meeting. The preferred social media hashtag for this year's event is #sbc2015.

Kansas pastor to be SBC 1st VP nominee

Baptist Press

Kansas pastor Steve Dighton will be nominated for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Texas pastor and former SBC president Jack Graham announced May 12.

Dighton is senior pastoral advisor at the Kansas City-area Lenexa Baptist Church in Lenexa, Kan., a church he founded 25 years ago and where he served as senior pastor until this past spring. Previously, he pastored two churches in Oklahoma after being called to ministry out of the men's clothing business.

"I am privileged to nominate my good friend Steve Dighton as first vice president," said Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

"I have known Steve for 40 years – first as a young layman in Ada, Okla., and then as a pastor when God called him to the pulpit.

"I have long admired Steve's steadfast love and commitment to preaching the gospel and his passion for people and for leading the church. He is a wonderful friend to pastors and a humble servant leader. He is truly everything that a Southern Baptist pastor and leader should be," Graham said.

When Dighton founded Lenexa in 1990, the church had less than 100 members. It has since grown to more

than 6,000, with three satellite campuses in Missouri and two in Kansas. Dighton has served as president of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists and as vice president of the SBC Pastors' Conference.

Lenexa, which was named a "breakout church" in Thom Rainer's 2005 book of the same title, cooperates with both the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists and the Missouri Baptist Convention.

The congregation is among the top givers through the Cooperative Program in both conventions, according to a news release from Graham. The church's total missions expenditures exceeded \$1 million in 2014.

Dighton holds both an associate of divinity degree and a master of arts in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He and his wife Mary, married for 44 years, have two children and four grandchildren.

Dighton is the first announced nominee for first vice president. Ohio pastor Cad Keck has been announced as a second vice presidential nominee. President Ronnie Floyd and Recording Secretary John Yeats both will be re-nominated.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Compiled from a news release by Prestonwood Baptist Church with additional reporting by David Roach, chief national correspondent for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service.) **BR**



STEVE DIGHTON

May 31

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

June 7

Stick with Acceptance

Focal passages: Romans 14:1-4, 13-19

When I became pastor of the church I serve, there was a man attending the church named Gary. During those early months, we had quite a few conversations about what it means to be a Christian. One day Gary came to my office and prayed to receive Christ as his Savior. He had a difficult time accepting that a simple prayer could forgive him of all his sins.

His faith wasn't easy. Former addictions didn't magically disappear. His relationship with his wife would eventually end, and Gary struggled with both his faith and loneliness. In all honesty, even though I invested countless hours into Gary's life, I wasn't sure that we – referring to the church and myself – were helping Gary progress spiritually. To make matters worse, Gary revealed he was dealing with cancer. He later moved, and I lost contact with him for years.

Life is complex. The issues that Paul

and the Roman Christians struggled with were not easy. The three main issues that first century Christians struggled with were (1) Jewish holy days, (2) dietary rules and (3) sexual immorality. The great difficulty was differentiating between that which was accepted or rejected by God and that which was accepted or rejected by men. Paul spoke of two laws in Romans, the law of liberty and the law of love. In the Christian life the Kingdom is defined by their healthy convergence (vv. 17-19).

In a recent phone conversation, he described to me in precise detail that day he asked Christ into his life. Furthermore, he remarked how he was getting healthier physically, and was cancer-free. Some days later his new pastor called to thank me for investing in Gary's life, and to tell me that Gary was their deacon vice-chairman.

I am grateful that our church stuck with Gary and accepted him, even when – like the Roman Christians – he was going through turbulent times.



WAYNE PROCTOR
Pastor, Eure Baptist
Church, Eure

Accept Your Leadership Role

Focal Passage: Joshua 1:1-9

Some years ago, as a college student looking for a way to make some extra income, I applied for a job with the U.S. Census Bureau. I was expecting a low-level job, but based on some of the skills I gained as part of my college degree-program, I was assigned a supervisor role over a survey crew. While I was flattered, I was in over my head. How was I, a young student, supposed to supervise and manage folks much older and more experienced than me?

Imagine Joshua's predicament as he inherited leadership over Israel as they prepared to take the Promised Land – a job previously held by none other than Moses. Yet Joshua was not left on his own to fill those shoes. Just as Moses had been inadequate on his own, Joshua too would need to depend on God for the wisdom and strength to lead.

