


NORTH CAROLINA'S
JAMIE DEW
NOMINATED TO
LEAD NOBTS

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M.O. OWENS,
105, SPENT
LIFE PREACHING
THE GOSPEL

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BR

BIBLICALRECORDER

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A biker participating in the Ride for Clyde shows a child her motorcycle at Mills Home, the main campus of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina in Thomasville. Riders raised more than \$77,000 for the ministry. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

‘Ride to Clyde’ raises record \$77K for BCH

By MIKE CRESWELL | BSC Contributing Writer

Cheering children and visitors waved excitedly as they welcomed more than 100 motorcyclists who thundered triumphantly onto the grounds of Broyhill Home in Clyde on May 11 to deliver a record \$77,674.88 for the Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina (BCH).

It was a crowning conclusion for the fourth annual Ride to Clyde and not even the morning’s sometimes heavy rainfall could dampen the spirits of the riders or those of children and guests gathered under umbrellas and pavilions at Broyhill for a music-and-barbecue celebration.

Riders were all ages. Tom Poston of Fayetteville brought along his 84-year-old father while several riders

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COUPLE ‘CAN’T THANK YOU ENOUGH’ FOR MISSION:DIGNITY FUNDS

By JOHN AMBRA | Mission:Dignity



When former pastor Rick Hall retired, he and his wife Betty had no savings to fall back on but heard about Mission:Dignity. It has made a huge difference in their lives. (Mission:Dignity photo)

Rick and Betty Hall, who live in a modest mobile home in central Alabama, have a multitude of stories about the small churches they served throughout the eastern part of the state over the course of three decades.

In the Halls’ last church, five people attended on the first Sunday. No one had lived in the parsonage for 36 years, and there were only 34 people within a mile of the church.

Attendance grew to nearly 40 during the eight years the Halls were there.

The members learned how to give to missions, and it became the top per-capita giving church in their local

association to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The couple both worked a variety of jobs to pay their bills. Rick shared, “Most country churches expect a pastor to do everything – visitation, hospital calls, turning the lights on. But most of them can’t pay much, if anything.”

When they retired, Rick and Betty had no savings to fall back on but heard about Mission:Dignity. It has made a huge difference in their lives. Mission:Dignity provides financial assistance to Southern Baptist ministers, workers and their widows in need of additional resources to cover housing, food and medical expenses.

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BSC board briefed on morality measure

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Members of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) board of directors recently heard an update about a forthcoming measure that would outline steps to remove individuals serving in leadership positions for moral failure. Don Goforth, chairman of the BSC articles and bylaws special committee, shared the update during a regularly scheduled board meeting on May 20-21 at

Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro. Goforth said the committee developed a “working draft” of an amendment to the state convention’s bylaws along with an accompanying policy that would establish a process by which certain individuals could be removed from their places of service for disqualifying behaviors. Currently, the state convention’s bylaws only define objective criteria whereby a board member’s service

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My parting thoughts

I appreciate the *Biblical Recorder's* (BR) new editor, Seth Brown, allowing me this final spot to offer a few parting words to our loyal audience.

The date on this print issue of the *Recorder* is my first day of retirement as your editor.

The good news is, I now qualify to receive a free copy of the *Biblical Recorder*! I am now one of 5,600 Baptist churches, entities, retired ministers, missionaries, associational leaders and others that receive the *Recorder* because our churches support Kingdom ministry through the Cooperative Program (CP).

If you expect me to counter with a “bad news” statement, there is no down side to report today.

It has been the *Recorder's* policy to provide all North Carolina Baptist churches with a complimentary copy because published news and information on these pages promotes generosity through the CP. That principle was part of the BR's vision when it was founded in 1833 – long before CP was birthed in 1925.

When the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) met in 1832 – which was only the third annual meeting – Thomas Meredith proposed the launch of the nation's fourth Baptist newspaper.

Addressing the messengers at the annual meeting, Samuel Wait said, “It will easily be seen that we have long labored under great and very serious disadvantages from the want of a well conducted religious journal.”

Underscore the words, “... great and very serious disadvantages... .” Wait, who served in a role comparable to the position Milton A. Hollifield Jr. holds as BSC's executive director-treasurer, said Baptists labored with serious limitations in the absence of an effective tool of communication.

Here is my translation of his comments: People need to know!

“Such a paper we might hope, being adapted to the existing state of our

churches, would be productive of the best consequences,” Wait continued. “Much information on important subjects could be imparted to the churches and our congregations at large, many prejudices removed, and the way soon prepared for securing to the Convention annually, a larger amount of aid.”

Do you see the vision they were putting forth? Information that supports the convention's mission must be effectively communicated to everyone in our Baptist family. Such information serves to remove prejudices and misunderstandings. It also raises support for our missionary causes – local and international – by reporting the great accomplishments of these ministries.

The *Recorder* was privately owned by a series of individuals and companies for the first 105 years. In 1938, the BSC purchased the BR and all of its assets, because the news journal struggled to survive as a business.

The convention wanted the *Recorder* to become a successful ministry tool with support from North Carolina churches through the Cooperative Program – which was only a dozen years old at that point.

For 186 years the *Biblical Recorder* has been telling the story. Through most of that time, the tool of the printing press has been the primary means of communicating to Baptists.

In the last 20 years digital tools have been added. Today the website, the weekly e-newsletter, the digital version of the print edition and multiple social media tools reach a broad Southern Baptist audience.

Although the convention and the *Recorder* have separate governing boards and operate independently, the BR has been owned by this convention for 81 years.

Both organizations depend on CP support and the support of church leaders across the state. We also mutually supports each other's purposes.

In my opinion, Baptist state newspapers – and accompanying websites – are the strongest voices for CP support avail-

able to Baptists, apart from the influence of local church pastors. Healthy journalism is also Baptists' strongest voice of accountability and responsibility.

As a former editor, I plan to promote the principles of a free, responsible press that is supported by local churches.

Church leaders need to value responsible journalism. Baptists have the resources to provide excellent journalism if leaders support it.

A quick review of secular journalism's landscape should teach us the need for fair, responsible journalism.

Without the civility and integrity of Christian journalists, secular media is imploding.

I will be quick to add that the presence of a few Christian journalists in secular media and the biblical “salt” they bring to the table, is possibly the only reason secular media has survived.

Needless to say, journalism is not perfect. CP is not perfect. Baptists are not perfect. There is no perfect system in our fallen world.

But I firmly believe in journalism's value to our cause. I believe CP is the best model for shared, multi-tiered mission support that exists in Christendom. I believe God is not finished with Baptists.

I encourage you to pray for the ministry of the *Biblical Recorder*. Pray for Southern Baptists. My prayer is that our Father will constantly remind us that we need Him and we need each other. These are two sides of the coin we call “ministry.”

Gratitude

I leave my post at the *Biblical Recorder* with much gratitude. I am thankful for the support I received from Milton

and the staff he leads at the BSC. From the very beginning, Milton personally affirmed that as the executive director-treasurer, he values the mission of the BR. At the same time, he expressed the desire for the *Recorder* to operate with editorial freedom, without the authority of his office.

With integrity, he lived up to his commitment. Going the second mile, he consistently and passionately promoted the *Recorder's* work in churches across the state. I am very grateful for Milton's leadership and support.

Working with the agencies, entities and ministries of the BSC and the Southern Baptist Convention has been a personal delight. I am extremely grateful for our partners in Kingdom work. It has been an honor to work with the gifted leaders of our Baptist organizations and entities, as well as their communications teams.

Our loyal subscribers, readers and church leaders are awesome. Thank you very much for supporting the BR and sharing our message with Baptists who do not know we exist.

I am grateful for the privilege of serving alongside the BR staff and board of directors. These outstanding women and men have functioned as a team to passionately, responsibly fulfill our mission.

I leave my post at the *Biblical Recorder* with full support for the BR's mission and the team that succeeds me.

They are leaders in Southern Baptist journalism. I share their conviction that the voice of free journalism in Baptist life must grow stronger.

It is my prayer that you will add your wholehearted support also. **BR**

CLARIFICATION

In an article that appeared in the May 18 issue of the *Biblical Recorder*, it was reported that the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) had operational control of Camp Mundo Vista as of Feb. 1. The BSC does own the land. Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina has entered into an agreement with Caraway

Conference Center and Camp for Caraway to maintain the land and facilities. WMU-NC has been in a lease agreement with BSC for 50 years. WMU-NC owns the buildings on the land and will continue to have input in curriculum for the summer girls' camps and mother-daughter retreats. **BR**

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Youth weeks play significant role in students' lives

With summer upon us, many children and youth across our state are looking forward to a break from school, family vacations and fun with friends. The arrival of summer also means that many middle and high school students are making plans to attend one of the state convention's annual summer youth week camps at the N.C. Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell, which is located at Oak Island on the North Carolina coast.

Summer youth weeks are more than just a week at the beach having fun in the sun, although that is a part of it. These weeks are intentionally designed to be spiritually engaging, enriching and encouraging for the campers.

Attendees will be challenged from God's Word through worship services, powerful proclaimers, small group and personal devotions, missions experiences and more.

The theme of youth weeks this year is "On This Rock" based on Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus says, "I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church..." Campers will explore the foundations of the church.

We anticipate more than 6,600 campers representing more than 270 churches to attend one of our eight

weeks of camp this summer. I invite you to join me in praying for these students, as well as the staff, chaperones, preachers and other leaders who will be attending each week.