We may not be called to the same type of leadership as Joshua, but there are

certainly some principles we can gather from the text and apply to our lives.

We have all been called to some form of leadership: it may be formal leadership in your work or school, or it may not come with a fancy title at all. You might be a leader in your home or in your local church. Regardless of the form our leadership may take, we must remember the ultimate goal: lead them to Christ!

What does this mean? In whatever form of leadership you are involved in, you are ultimately called to reflect the character of Christ and to point not to your glory, but to His! This is no easy task. It is a task rooted in complete dependence upon God. How

can we be strong and courageous and not turn right or left from what He commands? We must look to Christ! Submit to His authority and direction as you lead. It is in the scriptures that we know what He commands, and it is in communion with Him that we find the power to do it!



MANNY PRIETO
Lay Pastor, Imago Dei
Church, Raleigh

May 31

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

June 7

A Pure People

Focal passages: Malachi 3:1-7; 3:16-4:2

It's difficult to watch the news. Interviews with family members who have lost a loved one in a tragic shooting, video clips of corrupt or irresponsible business practices and stories covering destruction and discord caused by natural disasters often fill the newscast time slots. We long for Christ to come again, restoring His creation, upholding what is good and revealing what is evil. We also see difficulty in our own lives: disgruntled family members, economic strain, selfish desires or cold apathy in our relationship with the Lord.

Creation is groaning. Malachi spoke to the people of God, reminding them of the Day of the Lord, describing the coming of a Messiah that will purify a people for Himself. This incredible, universal day will be one of horror for those who do not know the Lord – they will be laid bare before Him. It will also be a day of long-awaited joy for those who do know Him. God will judge with fairness,

justice and power. He will recognize the faithful who trusted in Him.

The Day of the Lord hasn't come yet. Until then we wait confidently in the unchanging character of the one true God and we reach out to others, sharing the gospel with all who don't know the Lord.

Our hope is secure in Christ.

We don't have to fear the coming day because we know that we stand before God covered in the sufficient, pure blood of Christ. Such knowledge ought to strengthen our resolve to live as those who have been forgiven, cleansed and secured by the sacrifice of Christ. It also ought to disturb us toward action in the world. We recognize their need of the gospel by the Word of God, the illumination of the Spirit

and the encouragement of a local body of believers.

We fight together, out of love and concern, for our neighbors here and overseas, that they would repent of their sin and accept Christ as their Lord and Savior, prepared to meet him face-to-face with joy and expectation.



LINDSEY POPE
Christ Baptist
Church, Raleigh

The Truth Presented

Focal Passage: 1 John 1:1-4

Imoved to North Carolina almost four years ago. My wife and I were born and raised in Louisiana and graduated from Louisiana State University (LSU). I don't run into many LSU Tigers fans here, but at my daughter's soccer game recently someone noticed my purple and gold hat and yelled, "Go Tigers." Of course we had a great conversation after that about our beloved team. He informed me about a group of alumni in the Raleigh area that meets regularly for things like watching ballgames and boiling crawfish. There is always camaraderie when I meet Tiger fans.

This collegiate camaraderie pales in comparison to the fellowship we are to experience as the church. John wrote his letter to the churches, in what is now Turkey, to invite people into this deep fellowship among those who truly know Jesus. John knew Jesus. He walked with Him, learned from Him, saw the miracles He performed, saw Him die on the cross and saw Him resurrected from

the grave. John knew the truth about Jesus – that our Savior is fully God and lived fully as a man. It bothered John to see the gospel distorted by false teachers. He wanted people to know the real Jesus that he knew and loved.

Yet, what is more troubling than distorted facts about Jesus? That so many, though they believe the right things about Jesus, do not truly know Him. God invites us to have fellowship with Him. Fellowship with Jesus means having an intimate relationship with Him. The benefits unique to this relationship include eternal life (v. 2) and fullness of joy in this life (v. 4). Our churches exist so we can celebrate and enjoy this fellowship with

Jesus together, and as a result be his witnesses to our neighbors and the nations. God assembled us together to help each other know Jesus and make Jesus known to the world. This bond is stronger and even more exciting than the camaraderie between fans of the same team. Don't let anything keep you from enjoying fellowship with Jesus and His church.



MICHAEL WILKES
Pastor, New Life Baptist
Church, Henderson

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denominational

Carolina Baptist Association in Hendersonville will be accepting resumes for **Director of Missions** from May 18-June 30. Email to cha1877@gmail.com or mail to 601 Hebron St., Hendersonville, NC 28739.