Each year, students make decisions for Christ at camp that not only impact their eternal destiny, but also change the trajectory of their lives. In 2018, more than 360 people trusted Christ as Savior, nearly 900 rededicated their lives to Him and 15 others surrendered their lives to vocational ministry. I rejoice when I hear these reports and give God all glory, honor and praise for what He is doing in the lives of students across North Carolina.

While these numbers don't begin to tell the story of all that God is doing, they do point to the significance that Christian camps can play in the lives of youth.

A 2018 study by LifeWay Research on predictors of spiritual health in young adults reported that 44 percent of Protestant churchgoing parents of 18-30-year-olds sent their kids to church camps and retreats when they were growing up.

I'm thankful for Merrie Johnson, who serves as the state convention's senior consultant for youth evangelism and discipleship, and the work of her team for all the prayer, planning and preparation that goes into cultivating an environment at summer youth weeks that allows the campers to hear and respond to the voice and call of God.

To learn more about summer youth weeks, visit the youth evangelism and discipleship ministry's website at bedotell.com.

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, ..." – Ecclesiastes 12:1. **BR**

Are your college-bound seniors ready?

Stepping onto the college campus is truly unlike anything else. For your graduates, everything will be new and unknown. It will be exciting, but it can also be nerve-racking, especially when it comes to matters of faith.

As Christian graduates look to their first fall semester on the college campus, they've probably already wrestled with questions like, what if a professor challenges my faith, what if I can't find Christian community, or what if I lose my way?

While these are daunting thoughts, they're far from uncommon. Truly, the college experience is one of most pivotal moments in one's spiritual formation. It can either break or make one's faith.

I want to highlight three of the most relevant issues every high school graduate will likely face on campus, whether they end up going to a Christian university or a secular one: doubt, community and identity.

Here's some advice I'd like to share with church leaders and parents so they can equip students in these three important areas.

The reality of doubt

Graduates need to realize that doubt is not necessarily a bad thing. Doubt, unfortunately, is too readily looked down upon in Christian cultures, but it can simply represent a fundamental gap in understanding – trying to reconcile what you do know with what you don't know. This means doubt is a neutral thing. How you deal with that doubt, however, can either be constructive or destructive.

Students typically gravitate toward polar extremes whenever they first encounter doubt:

1. They blow their doubt out of proportion by immediately conceding to the doubt and holistically labeling everything they have believed prior to be wrong.
2. They ignore their doubt – even though they don't know how to respond to it – by simply trying not to think about the topic at hand.

Neither approach, of course, treats doubt for what it truly is, nor does it help your graduates grow.

Conversely, there's two healthy ways your graduates can approach doubt:

1. Consider it without conceding to it.
2. Engage and leverage doubt – meaning, they should strive to use an episode of doubt as a launch pad into a greater reasoning and better understanding. They should look at doubt as "intellectual opportunities" to constructively fill in the gaps in their understanding so that their faith can become stronger and better founded.

As church leaders and parents, you can help by encouraging students to "play fair" in the game of doubt: namely, by taking their doubt with a grain of salt and by doubting their doubts, as much as their doubts cause them to doubt their beliefs. That's the only fair approach. Encourage your students to be alert, but not alarmed.

The necessity of community

Perhaps the most important thing your graduates can do once they get to college is look for a Christian community. Exhort your graduates to reach out

to others, plant seeds of intentionality, endure the loneliness even when it looks like there's nothing relational sprouting to the surface and toil with the social awkwardness, knowing that there will be a harvest of community eventually.

One way you can encourage students to find good community is by advising them to search for local churches and campus ministries before they even move to campus.

As someone who works in a college and young adult ministry, it'd be impossible for me to not get excited to hear from a new high school graduate who's seeking more information about a ministry and trying to get plugged in.

If students simply send an outreach email, any good church or campus ministry employee will take care of the rest, making sure they're included right from day one.

For church leaders, I have two challenges for you to help graduates find good, Christian community.

First, if students have questions about churches, you need to be able to name a few

reputable churches in their college town. Second, keep a working file that lists where your trustworthy, Christ-following alumni go to church while they are at college. Help create discipleship opportunities!

The importance of identity

The notion of "identity" or self-worth is not new in college; it's just exacerbated. When students get to campus, they will immediately be tempted to find self-worth in a myriad of ways, including approval from others and academic achievement.

They must realize that the only life-giving source of self-worth is not found in their particular university, their GPA, their career path, their social media presence, their fraternity or sorority, their relationship status, their role at a church or even their own degree of Christian morality.

A self-worth based on personal performance or circumstance will always lead to destruction. Why? Because a self-worth based on performance and circumstance is unstable and unreliable.

If you teach graduates anything before they leave for college, they need to know that the only place where they can find a self-worth that is stable, reliable and satisfying is through the gospel.

Why? Because only in the gospel can you find a self-worth that is not based on performance or circumstance. It's a self-worth based on Jesus' grace and unconditional love for them.

Only in Christ can your students have the ultimate approval, security, acceptance and love of the One whose opinion truly matters most anyways.

How your graduates approach doubt, community and identity will dramatically shape their college experience. Exhort them to trust and obey Jesus. They will have nothing to fear if they simply fear Him. And He will be with them every step, making their growth something beautiful for His glory, His Kingdom and their joy.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Austin Gentry is young adults pastor at Second Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Visit austingentry.com. This article has been adapted from his book, 10 Things Every Christian Should Know for College. Used by permission.) **BR**



AUSTIN GENTRY
Guest Column

North Carolina's Jamie Dew nominated to lead NOBTS

By GARY D. MYERS | NOBTS

James K. “Jamie” Dew Jr., vice president for undergraduate studies and distance learning at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), has been nominated as the next president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS).

The presidential search committee will present Dew to the full trustee board for a vote on June 5.

“As a committee, our focus has been to find the heart of God and the man that God has chosen for this role,” said Frank Cox, chairman of the NOBTS presidential search committee. “After much prayer and research, we have been led to unanimously nominate Dr. Jamie Dew.

“It is our firm conviction that Dr. Dew embodies the DNA of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary,” Cox said. “We believe he will make a great president and will bring out the best in the next generation of Southern Baptists.”

Cox cited Dew’s academic preparation and experience, his ministry background and his engaging personality among the top reasons the committee is recommending the 42-year-old North Carolina native for the role.

An extensive presidential search process was initiated after Chuck Kelley’s October 2018 announcement that he planned to retire on July 31, 2019. Cox, chairman of the NOBTS trustee board at the time, selected a diverse committee to conduct the presidential search. The 11-member committee, NOBTS noted, included male, female, Asian, African American and Caucasian and represented a wide range of backgrounds including educators, administrators, pastors, students and business leaders.

The committee launched its efforts with a time of focused prayer in November 2018. Later, they called on Southern Baptists to nominate qualified individuals.

Cox said the committee received many nominations from Southern Baptists including three African American nominees and one Hispanic nominee. In total, he noted, the committee carefully reviewed 20 candidates.

The committee considered all the candidates equally, regardless of age or ethnicity. One of the four finalists for the nomination, Cox said, was African American and was interviewed extensively by the committee. The top candidates ranged in age from 42 to 63.

“We were impressed by all four of these candidates – they are all great men,” Cox said.

The committee felt an immediate connection with Dew during their first interview with him.



Jamie and Tara Dew have two sets of twins and are members of Open Door Church in Raleigh. Jamie has been nominated as the next president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to succeed Chuck Kelley, who announced he will retire July 31, 2019. The board will meet June 5 to vote. (NOBTS submitted photo)

“When we sat down with him the first time, we had a God moment as a committee,” Cox said. “We realized that God had His hand on Dr. Dew. Every time we met with him, we became more convinced that he was God’s man for NOBTS.”

Dew was elected to serve on the SEBTS faculty in 2011. Since 2013 he has directed the work of the College at Southeastern and served as a member of the SEBTS president’s cabinet. From 2013 until 2014, Dew served as dean of The College at Southeastern. In 2014, Dew’s role expanded when he was named vice president for undergraduate studies and distance learning. As vice president, Dew supervises the college, all aspects of distance learning, the prison programs and the writing center.

Dew also teaches and mentors undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students in his role as associate professor of philosophy and the history of ideas at SEBTS.

Cox fully expects Dew to continue mentoring and engaging students even as NOBTS president. Dew will be the type of president who knows students and is accessible to them, Cox said.

The committee was impressed with the leadership Dew has exhibited during his time at Southeastern Seminary. In addition, Cox noted that Dew’s Southern Baptist roots, his commitment to his family, his academic preparation and acumen, and his ministry experience were key factors in the decision to nominate him for the NOBTS presidency.

“He has an engaging testimony of God’s wonderful grace and work in his life,” Cox said. “As Southern Baptists get to know him, they are going to be drawn to his life story.”

Dew is a “strong family man,” Cox said. Married for 18 years, Dew and his wife Tara are the parents of two sets of twins – Natalie and Nathan (11), and Samantha and Samuel (8). Cox commended the Dews on the way they communicate with each other and complement each other in ministry.

Dew’s academic preparation and credentials impressed the committee. After earning undergraduate degrees from Louisburg College in Louisburg, N.C., and Toccoa Falls College in Toccoa, Ga., Dew earned a master of divinity degree in pastoral ministry and a doctor of philosophy degree in theological studies from SEBTS.

In July, Dew will graduate with a second doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Birmingham in Birmingham, UK. His second Ph.D. focuses on the philosophy of the mind and philosophy of religion.

Dew is also an accomplished author, editor and researcher. His books include *How Do We Know? An Introduction to Epistemology*, *God and Evil*, *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views*, and *Philosophy: A Christian Introduction*.

Tara Dew has strong academic credentials of her own. She earned a doctor of education degree from SEBTS, writing her dissertation on the preparedness of Southern Baptist pastors’ wives for ministry. Cox noted that Tara Dew remains engaged in the training and equipping of ministers’ wives.

The committee placed a high priority on church ministry experience from the beginning of the presidential search process.

Since 1996, Jamie Dew has engaged in a wide range of church ministries including stints as youth minister, minister to adults, interim pastor and senior pastor. Dew served eight years as the senior pastor of Stony Hill Baptist Church in Wake Forest, N.C., and currently serves as a care group leader, discipleship leader, and AWANA leader at Open Door Church in Wake Forest.

In addition to the long list of qualifications, Cox said that Dew and his family already have developed a love for the city of New Orleans.

During the Dew family’s last visit to the city, Cox said they expressed sadness about leaving and mentioned their eagerness to get involved in ministry in New Orleans.

If elected during the special-called trustee meeting on the NOBTS campus, Dew will become the school’s ninth president. **BR**

Church ordination study: ‘room for improvement’

By GRACE THORNTON | Baptist Press

The ordination process of Southern Baptist churches is a weak spot when it comes to protecting congregations from sexual predators, according to a report released May 9.

The report, “Above Reproach: A Study of the Ordination Practices of SBC Churches,” was conducted by Jason A. Lowe, an associational mission strategist in Kentucky, in response to a Feb. 10 *Houston Chronicle* report on sexual abuse among Southern Baptist churches.

Lowe began polling pastors and other Baptist leaders across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) on Feb. 20, two days after SBC President J.D. Greear presented 10 calls to action from the Sexual Abuse Presidential Advisory Study, one of which was to enhance the ordination screening process.

The screening process is a “sacred responsibility” that needs to be taken seriously, Greear said, the *Illinois Baptist* reported. He explained that ordination candidates should have no hint of sexual abuse or cover up in their past and asked

why background checks are often more rigorous for children’s ministry volunteers than people being ordained to lead.

Ordination, a process that sets a person aside for ministerial service, is left up to each individual Southern Baptist congregation in keeping with the SBC’s policy of church autonomy. Churches may review a person’s salvation experience, pastoral call, qualifications and potentially his experience or seminary training to determine if he’s an appropriate candidate, according to the SBC’s website, *sbc.net*.

But Lowe wrote in his article that up until now, no one had a good snapshot of what was actually happening across the SBC when it came to ordination practices.

“Very little study” has been done on this topic, he said.

“No one knows how thoroughly candidates for ordination are being examined,” wrote Lowe, who serves as associational mission strategist for the Pike Association of Southern Baptists in southeastern Kentucky as well as

See Study page 11

Study explores churchgoers' perceptions, experiences with sex abuse, misconduct

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Research

Many Southern Baptist churchgoers believe still more revelations of sexual abuse and misconduct by pastors and other church staff will be exposed, but few know of specific individuals in their church whose misconduct is still hidden, according to a new study from LifeWay Research.

The 2019 Sexual Misconduct and Churchgoers Study by LifeWay Research and sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources explored the perceptions and experiences of Southern Baptist and Protestant churchgoers.

Brad Waggoner, acting CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, commended SBC President J.D. Greear on the way he has led the convention to view the issue of sexual abuse. "Protecting people from abuse of any kind should be of utmost importance to churches and our convention," Waggoner said. "LifeWay decided to sponsor this research because it's imperative we make our churches safe places for people to hear the gospel and grow in their walk with Jesus Christ."

The study found 1 in 3 (32 percent) Southern Baptist churchgoers believe many more Protestant pastors have sexually abused children or teens than have been currently exposed. More disagree – 43 percent – while 25 percent say they don't know.

Fewer Southern Baptist churchgoers

say there are many more undiscovered instances of Protestant pastors who have sexually assaulted adults – 29 percent – while 46 percent disagree and 25 percent don't know.

Relatively few, however, know someone attending their church who has sexually abused a child (3 percent) or sexually assaulted someone (3 percent) but has not yet come to light.

"Perceptions are reality," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, based in Nashville. "When almost a third of churchgoers sense there is an avalanche of abuse and assault cases coming, churches must address this head on even if few say they actually know someone whose abuse is still hidden."

Room for improvement

More than a third of Southern Baptist churchgoers (37 percent) say they have been victims of the following types of sexual misconduct: unwanted sexual joking, unsolicited sexual messages, unwanted compliments and inappropriate glances.

Researchers asked those victims where the misconduct took place. Seven percent say the misconduct occurred at church.

Six percent of those Southern Baptists who say unwanted sexual joking was directed at them say it happened at church. The same is true for 7 percent of those who received unwanted compliments

See Abuse page 11



Garland Honeycutt, seen here in this 2018 file photo, has resigned as executive associational missionary of Three Forks Baptist Association and Avery Baptist Association. (Contributed file photo)

Honeycutt admits personal, moral failure in resignation

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Editor

Three Forks and Avery Baptist Associations accepted Garland Honeycutt's resignation May 14 in an emergency meeting of the Three Forks executive council.

"Our hearts are broken for Garland, for his family, and for all of those affected," said a statement by the council. "We ask you to join us in praying for Garland's healing, restoration, and continued journey with the Lord. As his brothers and sisters in Christ, let us extend a spirit of gentleness and grace towards him as he begins this undoubtedly difficult season."

The council's email said the leadership had "learned of personal and moral failure during his tenure as our executive associational missionary."

The council expressed thanks for Honeycutt's leadership and gifting but said it was "unquestionable that Garland's actions disqualify him from continued leadership at this time."

Honeycutt's resignation letter was also released.

"Due to a personal and moral failure, I have brought embarrassment upon myself, my Lord, His Church, and the Kingdom," Honeycutt said.

"In an effort to deal with my failure in a forthright manner, it is my intent to step away from active ministry and deliberately pursue repentance, healing, and restoration.

"I ask for your prayerful support as I engage in this journey."

Honeycutt was the youngest associational leader in North Carolina. A representative from the Baptist State Convention (BSC) of North Carolina said Honeycutt had also resigned from service to the BSC's Committee on Convention Meetings, which met at the convention

building in Cary on May 16 in preparation for this year's annual meeting.

The Three Forks executive council said it is "committed to provide leadership that you trust and will be working on plans to provide for continuity of leadership in the coming weeks."

They requested prayers as they seek God's will for the next steps in the process.

The email from the executive council listed Seth Norris, moderator and pastor of Perkinsville Baptist Church in Boone, and Travis Suits, vice moderator and pastor of Laurel Springs Baptist Church in Deep Gap.

Below is Honeycutt's resignation letter:

May 14, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with a heavy heart and great remorse that I tender my resignation as Associational Missionary for the respective Avery and Three Forks Baptist Associations, effectively immediately. Due to a personal and moral failure, I have brought embarrassment upon myself, my Lord, His Church, and the Kingdom. In an effort to deal with my failure in a forthright manner, it is my intent to step away from active ministry and deliberately pursue repentance, healing, and restoration. I ask for your prayerful support as I engage in this journey. Thank you for the honor and the privilege of serving alongside of you in Kingdom work for the past several years. It has been a joy to work with you in the task of encouraging and challenging churches to be on mission for the sake of the Gospel. I thank God for all that we have accomplished together. Please, keep in me in your prayers during the days to come, as I begin this season of transition.

Grace and peace,

Garland H. Honeycutt **BR**

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SBC: Giving increases while baptisms continue decline

By CAROL PIPES | LifeWay Christian Resources

Southern Baptist congregations saw an increase of more than \$82 million in overall giving in 2018, according to the latest Annual Church Profile (ACP) report. However, other key metrics declined slightly in 2018, including baptisms, membership, average worship attendance and total number of Southern Baptist churches.

The number of churches cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) declined by 88 to 47,456 or 0.19 percent. Southern Baptists also reported 4,085 church-type missions last year, a decline of 291 or 6.65 percent. The number of churches and missions combined is 51,541 congregations. The ACP is compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in cooperation with Baptist state conventions.

“Part of the Annual Church Profile process is for associations and state conventions to connect with each congregation and to confirm they still exist and are cooperating together in ministry,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “This year several states put extra effort into identifying and confirming cooperating churches, revealing the decrease in the number of congregations.”

Four state conventions saw double-digit growth in the number of Southern Baptist congregations. The Baptist General Convention of Texas added 44 congregations, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention grew by 31, the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention added 22 congregations, and the SBC of Virginia grew by 20. Those figures include churches along with church-type missions – congregations that are not fully independent or self-sustaining.

Although Southern Baptist congregations reported increased giving, reported membership of those congregations declined by 192,404, down 1.28 percent to 14.8 million members. Average weekly worship attendance declined by 0.43 percent to 5.3 million worshippers.

McConnell noted that while the ACP offers a snapshot of the Southern Baptist Convention, it does not tell the whole story. Seventy-six percent of Southern Baptist churches participated in the 2018 ACP by reporting at least one item on the profile. Almost a quarter of churches did not report any information.

“The percent of churches reporting in 2018 is up two percentage points from 2017 but lower than the three previous years (2014-2016) when we had 77 percent participation,” he said.