Truett Baptist Association is seeking a **part-time Director of Missions**. Responsibilities/Qualifications can be found at truettba.com. Send resume and cover letter to TBA, ATTN-ADOM SEARCH COMMITTEE, PO Box 473, Marble NC 28905, or email to truettassoc@gmail.com. Deadline to apply is June 15, 2015.

Pastor

Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Alexis, N.C., a member of the South Fork Baptist Association, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. Five years of pastoral experience is preferred. The church is situated 20 miles west of Charlotte in southern Lincoln County. Please send resume and cover letter to Pastor Search Committee, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, P.O. Box 70 Alexis, NC 28006.

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

Corinth Baptist Church, located in Elizabeth City, NC, is seeking candidates for a **full-time permanent pastor**. We are an active congregation with approximately 325 attending worship weekly. Corinth is seeking a compassionate, caring servant led by the Holy Spirit. Applicants should be biblically grounded, demonstrate a commitment to God-centered biblical worship, and possess a servant's heart. To find more information on our church, including a copy of our Pastoral Job Description, please visit our website at www.corinthbaptist.com. Interested applicants should send their resumes to Corinth Baptist Church, Attn. Pastoral Search Committee, 1035 Hwy 17 South, Elizabeth City, NC 27909, or submit electronically to pastorsearch@corinthbaptist.com.

Moore's Chapel Baptist Church in Saxapahaw, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. Primary duties will include Sunday morning service, Sunday evening service, Wednesday evening Bible study, visiting the sick, shut-ins, and ministering to the needs of the congregation. Bible College or Seminary training preferred but not required. Send resume and references to jhneal33@triad.rr.com or Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 55, Saxapahaw, NC 27340.

Bakersville Baptist Church, is seeking the **pastor** that God has chosen to shepherd our congregation. We are seeking a pastor qualified according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. We are praying for a pastor who will serve our people through bold proclamation of the Gospel and compassionate ministry and will then lead us into our community to serve them in the same fashion. Our church is a small, long established congregation in the town of Bakersville, North Carolina. We are a body of believers who welcomes all people to hear the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, values our youth program, and puts a strong emphasis on serving our community through mercy ministries. This position includes planning the worship calendar and services, preaching, teaching, home and hospital ministry to families, counseling, community involvement and relationship building. A minimum of six years Pastoral/Ministry experience is required and formal biblical/ministerial degree is preferred. Interested and qualified candidates should please contact Pastor Search Committee, c/o Brian McKinney (chair pastoral search committee), PO Box 1311, Bakersville, NC 28705; brian.mckinney@mcdowell.k12.nc.us.

Antioch Baptist Church of Morganton, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor** for our conservative, scriptural, Southern Baptist church! Candidates must have a strong foundation in the Word of God, missions and Christ-like servant leadership. Applicants should be mature in their faith with a commitment to preaching, teaching God's Word and evangelism. Seminary trained pastor preferred, parsonage located in close proximity to the church. Please send resumes to: Antioch Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 2441 Antioch Rd., Morganton, NC 28655, email: levifirstborn@yahoo.com.

Coggins Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington, NC, is accepting resumes for **senior pastor**. College and a Southern Baptist seminary required; five years pastoral experience preferred. Resumes accepted until 9/1/15. Send resume to: Mr. Horace Hill, Pastor Search Committee, Coggins Memorial Baptist Church, 1306 South Main Street, Lexington, NC 27292; e-mail: Hhill003@gmail.com.

Long Leaf Baptist Church of Wilmington, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **Full-Time Pastor** who will shepherd our congregation. Applicants should be biblically grounded, compassionate and led by the Holy Spirit. Worship service attendance is currently 200-225. We have a strong fellowship and are debt free. Seminary and pastoral experience is required and a master's degree is preferred. Please send resumes and references by mail to Long Leaf Baptist Church, 317 Shipyard Blvd., Wilmington, NC 28412, or by email to LLBCPastorSearch@ec.rr.com.