As in previous years, reported totals do not include all of the activity of Southern Baptist congregations, though the summary does include adjustments in some categories for non-reporting congregations.

Baptism decline slows

Southern Baptist congregations baptized 246,442 people in 2018, a 3.02 percent decline from the 254,122 reported in 2017. Southern Baptists saw a 9.49 percent decline in baptisms from 2016-2017. In 2016, Southern Baptists reported a 4.89 percent decline in baptisms from the previous year.

“Seeing our neighbors or children follow Christ in believer’s baptism has never been something to take for granted,” McConnell said. “Every baptism reported signifies change that only the Holy Spirit can bring about. Southern Baptists are blessed to have seen these lives transformed. We pray God will continue to move

and that He would empower us to share the gospel with more people in the coming year.”

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, agreed, “While this report contains news that concerns us greatly, we need to celebrate every life who was positively impacted by the gospel.

“As we look forward,” he said, “it is time to press reset spiritually and strategically in the Southern Baptist Convention. Prioritizing and elevating the advancement of the good news of Jesus Christ into every town, city and county in America, as well to every person across the world, must be recaptured by every church. Urgency is not an option for any of us as Christ-followers. People need Jesus and they need Jesus now. Our generation of Baptists must believe and determine now that we will do whatever it takes to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations.”

Several state conventions experienced growth in baptism numbers this past year. State conventions with the largest increases in baptisms in 2018 were the California Southern Baptist Convention, which grew by 2,653 to 12,212; the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, which grew by 2,092 to 21,563; the Florida Baptist Con-

vention, which grew by 1,245 to 26,162, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina grew by 469 to 17,511; and the Colorado Baptist General Convention grew by 353 to 1,834.

Giving & mission expenditures

Total church receipts and undesignated receipts were both up for the second year in a row. Total church receipts reported through the ACP increased 0.7 percent to 11.8 billion. Undesignated church receipts increased 0.87 percent to \$9.6 billion.

Congregations reported total mission expenditures of \$1.17 billion and Great Commission Giving of \$572 million.

Giving through the SBC’s Cooperative Program is not included in the ACP statistical summary. Those totals are available through Baptist state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee which processes the mission gifts.

Individual congregations voluntarily report their ACP data to their local Baptist associations and/or their state conventions. National statistics are compiled and released when all cooperating state conventions have reported. **BR**

IMB pledges to ‘be a leader’ in abuse prevention

By JULIE MCGOWAN | IMB

International Mission Board (IMB) trustees heard recommendations May 22 from the firm conducting an external examination of IMB’s handling of past allegations of abuse and sexual harassment and IMB’s present policies and practices.

IMB President Paul Chitwood responded immediately with an apology to victims and a pledge for the future.

Kathryn Nash, leader of the examination task force from Gray Plant Mooty (GPM), presented findings from the firm’s external examination during a trustee plenary session. In her statement, Nash reviewed the scope and process of the firm’s examination and various recommendations resulting from the work.

“IMB has an opportunity to be a leader within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in prevention and response efforts,” Nash said. “GPM’s recommendations will enable IMB to improve its efforts to protect its personnel and their families and those who interact with its personnel and their families and to effectively and appropriately respond when there is an allegation of child abuse or sexual harassment (including sexual assault).”

Chitwood responded to the presentation from Gray Plant Mooty with an acknowledgement that “churches and mission agencies are not exempt from evil and sin” and the imperative that the IMB, the Southern Baptist Convention and Christian believers altogether must demand the highest standards in abuse prevention and response. “On behalf of the International Mission Board, to any person who has been affected by these actions of anyone associated with IMB, I offer a heartfelt, sincere apology that these injustices have occurred in your lives,” Chitwood said.

“I recognize that some people were harmed by the way IMB has responded to these situations throughout our 174-year history and for that, on behalf of the IMB,

I apologize,” he said. “I commit to you today that we will do better in the future.”

Chitwood noted IMB’s trustees and senior leaders already are at work to implement the recommendations presented by the examination. IMB is “committed to making the changes necessary to better prevent instances of child abuse and sexual harassment (including sexual assault), and to better care for victims while holding perpetrators accountable,” he said.

He called on members of churches in partnership with the SBC to partner “in diligently demanding the highest standards” to respond to incidents of child abuse and sexual harassment (including sexual assault), including seeking trauma-informed care for victims. Beyond the SBC, he called on every believer in Jesus Christ to join in the commitment to “absolute excellence in these areas as we represent the global church.”

In his response, Chitwood reiterated that the IMB strongly encourages any church, entity, or other employer who is considering working or partnering with a former IMB personnel to contact IMB at references@imb.org to obtain a reference on that individual “so that we can do our part to help you make wise and informed hiring decisions.”

In July 2018, then-IMB President David Platt called for an external examination of IMB’s handling of past allegations regarding child abuse and sexual harassment – including sexual assault – as well as a review of IMB’s policies and practices. IMB trustee officers interviewed numerous potential outside investigators for the task and selected Gray Plant Mooty, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minn., to conduct the examination. After Chitwood’s election in November 2018, he affirmed his commitment to the examination.

IMB encourages anyone who has been a victim of abuse by its personnel to report it to authorities. In addition, victims can contact IMB on a confidential hotline at (866) 292-0181 or email advocate@imb.org. **BR**

Board

Continued from page 1

may be terminated. Those criteria include failing to meet certain attendance requirements, moving outside the region from which they were nominated to serve or moving out of state.

The measure would apply to board members, convention officers, convention committee members, appointees to convention special committees and the members of the board of directors of Fruitland Baptist Bible College.

The measure also outlines procedures to handle accusations, investigations, reports, hearings, suspensions and appeals.

Goforth estimated that the articles and bylaws committee is about 85 percent complete with its work on the proposal. The committee will meet again in early June to finalize a proposed bylaw amendment and policy that will be sent to the state convention's executive committee for review and consideration.

The final version will be presented to the full board of directors at its September meeting. Bylaw amendments will be presented to messengers at the BSC annual meeting in Greensboro this November.

State convention leaders have been working on the changes since a motion was passed at the January board meeting asking the executive committee to develop a policy for removing board members in cases of moral failure.

During the course of its initial work, in consultation with legal counsel, the executive committee determined that such a measure should apply to more than just board members and that the proposal would best be addressed through a bylaw amendment and policy that work in tandem. At its March meeting, the executive committee voted to refer the matter to the articles and bylaws special committee and instructed the committee to provide subsequent updates.

The recent May board meeting was the first opportunity for the articles and bylaws committee to report back to the

executive committee and the full board since taking up the original motion.

"We would rather get this right than get this fast," said board president Clay Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Matthews, who thanked committee members for their work on the motion. "We are deliberating at a slow pace to try to get something that will serve us well for the future."

Financial update

Beverly Volz, BSC director of accounting services, shared a financial update with the board and reported that the state convention had received more than \$9.7 million in Cooperative Program (CP) receipts through the end of April. Although receipts were slightly behind pace for the current year's budget, the total is up more than 12.8 percent (\$1.1 million) through the same period as last year.

Volz also reported that giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions is more than \$10.1 million for the year, which is up 17.8 percent from last year.

Receipts for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions are at more than \$1.4 million to date, which is more than 33 percent behind last year through the same time period. Volz said she expects that figure to even out in the coming months since Easter fell approximately three weeks later in 2019 than it did in 2018.

Additionally, Volz reported that giving to the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) totaled more than \$390,000 through April, which is up nearly 28 percent through the same time period in 2018. Those early giving totals were encouraging, Volz said, because the primary NCMO emphasis does not take place until September.

As board members heard the current financial report, they also had the opportunity to share input and ask questions of the BSC budget committee as it works to

develop a proposed CP budget for 2020. Board members participated in a listening session with the committee during the board meeting.

Following the board meeting, the budget committee along with convention leaders, officers and representatives from the state convention's institutions and agencies met to hear requests and make recommendations for the 2020 budget. Once a budget proposal is developed by the committee, it will be sent to the executive committee for review and consideration at its July meeting. Following action by the executive committee, the proposed budget will be presented to the full board in September and to messengers at the annual meeting in November.

Budget committee chairman Rick Speas, pastor of Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, requested prayer for wisdom for himself and committee members.

"We desire more than anything else as a committee to present to you a budget that is God-given, Jesus-honoring, Holy Spirit-empowered and gospel-centered that aligns with our mission of assisting churches to fulfill their divinely appointed mission, which is the Great Commission," Speas said. "Pray for us to that end."

Blume honored

BSC Executive Director-Treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr. recognized Allan Blume, retiring editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, for his years of service to North Carolina Baptists. Prior to becoming editor, Blume served as pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Boone. Hollifield described Blume as a "humble servant of God" who has always been supportive of the state convention.

Blume will retire following an eight-year stint as editor of the *Recorder* at the end of May. In remarks to the board, Blume thanked convention leaders and pastors for their support of the *Recorder*.

"Thank you for understanding the unique value of the *Biblical Recorder's* ministry and supporting the work we do for your churches and for the Kingdom," Blume said.

In retirement, Blume said he plans to spend more time and care for his wife, Pam, who is in the midst of a seven-year battle with breast cancer. He also plans

to devote more time to his hobby of making ink pens while also serving churches through interim pastorates, pulpit supply and communications training.

"I am retiring as editor of the *Biblical Recorder*," Blume said. "I am not retiring from ministry. As you know, ministry is a calling, not a vocation."

Children's ministry, church planting highlighted

During his board address, Hollifield recognized two BSC staff members to share about their respective ministries.

Cheryl Markland, senior consultant for childhood ministries, made a brief presentation to the board in which she provided a number of safety and security resources for children's and youth ministries.

Markland reminded board members to take any allegations of abuse seriously and that under North Carolina law, churches are required to report allegations to local law enforcement or the county Department of Social Services.

Markland said items available to churches and pastors from the state convention include training videos, a framework for developing safety and security measures, a comprehensive security resource list, and more. Resources may be accessed by visiting ncbaptist.org/children.

Hollifield also introduced Mike Pittman, the BSC's new team leader for church planting, to the board. Pittman joined the state convention staff in February after serving as pastor of Vertical Church in Lumberton, a church he helped start.

Pittman shared his vision to see a "reproducing church movement" across North Carolina that is undergirded by prayer. Pittman said his team's goal is to help churches recognize the opportunity they have to reproduce and to encourage them to "plant churches that plant churches."

More information on church planting is available at ncbaptist.org/churchplanting.

Next meetings

The BSC executive committee is scheduled to meet on Thurs., July 11.

The next meeting of the full board of directors is Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 23-24. **BR**

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Ride

Continued from page 1

brought their children, riding along on the seats behind them.

Motorcyclists clad in brightly colored rain gear rode their wide assortment of two- and three-wheeled motorcycles around the Broyhill cottages and down the steep road by the children before dismounting to present the large, board-mounted check to BCH President Michael C. Blackwell who beamed with delight. This year's Ride to Clyde contribution to BCH was a healthy increase over the \$55,000 the riders raised in 2018.

Ride to Clyde participants have raised in excess of \$185,000 over the four years. Although the approximately 120 riders this year was about the same number of riders as in 2018, they raised more this year, said Ride to Clyde organizer Brian Davis, associate executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

"Many of the riders have moved to a year-round fundraising effort for the children's homes, and I think that accounts for this wonderful increase," said Davis, who again made the ride on his Harley-Davidson. "Some of the riders have become very creative with their fundraising and others are enlisting businesses that are giving generously to support the work of BCH."

That was confirmed by rider Terry Blake, a deacon at Calvary Baptist Church in Norwood, who rode his Indian Roadmaster Classic this year. His church takes up an offering during Vacation Bible School for Baptist Children's Homes and also brings children or other BCH staff to the church to speak. They also sponsor an annual motorcycle ride with 50 to 60 bikers to Oak Ranch, a BCH home for unwed mothers.

"Every time we do some ministry with the Baptist Children's Homes, God just blesses it so much," Blake said.

Not your typical motorcyclists

Ride to Clyde riders mostly favor black T-shirts and jackets as do some less savory motorcyclists, but many of the Ride to Clyde riders sported Bible verses on their vests, cross emblems or church banners.

That's because these riders included pastors and church staffers, plus riders from several Baptist biker churches and some of North Carolina's many Christian motorcycle ministries. More than 40 Christian motorcycle groups in the state are affiliated with the BSC.

The bikers covered more than 450 miles on some of North Carolina's most scenic byways over the four days, Wednesday through Saturday. Bikers are divided into smaller groups for safety and to reduce impact on small towns. Routes are carefully selected for both scenic value and safety. For example, left turns are kept to a minimum, because many motorcycle accidents occur when the biker is making a left turn.

They gathered May 8, at Fort Caswell, the BSC's seaside conference center on Oak Island, to prepare for the ride.

A walk in the woods

On May 9, half the riders visited Camp Duncan, a facility for girls near Aberdeen, and the other half visited Cameron Boys Camp at Cameron. Both BCH facilities are residential wilderness camps in which the young people build their own housing and live in the woods, with leaders providing structure and teaching.

May 10, the riders visited Mills Home, the main campus of the 21 BCH locations across the state. There the big event was parking the motorcycles and letting preschoolers sit on them – and blow the horns, sometimes repeated-

ly. The kids had a great time, but no better than the bikers. Even some of the biggest, bearded and leather-jacketed bikers were shedding tears.

Friday evening (May 10) at Lake Junaluska, the riders heard Shawn Fitchett, now grown and happily married with his own family, tell how moving to Broyhill Home saved his life. He told of his adoption and having to live with people who did not want him before Broyhill.

Saturday (May 11) the riders concluded their ride at Broyhill Home, a BCH campus set among the mountains and hills of Clyde. Several riders were amazed to hear for the first time about these and other ministries that have become possible because Baptists work cooperatively together through the BSC.

A penny for your soul

At Caswell, each rider was given a handful of pennies, each coin with a cross cut from the middle. Use these for witnessing or give them to BCH children as you tell them God loves them and you do too, riders were told.

One four-member team from Brookstone Church in Weaverville was able to lead a 17-year-old woman to faith in Christ during a stop in a fast-food restaurant near closing time.

"A conversation turned into a gospel conversation, and that gospel conversation turned into her asking Jesus into her heart," said rider Dean Greene, weeping openly as he told of the encounter later and as other riders applauded and cheered.

Riders were urged to show Christian love to the children in BCH care they would meet along the way.



"Many of these children have been told that they are worthless," Davis said. "We want to make sure when we are interacting with them that they know they are not worthless, and we want them to know they have great value, because the God who created them thinks they are so valuable He sent His only Son to die on a cross."

"But the Good News is that Jesus did not die on a cross to remain buried in a grave, but He gloriously and victoriously rose again. The resurrection means He has power over sin, death and the grave."

Touching 94,000 lives this year

At a gathering at Caraway Conference Center on Thursday evening (May 9), BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell told the riders the Baptist Children's Homes would touch some 94,000 lives this year through their variety of ministries. But he also bemoaned the horrible stories of child abuse so often in the news.

Blackwell challenged the riders: "I want you to ride with power. I want you to ride with Holy Spirit power. I want you to ride with supernatural power...Think great! Be great! You are a representative of the kingdom of God."

J. Keith Henry, the CEO of Baptist Children's Homes, urged the riders and churches represented to consider becoming Christian foster parents for needy children. And the need is great, he said.

"16,796 – that's how many kids were taken away from their families last year due to abuse and neglect, just here in North Carolina," Henry said.

He said BCH has begun a new Family Foster Care ministry to provide training and licensing for couples to be



At left, riders pray at the hotel at Lake Junaluska before setting out on wet roads for the last day (May 11) of Ride to Clyde, a cross state trip visiting Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina sites.

Above, riders talk with children at Mills Home on May 10. Some had gifts for the children; and children were able to get on the motorcycles. Blowing the horn was a favorite activity of those who got close to the motorcycles.

Below right, riders rumble through Fort Caswell at Oak Island headed to Cameron Boys Camp. Others went to Camp Duncan, the outdoor girls camp. Bikers are split into smaller groups for safety and to reduce impact on smaller towns. That night, riders stayed at Caraway Conference Center and Camp. (BSC photos by Mike Creswell)

event; you want to bring more," Smith said.

The increased giving reflected in this year's Ride to Clyde total suggest many riders feel the same about supporting the Baptist Children's Homes. In a Friday night gathering at a hotel overlooking Lake Junaluska, 11 individuals and couples received special pins of honor from the Baptist Children's Homes for collecting more than \$1,000 each.

Top fundraisers

The top fundraiser this year was Keith Austin, a member of West Oakboro Baptist Church, who collected \$12,220. But that amount was not without cost: Austin had promised to shave his head if he raised as much as \$10,000. He lifted a scarf to display his shaved head.

Rider James Norton is a big bearded man sporting a black leather vest. He is a tree surgeon who specializes in taking down dangerous trees. But he blinked back tears after hearing how children are abused.

"I cannot imagine people not caring for children," Norton said. "I have no words. There are no words to describe what it does to my heart. Those babies need love!"

Norton had set a goal of collecting \$300 for the children, but wound up collecting well over \$800.

The top church contributor this year was Elizabeth Baptist Church in Shelby, whose pastor, Rit Varriale, has made all four Ride to Clydes. He and Davis helped develop the

original Ride to Clyde concept.

Rider Dean Greene, a member of Brookstone Church in Weaverville and a professional firefighter, is so committed to the ministry to children that he got an OK from the Baptist Children's Homes to use their logo of children's hand prints for a custom paint job on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The small footprints on the front fender are those of his own children.

"There's not a time I don't look at that bike, whether it's in the basement or I'm riding it, that I don't pray for the Baptist Children's Home kids," Greene said.

Davis urged the riders to find other ways to interact with the Baptist Children's Homes during the year, but also to find other ways to minister to needy people.

Riders Todd Brady and David Wilder urged the riders to get involved with N.C. Baptists on Mission, whose volunteers continue to restore houses damaged by Hurricane Florence. Brady is pastor of River Community Church in Fayetteville, and Wilder works in rebuilding efforts with Baptists on Mission in a four-county area around his home in Scotts Hill, near Wilmington.

Wilder told of a young man whose house was flooded and stayed four months with the Wilders. Wilder was surprised to learn that the young man had spent time at the Cameron Boys Camp.

"We don't know who this [Ride to Clyde] thing will touch," Wilder said. **BR**

foster parents through BCH. The goal is for BCH to have foster care families in all 100 North Carolina counties.

"What we need is to expand our foster care so there are Christian families these kids can go into," Henry said.

Henry also reviewed the orphan care ministry BCH has launched in Guatemala which has two homes operating with a third home being built now. He called for volunteers to come help that work.