Autryville Baptist Church in Autryville, NC, a small conservative Southern Baptist church in Eastern North Carolina is seeking a **full-time pastor** to minister to our church and the community. We are looking for someone who is energetic and has a heart for people and wants to guide our church into the future with growth and a vision for ministry opportunities. It is important to our members to have opportunities for spiritual growth, continue support of national, state and local missions and have appealing programs for youth and children. A parsonage is located on the church grounds for use by the minister and his family. Applicants must have a minimum of five years of service in church ministry and a seminary or religion degree from either a university or Bible college. Interested applicants may submit a resume with references and a sample video sermon to Pastor Search Committee, Autryville Baptist Church, PO Box 26, Autryville, NC 28318, or email to Ed4tca@hotmail.com.

Church Staff

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Shelby, NC, is seeking a **Youth Minister** who will demonstrate a strong commitment to Jesus Christ. We are interested in Christian candidate who will offer strong leadership and organizational skills. Please send all resumes to Dr. Eric Davis at Dr.JED@carolina.rr.com.

First Baptist Church of Maggie Valley, NC, is seeking to hire a qualified person as **worship/choir leader**. Resumes should include references and phone numbers and may be faxed to 828-926-0098 or mailed to PO 309, Maggie Valley, NC 28751.

Memorial Baptist Church, Staunton, Va., 1,200-member church looking for a **Minister to Families**. The position is fundamentally a youth ministry position oriented toward a family supported approach to youth ministry. Will also be the staff resource person for the children's ministries and will have some pastoral team responsibilities. Salary in mid 40k range plus benefits. The interested candidate should send a resume to the Senior Pastor: revmjones1@gmail.com.

Parkwood Baptist Church of Concord, NC, is seeking a **full-time Minister of Children/Family**. Requirements: Called of God to lead children's ministry, a committed Southern Baptist, has a seminary degree. We are open to female candidates that are not seeking ordination. If interested email resume to info@parkwoodbaptist.com by June 30th. For more info about our church visit www.parkwoodbaptist.com.

First Baptist Church, New Tazewell, TN, is accepting resumes for **full-time Director of Student Ministries**. Email resume to fbc-newtazewell@centurytel.net.

First Baptist Church, Wadesboro, NC, is currently seeking a **part-time/full time Minister of Music** to oversee a comprehensive music program to include all areas of music to include, Adult Choir, Youth Choir, and Handbells. Organ experience preferred, but not required. First Baptist is seeking a Minister of Music who will embrace a blended style of worship that includes traditional, contemporary and praise music. This includes all worship services, special services and any church related events where music is needed. Experience in a church setting preferred. This position will include, assisting the Pastor in planning worship services, plan, organize and promote camps, programs, etc. for the various choirs. Salary, hours and benefits negotiable. Please send resume with cover letter to: Personnel/FBC, PO Box 423, Wadesboro, NC 28170, or email to: office_fbc@windstream.net.

Cashie Baptist Church in Windsor, NC, is seeking a **full-time Youth/Children's Pastor**. Interested applicants should send a resume to cashiebaptistchurch@gmail.com. Some experience and theological training is preferred. For more information on the church please check our church website: www.cashiebaptist.org.

Encouraging Word Baptist in Waynesville, NC, is seeking an **Associate Pastor of Worship and Students**. Experience in music and student ministry required. Salary commensurate to experience and qualifications. We are a theologically conservative and mission-minded Southern Baptist congregation. Send resume to: Personnel Team, PO Box 797, Waynesville, NC 28786, or encouragingwordbaptist@gmail.com. Please submit before May 31, 2015. Job description available at: www.encouragingwordbaptist.com/apply.

Woodlawn Baptist Church, Conover, is looking for a **part-time worship leader** for their contemporary service. Resumes may be sent by June 15 to Dr. Ed Yount, Woodlawn Baptist Church, 440 7th St. Pl. SW, Conover, NC 28613.

Miscellaneous

Stevens Chapel Baptist Church. **Wanted a good used church bus:** 25 Passenger. Call J.T. Stallings 919-965-8305.

DISCOUNTS for 5-star condos in TN mountains, or SC beach. \$100's below resort prices. Call and mention this ad: 828.442.4455.

For Sale: 2 manual, 27 rank Zimmer & Sons pipe organ. The instrument is available for demonstration and for immediate sale. Ardmore Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC. Please call for complete specifications and photos; 877-376-1599.

NCBAM needs short-term servant volunteers to "March the Blues Away" in four easy steps: 1 aging adult in need, 2 volunteers, a 3-month commitment, with 4 contacts per month. Call North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry: 877-506-2226.