Rider David Smith, a member of Pinnacle Baptist Church in Canton, backed up the great need for children to have better care. He is a deputy sheriff who works with a domestic court, and he often sees kids sent to homes not near as good as the ones Baptists operate. He was impressed with what he had seen earlier in the day at Cameron Boys Camp.

"It's a blessing to my heart today to see that these boys are being taught about the Lord, because if anything can change their lives and help them, it's going to be Jesus Christ," Smith said.

Smith told of talking to a boy who has been at Cameron for three months: His goal was to learn more about the Bible and to grow closer to the Lord.

"I don't care how much money you brought to this

"It's a blessing to my heart today to see that these boys are being taught about the Lord, because if anything can change their lives and help them, it's going to be Jesus Christ." – David Smith

Top givers

Individuals/Couples

Keith and Jody Austin – \$12,220
 Jerry & June Coffey – \$7,800
 Ben Bonds – \$5,176.06
 Robin & Tammy Ferguson – \$5,000
 Lester Evans – \$1,815
 Glenda Bucy – \$1,666.61
 Frank Allen – \$1,590.47
 Greg & Jane Walters – \$1,563
 Edward Schemper – \$1,350
 Terry & Donna Troutman – \$1,240
 Phillip Robinson – \$1,135

Churches/Organizations

Elizabeth Baptist Church, Shelby – \$10,152.50
 Kinza Baptist Church, Stanfield – \$4,878
 River Community Church, Fayetteville – \$2,934.10
 Carolina Faith Riders – \$2,890
 Hopewell Baptist Church, Monroe – \$2,490
 Brookstone Church, Weaverville – \$2,205
 Freedom Biker Church, Monroe – \$2,186
 Kellum Baptist Church, Jacksonville – \$1,903.47
 First Baptist Church, Hickory – \$1,885
 Calvary Baptist Church, Norwood – \$1,193.64
 Blue Ridge Biker Church, Asheville – \$552.50



‘Stories of Hope’ podcast launched by Send Relief

By **BRANDON ELROD** | NAMB

When a hurricane devastates a community or constant poverty leaves people hungry, how does the local church encounter its neighbors to meet needs? What steps do a pastor and his congregation need to take to see lives changed by the gospel?

A new podcast from Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), helps churches consider these questions by sharing the stories of missionaries who have reached out to those who need help. That podcast is “Stories of Hope.”

“All around North America, Send Relief and church planting missionaries have been meeting needs and changing the lives of people who are within the shadow of their own buildings,” said David Melber, president of Send Relief. “Every community has needs that the local church can engage and be a bold witness for the sake of the gospel.”

Each episode of the podcast follows along as a missionary or church leader shares their story, whether they responded to a hurricane or served those in poverty.

“I think it’s easy for believers to hear about someone doing great things for the kingdom and think, ‘I’m not capable of that,’” said Tony Hudson, a NAMB marketing specialist and a producer for the podcast.

“But every story we have told so far is about ordinary people who are just meeting needs and building relationships,”

Hudson said. “That convicts me not just to think, ‘I’ve got to do something,’ but ‘I can do something.’”

In one recent episode, Stories of Hope follows Melanie Watt of Spartanburg, S.C. She operates a ministry to at-risk youth called Hope Remains Youth Ranch that uses equine therapy to help children cope with their stresses.

“The horses break down that wall of anger. They break down whatever wall was there – the abuse, the neglect,” Watt said in the episode.

“For that moment, it’s a calming effect and the kids just get so comfortable, they start talking.”

Once those walls start to come down, Watt is able to start opening doors for gospel conversations.

Another episode features Jorge Santiago.

Following Hurricane Maria in 2017, he rallied in Puerto Rico to start a free laundromat so residents could wash their clothes.

A new church blossomed from his outreach.

“When people used to come to wash their clothes, they had to be there with us,” Santiago recalled.

“And we shared the gospel and prayed with so many people at the washer machine area.”

The podcast launched earlier this year, and new episodes are posted every two weeks. To learn more and subscribe to the podcast, visit sendrelief.org/podcast/stories-of-hope/ or search Stories of Hope in your favorite podcast app. **BR**

Blackwell hosts new podcast: ‘It’s a family matter’

By **JIM EDMINSON** | *Charity & Children*

Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH) is joining the “podcast world” this summer.

BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell will be hosting “It’s a family matter.”

“I’m excited about this new venture in ministry,” Blackwell said. “And who knows, we might even have a bit of fun.”

As a teenager, he made history becoming one of the youngest rock ‘n roll deejays in America. Right out of college, he and a group of young men took Charlotte by storm birthing the highly successful BIG WAYS Radio. Noted for his smooth baritone voice, Blackwell captivates audiences wherever he speaks traveling hundreds of miles a year and speaking to thousands.

During each episode of “It’s a family matter,” Blackwell will interview personalities on the leading edge of relationship issues involving parenting and family.

“The expertise of all those serving at BCH is vast,” Blackwell said. “Each episode will also tap into years of experiences to inform listeners of the best practices for raising families and strengthening relationships.”

Each episode will feature an additional two to three mini-casts highlighting staff members who daily see family dynamics up close as they serve children and families.

Musician William Johnson composed the podcast’s theme music and sound editor Kenny Conyers has joined the project. A state-of-the-art sound studio is being created on the Mills Home campus in Thomasville. **BR**

NEWS BRIEFS

Branzell to lead National Day of Prayer

(Baptist Press) Kathy Branzell has been named as Ronnie Floyd’s successor as president of the National Day of Prayer (NDP) Task Force.

Branzell, of Atlanta, has participated in the NDP for 19 years, according to a news release from the 10-member NDP board of directors. Floyd ended his two years of leading the NDP May 17 prior to taking office as president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee on May 20.

Branzell, 51, a member of Celebration Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in northeast Atlanta, attended her first National Day of Prayer in Washington, D.C., in 2000. She has been on the NDP board of directors for 10 years. As founder and president of Fellowship and Christian Encouragement (FACE) for Educators for 17 years, Branzell has drafted weekly scripture readings, prayer prompts and devotionals for educators to use throughout the school year. She is the author of several books on prayer and holds a master’s degree in biblical studies from Liberty University’s School of Divinity and an undergraduate degree in education and human development from the University of Georgia. She and her husband Russ have two children.

Branzell, in the NDP news release, stated, “The next generation is filled with the Holy Spirit and passionate about prayer. ... We need them.”

There isn’t a single generation nor “one ethnicity, one gathering or one person that could call this nation to prayer. The body of Christ is beautiful in reflecting every nation, tribe and tongue.”

Cross Church affirms Nick Floyd as senior pastor

(Baptist Press) Nick Floyd was affirmed April 28 as the next senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, to succeed his father, Ronnie Floyd, president/CEO-elect of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee.

“I love this church. I am a product of you, this body of believers,” Nick Floyd, 35, said in a video prepared for the congregational vote.

Floyd and his wife Meredith have four children.

U.S. births, fertility rates hit record low

(Baptist Press) U.S. births are at their lowest point in 32 years, and fertility is at a record low, statistics released May 15 show.

Births and fertility rates both fell 2 percent in 2018 from the previous year, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in Hyattsville, Md., said. For the past decade, fertility has been consistently below the replacement rate, the level at which a given generation can exactly replace itself, NCHS said.

The decreased birth rate comes as the most recent abortion statistics in the U.S., based on 2015 data, show the lowest rate of abortions since the procedure was legalized nationwide.

Births totaled 3,788,235 in the U.S. in 2018, down from 3,855,500 in 2017. The numbers mark the fourth consecutive year of decline since a spike in 2014 and the lowest number since 3,731,000 births in 1986, the NCHS said.

The 2018 general fertility rate was 59 births per 1,000 women ages 15-44, down from 60.3 per 1,000 women in the age bracket in 2017. Comparatively the total fertility rate, the estimated number of births that a hypothetical group of 1,000 women would have over their lifetimes, was 1,728 births per 1,000 women, the study concluded. Both the general fertility and the total fertility rates are at record lows, the NCHS said.

Animated gay wedding sparks protest

(Press reports) Animated PBS children’s show “Arthur” debuted its season with a gay wedding.

The show chronicling the adventures of an elementary school-aged, anthropomorphic aardvark included in its season 22 premier May 14 the same-sex wedding of the title character’s teacher Mr. Ratburn, according to media reports.

Ken Ham, founder of the Answers in Genesis (AiG) apologetics ministry, said the gay wedding depiction illustrates “you can’t trust what your kids may watch on PBS.”

The day after the episode “Mr. Ratburn and the Special Someone” aired, One Million Moms, an indecency watchdog group that is part of the American Family Association, posted an online petition, garnering thousands of signatures within hours. A statement from the group said, “Discussion of such controversial topics and lifestyle choices should be left up to parents. PBS Kids should not introduce this to young children.” The network “should stick to entertaining and providing family-friendly programming, instead of pushing an agenda.”

Full stories available online at BRnow.org.

Abuse

Continued from page 5

that implied the person viewed them sexually, 3 percent of those who received unwanted pictures or sexual advances via text or direct message, and 6 percent of females who experienced prolonged glances or staring at their chest.

When asked if they received compliments that implied the person viewed them sexually, 6 percent of Southern Baptist churchgoers say they heard such remarks as a child and 15 percent as a teenager. When asked from where the person had given the sexually-insinuating comments, 36 percent say school, 34 percent say their home or family and 10 percent say church.

Similar issues continued in adulthood. Southern Baptist churchgoers are more likely to say inappropriate behavior occurred in settings other than the church, but some still reported occurrences in church.

Some churchgoers expressed wariness over the greetings they receive from others at church. Around 1 in 6 (18 percent) say some attendees express physical greetings in ways that seem to go beyond a simple gesture.

A 2018 LifeWay Research study found 1 in 8 Protestant pastors said a church staff member had sexually harassed a member of the congregation at some point in the church's history. One in 6 pastors said a staff member had been harassed in a church setting.

Overall, in the 2019 study, most SBC

churchgoers (86 percent) say the church is a better environment when it comes to encountering sexually inappropriate comments compared to other places where they socialize with people. That's slightly better than the 75 percent of all Protestant churchgoers who say the same. Few Southern Baptist churchgoers (1 percent) believe the church is a worse environment, while 6 percent say it is the same as other places and 7 percent aren't sure.

"The findings of this study are similar to previous research through the years," McConnell said. "Churchgoers and the church setting have statistically fewer cases of immoral behavior, but those issues still have a very real presence."

Church preparation & optimism

Most Southern Baptist churchgoers believe their church is prepared to handle issues of sexual abuse and trust their congregation to respond appropriately if confronted with instances of misconduct. A majority say their church would respond to someone who had experienced sexual abuse, sexual assault or rape with respect (73 percent), sympathy (70 percent), privacy (62 percent) and protection (56 percent). Few believe their church would ignore the person who shared their experience (2 percent), see them as an attention-seeker (2 percent) or as partly to blame (2 percent).

Nearly 8 in 10 Southern Baptist

churchgoers (76 percent) consider their congregation at least somewhat prepared to help someone who has experienced sexual assault, with 38 percent saying their church is very prepared. Fewer than 1 in 10 (7 percent) believe their church is unprepared. Eighteen percent aren't sure. The vast majority of Southern Baptist churchgoers (95 percent) agree their church is a safe place where adults are actively protected from sexual assault in the church; 3 percent aren't sure and 1 percent disagree.

More than 8 in 10 (86 percent) believe their church is at least somewhat prepared to protect children from sexual abuse in ministry programs, with 62 percent saying their church is very prepared. One in 20 (5 percent) say their church is unprepared and 9 percent are unsure.

Virtually all Southern Baptist churchgoers (96 percent) say their church is a safe place where children and teenagers are protected from sexual abuse. Few aren't sure (3 percent) or disagree (1 percent).

Southern Baptist churchgoers believe safety measures have improved in the last decade. Three in 4 (74 percent) believe their church is more prepared to protect children from sexual abuse than 10 years ago. Few say their church has had no additional preparation (6 percent) or was doing well then and now (7 percent). Thirteen percent say they don't know.

"Those in the pews are noticing prog-

ress in the prevention efforts at their own church," McConnell said. "Additional steps need to be taken and clearly communicated, however, so that more can say their congregation is very prepared to protect those who attend from sexual assault and child sexual abuse."

If someone did experience sexual abuse, Southern Baptist churchgoers feel confident their church would be a safe place for victims.

More than 9 in 10 (92 percent) say someone who experienced sexual abuse as a child or teenager would find healing at their church; 4 percent disagree. Similarly, 94 percent say their church would be a place of healing for adult victims of sexual assault; 2 percent disagree.

Eight in 10 Southern Baptist churchgoers (80 percent) say an adult attending their church could share that they have experienced sexual assault by a fellow attendee and be believed. Fourteen percent aren't sure and 6 percent disagree.

"When a church communicates it is a safe place for those who are hurting to find healing, it teaches truths about the identity and worth of every individual," McConnell said. "More importantly it answers the fundamental question of whether God cares."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – See full story at BRnow.org, including information about methodology. LifeWayResearch.com also has the complete report, graphics and a video summary.) **BR**

Study

Continued from page 4

executive pastor for First Baptist Church of Pikeville.

"No one knows how many ordination councils require candidates to complete a background check," he wrote. "No one knows how many ordination councils examine a candidate's sexual purity."

So in late February and early March, Lowe gathered 555 survey responses from pastors (60 percent), associational and denominational leaders (17 percent), deacons (9 percent), retired or former pastors (5 percent) and others (9 percent) across 34 states to find out how their own ordination processes were conducted. He released his findings in a 42-page report and noted five significant points of interest:

SBC ordination practices have significant room for improvement.

In addition to Greear, other SBC leaders had spoken out about weaknesses in the ordination process ahead of Lowe's report.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote on his blog in February that "lackadaisical ordination will produce doctrinally dubious and morally corrupt pastors."

That kind of trend "must end and churches must take responsibility for those men they ordain for ministry," he wrote.

Thom Rainer, former president of Lifeway Christian

Resources, also wrote that because of the weak process, "we 'bless' new pastoral candidates who may not be ready for ministry at the least, and who are sexual predators at worst."

Lowe said his report confirmed their observations.

"While there are some encouraging trends, [Southern Baptist] churches need to improve our current ordination practices in a number of ways," he said.

For example, only 30.2 percent of ordained ministers were required to have a background check and only 29.4 percent were asked about their sexual purity. Also in roughly 60 percent of cases, the ordination service was publicized before screening took place and the screening council happened on the same day as the service.

Discussions regarding a candidate's sexual purity are sparse, but on the rise.

Even though sexual purity is not discussed most of the time, the report found that there has been a "significant uptick (40.5 percent) since 2010."

SBC ordination practices are changing in both positive and negative ways.

Lowe's survey garnered ordinations spanning every decade since the 1960s, and across the years, a number of trends emerged.

Some were positive – for instance, more churches are requiring theological training, and more are conducting

background checks and asking candidates about sexual purity.

But on the other hand, the role of the ordination council seems to be decreasing in importance. Screening periods have gotten shorter as a whole, and councils involve fewer ordained pastors.

Ordaining churches in more populated areas set higher standards for their ordination candidates.

The report data showed urban and suburban churches handling the process differently than churches in less-populated areas. The former checks in more often with candidates both before and after ordination and requires training more often. The latter is more likely to publicize the ordination service before a candidate is approved, then conduct the screening on the same day as the service.

Larger churches are more thorough in their examination of ordination candidates.

Churches with a larger membership are more likely to cover more topics during the screening process, require a background check and require training.

Lowe didn't make any specific recommendations for improvements, but he wrote that he shared the findings "with the hope of generating productive conversations among Southern Baptists as we seek ways to improve our ordination practices in the days ahead." **BR**

M.O. Owens, 105, spent life preaching the gospel

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Editor

Milum Oswell “M.O.” Owens Jr., 105, died May 20 after years of service to North Carolina Baptists.

“His life may have ended on earth when he was welcomed into heaven, but the influence of his life will live on through those who came to know Christ through his witness and those who were disciplined through his Bible teaching,” said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), in a statement to the *Biblical Recorder*.

A retired church pastor and founder of Gaston Christian School, Owens was born in New Holland, S.C., Sept. 4, 1913, and graduated from Furman University in 1933.

He later finished with honors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in 1939. He pastored churches in Myrtle Beach, S.C., Palmetto, Fla., Marion, N.C., and Lenoir, N.C., before accepting the call to East Baptist Church in Gastonia.

Owens led the church that eventually became Parkwood Baptist in 1964 and was the first pastor until his retirement in 1980. He then ministered in 15 churches as an interim pastor and wrote a book on prayer, *God, Can You Hear Me?*.

Owens, who was influential in the early Conservative Resurgence movement, and Home Mission Board employee Bill Powell first started rattling Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) cages about 1973 when they formed the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship and later, the Baptist Literature Board that offered Bible study materials as an alternative to those sold by the Convention’s own publishing house.

Owens returned to Parkwood as pastor emeritus and retired again from the pulpit in 2015.

Twice president of the N.C. Baptist Pastors’ Conference, Owens was elected to the BSC General Board and a number of committees.

He served as a trustee of the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) and the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board).

Owens was on Gardner-Webb University’s Board of Trustees for 14 years; several years, he served as chairman. He also helped form the Crisis Pregnancy Center and was a member of the Kiwanis and Rotary clubs.

Cooperative Program

A 2013 Baptist Press story recounted Owens, at age 11, being at the May 13, 1925, SBC annual meeting, the day the



M.O. Owens, who died May 20, poses next to the statue of him at Gaston Christian School. The Dr. M.O. Owens Jr. Worship and Fine Arts Center was dedicated in November 2018. (BR file photo by K. Allan Blume)

Cooperative Program (CP) was birthed.

“I remember very vividly how excited my dad was, how delighted he was, and I do remember so well he was concerned about enlisting the other pastors,” Owens said of his father, the late Milum Oswell Owens Sr., who pastored two churches.

“He was the only pastor from that association [Orangeburg County, S.C.] who attended that convention.”

At that time the meeting was five days, but Owens was only allowed to attend that particular day.

“Before that day [of the CP vote] there were very few Sundays there wouldn’t be someone appealing for an offering,” Owens said. “I remember my parents talking about it, Dad saying we needed to figure out a way to lump some of these appeals together – foreign missions, home missions, Indian missions, orphanages and more. And then he heard about [what is known today as the Cooperative

Program] and he was tickled pink when it happened.”

Owens said he watched for years the strength of the CP his father was so pleased to help pass.

“It is a beautiful arrangement,” Owens said. “The churches are not plagued by appeals for money. Each church can choose to participate – or not. Each agency and institution can feel fairly secure in anticipating its designated share.”