Placing a classified ad in the *Biblical Recorder*

Choose one of three avenues:

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Chaplains Continued from page 1

military service, read the list of the three deceased men. Walt Fisher was from North Myrtle Beach, S.C., Matt Fineran was from Summerville, S.C., and Jason Landphair was living in Fayetteville, N.C.

Riggs did not make an immediate connection to the names until his chaplain assistant said, “Hey, sir, wasn’t that guy from the Bible study last night named Jason? Is this the same guy?”

“I felt chilled,” Riggs said. “Stunned ... shocked.”

The following day he accompanied the three bodies to a C-130 transport aircraft for a “hero flight” back to the United States. “In one of those cold metal coffins,” Riggs said, “was the body of Landphair, the first-time visitor at the Wednesday night Bible study 48 hours before – alive, vibrant, smiling, talking and engaging in the discussion of how God can make a person into a fearless warrior. Forty-eight hours earlier, I was teaching about the fearless warrior. I had no idea that Jason would be living it.

“‘Rest in peace’ is the standard phrase for funerals and sending off the dead. But for Jason, I said, ‘Rest in eternity, my friend, for now you stare directly into the loving eyes and relax in the gentle arms of God. You are the Fearless Warrior.’”

Army chaplain – a lifelong goal

Even with such occurrences, Riggs is living his dream. “He always wanted to be an Army chaplain,” said his father, retired Col. Dwight Riggs, an Army chaplain himself for 26 years.

The senior Riggs and his wife Kathy are members of First Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C., where their son was actively involved before being deployed overseas.

His son graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary in December 1997 and went on active duty as an Army chaplain in January 1998. When he began his chaplaincy work at age 26, Derrick was the youngest chaplain ever to serve, his father

said. “I was deployed three weeks after 9/11,” Derrick Riggs said, “which began what has become a ministry of bringing soldiers to God and God to soldiers in garrison and combat.”

Jason Landphair

Landphair, the visitor to Riggs’ Bible study in January, is survived by his wife Natasha and two daughters, Sofia and Wren. Friends have described Natasha as an amazing woman of God. Following her husband’s death, she sent Riggs a note that read, “Jason called that night and told me about the Bible study. He was excited and looking forward to going back next week.”

“That note brought tears to my eyes,” Riggs recounted.

Riggs said that even though Landphair was at Camp Integrity only about two weeks, “the impact his visible relationship with God has had on many of my personnel has been profound.”

A graduate of Idaho State University, Landphair joined the Army and was deployed to Iraq where he was wounded by a sniper. But he soon returned to duty after receiving a Purple Heart.

After his injury, he trained in the Army Special Forces to become a medic and served three tours in Afghanistan without further injury. Landphair was trying to help two wounded comrades when he was killed. Riggs led the second Wednesday Bible study on Psalm 91 with a heavy heart, admitting he was “overcome with emotion. After three tours in Afghanistan and two in Iran, for a total of 46 months, and numerous Bible studies in combat areas, Riggs said he had “never really wondered if someone in our group would not return because of death.”

He is scheduled to return to the U.S. in June.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Rudy Gray is editor of the Baptist Courier, baptistcourier.com, newsjournal of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.) **BR**



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AROUND THE STATE

Staff change

JOE BROWN has been called as pastor of Northside Baptist Church, Charlotte, an independent Baptist church. He has been serving in interim and pulpit supply since his retirement as pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte.

Anniversary

CATHERINE LAKE BAPTIST CHURCH, Richlands, will celebrate its 125th anniversary on Sun., May 31 at 11 a.m. with regular worship service and a cookout. Address is 2064 Catherine Lake Road, Richlands, NC 28574; call (910) 324-2206

Retirement

HENRY “SANDY” BECK is retiring from his position as director of missions (DoM) for the Carolina Baptist Association after 15 years of service and dedication. A retirement reception will be held Sun., June 7 from 2-4 p.m. on the lower level of the association building in Henderson. A presentation will be given at 3 p.m. Beck has also worked as a professor at Fruitland Baptist Bible College for 13 years. Before moving to North Carolina, Beck served on staff at several churches in Georgia. Beck will be available for interim positions and pulpit supply. Contact Beck at cba1877@gmail.com or (828) 694-0694.

Submissions

The *Biblical Recorder* is pleased to publish staff changes, church news and events with a statewide interest. Please send information immediately following an event, or for opportunity corner, send at least two months in advance. Include cost and contact information in your email or correspondence. Send to dianna@BRnow.org or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127.



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