Recognition

Hollifield described Owens as a “living legend” in 2013 when he presented Owens with a lifetime achievement award during a special time of recognition during the BSC annual meeting in Greensboro.

“M.O. Owens Jr. is one of my great heroes. I have respected and appreciated him through the years,” Hollifield said at the time. “I am grateful for what he has meant to us as North Carolina Baptists and to the Southern Baptist Convention.”

Don Warren, a member of Parkwood, called Owens a man of integrity. “When I think of M.O. Owens I think of a man who lives his Christian life by not compromising before God and man. People see that in him and recognize that he is a follower of Jesus Christ.”

Warren is grateful for the dedicated, visionary leadership of Owens. “Every church M.O. has ever pastored has grown, and every church he pastored exceeded its budget,” he said.

Jeff Long, senior pastor of Parkwood, said leaders such as Owens paved the way for the current generation, taking risks for the sake of the gospel.

“The way he treats people, the way he preaches the Word, the way he ap-

proaches life with grace and dignity - he truly is a godly man,” he said. “If you ever interact with him it’s evident from the very beginning. And it’s not age; it’s having spent a life walking with God.”

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest endowed the Dr. M.O. Owens Jr. Chair of New Testament Studies in April 26, 2012. Daniel Akin, SEBTS president, announced David Alan Black, professor of New Testament and Greek, was the first recipient of the chair.

The BSC had previously honored Owens at the 2011 Heritage Awards.

Throughout his ministry, Owens never strayed from his commitment and passion to tell people about the life-transforming message of the gospel.

“Just preach the gospel,” Owens said in a 2013 story. “That’s all that matters.”

In November 2018, Owens attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for a building with his name attached to it at Gaston Christian School (GCS) in Gastonia.

The Dr. M.O. Owens Worship and Fine Arts Center is a \$4 million, 26,000-square-foot facility at the school he helped found. The facility gives Gaston County’s largest private school a 520-seat auditorium, art classrooms, band and choral classrooms, a dance studio, wood shop and costuming classroom. GCS has 920 students enrolled.

A life-size bronze statue of Owens was unveiled on the building’s front porch. Owens’ body was electronically scanned and the data was delivered to China where the statue was built.

GCS originally met on the campuses of Parkwood and Catawba Heights Baptist Church before the current property was purchased and the school constructed in 2002.

He was widowed three times – Ruby Bridges Owens and Ola Carothers Owens and most recently, Margaret Williford Brown Owens, who died in 2012. He is survived by his three daughters: Celia Alexander of Suffolk, Va., Linda Russ of Greenville, S.C., and Mary Lancaster of Vass, N.C.; foster daughter, Deborah Ko of Girard, Ohio; eight grandchildren; two foster grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; three foster great-grandchildren; five step-children and many step-grandchildren.

Memorials to: Crisis Pregnancy Center, 700 Robinson Road, Gastonia, NC 28056; Parkwood Baptist Church, Owens Mission Fund, 1729 Garrison Blvd., Gastonia, NC 28054; Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, M.O. Owens Chair, 222 N. Wingate St., Wake Forest, NC 27587; and Gaston Christian School, 1625 Lowell Bethesda Road, Gastonia, NC 28056. **BR**

who's your ONE?

Submitted to the *Biblical Recorder*: On April 21 one family from Conway Baptist Church had an exceptional double reason to rejoice. In mid-February, Cody Martin, the 10-year-old son of Ken and Lisa Martin, made a profession of faith and his baptism was scheduled for Easter morning. About 20 of his extended family members were among those in attendance on Easter Sunday to witness this special observance at the beginning of the worship service. Jayson Rowe, pastor, had been discipling Cody along with his 12-year-old brother, Dustin, during the weeks preceding. The pastor had been promoting the “Who’s Your One” Campaign. Rowe had chosen Dustin as his “One” and prayed that he would make the same decision to accept Christ. God answered those prayers three weeks prior to Easter in the pastor’s study when Dustin made this major decision to accept Christ. However, perhaps from both a little shyness, and respect for his brother’s special day, Dustin struggled with when to make the decision to come forward and make his profession public by requesting baptism. During the invitation call after the Easter sermon Dustin courageously came forward. Conway Baptist gladly voted for acceptance. With the baptismal pool still filled and family members present, Dustin was immediately baptized at the end of the service that Sunday followed by the observance of the Lord’s Supper. (Submitted by Madie Draper and Debbie Vinson)



What about your story?

Have you shared about your one on social media or do you have a story about your one? Let us know. Send to editor@BRnow.org or tag [@biblicalrecorder](https://www.instagram.com/biblicalrecorder).

Please share photos and text about your post or, if you don’t have social media, please email your story and photos to the *Biblical Recorder*. We look forward to hearing from you.

AROUND THE STATE

Ordination

ZACHARY DAN PARKS was ordained to the gospel ministry by New Bethel Baptist Church, Garner, on Sun. May 5. Parks has his bachelor of arts degree in Christian studies and a master of arts in ethics, theology and culture from Southeastern Seminary. He is currently in the clinical pastoral education program at Wake Medical Center in Raleigh and serves as the student and music minister at New Bethel.

Submitted to the *Biblical Recorder*: Performing two baptisms at Horse Shoe First Baptist on Easter Sunday was certainly a blessing for a first-time pastor, but what followed was simply amazing! We posted our ONE’s around the double doors leaving the sanctuary to serve as a visual reminder every time we exit the building. At the end of our baptism service a man named Michael came forward to make a decision for Christ. He was the brother of Jason, one of our candidates for baptism. I asked our two candidates and one new believer if they had anything they wanted to share with the church. Jason said “I just want to let y’all know, Michael was my ONE!” Michael’s name had been on our door for less than a week. God heard our prayer, saved his soul, and we removed Michael’s name from our door that Sunday! (submitted by Clint McKnight, pastor of Horse Shoe First)



2019 SBC CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE



J.D. GREEAR



MARSHAL AUSBERRY



NOE GARCIA



JOHN YEATS



EDDIE EATON



DON CURRENCE



DAVID UTH

At press time, these were the announced candidates for election to offices for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the SBC Pastors’ Conference, from left: J.D. Greear, president; Marshall Ausberry, first vice president; Noe Garcia, second vice president; John Yeats and Eddie Eaton, recording secretary; Don Currence, registration secretary; and David Uth, president of the Pastors’ Conference. Check BRnow.org for updates and for more information about each of the candidates. **BR**

June 9

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

June 16

Deborah: Encouraging Faith

Focal passages: Judges 4:1-9; 5:1-5

I will never forget my friend William*. He was very outgoing with a magnetic personality. He would not, however, have considered himself a spiritual leader. You can imagine his surprise when I came and asked him to pray about teaching adult Sunday School.

Someone had observed in a men's study that William asked great questions and made insightful comments from his own time of studying God's Word. I was overjoyed when, not that much later, William was not only leading an adult Sunday School class but also leading a men's Bible study that involved nearly 100 men.

God allowed me to use my faith in Him and the influence He had given to me to call someone else to greater faith in, and service of, Him for the advance of His Kingdom. Afterward, we had the opportunity to rejoice together at all we had seen God do and to praise God for what He had done. Such was the case with Deborah. As judge and prophetess, she was a faithful servant of the one true God, even during the time of the judges –

a period marked by the rollercoaster experiences of idolatry and disobedience, followed by repentance and God's deliverance, followed by further idolatry and disobedience. Deborah not only walked by faith in God and in faithful service to Him, but she also used her influence to call others to an active faith as well, seen in her enlistment of Barak. She was also quick to sing praise to God, then, for His powerful work.

This is a repeating pattern we see in God's work throughout scripture. God does His work in and through one of His faithful servants who then uses his or her example and influence to call others to faithful service to God as well. As a result, God's Kingdom is advanced, God receives glory, and those who have been used by God praise Him for what He has done. Who has God put in your life that you could encourage toward greater faith and obedience for God's glory and the advance of His Kingdom?

* Name changed



RANDY MANN
Pastor, Central Baptist
Church, Henderson

Focal passages: 1 Samuel 1:1-2,9-11, 17-18,26-28; 2:1-3

As a pastor, one of my greatest frustrations is to hear someone facing a difficult situation say something like, "Well, I guess all we can do is pray," as if they have exhausted all of the good options and are now left with prayer as a less desirable, but last available, response. God often quickly brings conviction upon my own heart, however, when I get too critical about such comments.

He quickly reminds me how, even as a pastor, it is very easy to slip into a practice of self-sufficiency where I can spend much of my time preparing and planning and, by contrast, precious little time praying – unless, of course, I have come up on a difficult situation where it seems that prayer is my only remaining option.

There is no doubt that Hannah was in a very heavy and painful situation. She was a broken-hearted woman who had

no children, but desperately longed for them. In her case, there was nothing she could do to remedy her painful circumstance. In that time of great distress, she chose not to wallow in self-pity or to walk in self-sufficiency. Instead, she took her situation, by faith, to the only one who could give hope. She acknowledged God for who He was – the Lord of Hosts, the Holy One, her solid Rock. She trusted Him as she asked. She praised Him when He answered.

God desires that we walk by faith and that we demonstrate that faith as we "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer should not be a last resort, all else has failed, kind of endeavor. It should be the consistent practice of our lives – praising God for who He is, declaring our faith in Him, and asking Him to do what is necessary in our lives, both for our good and His glory.

Are you walking with God, by faith, in consistent, dependent prayer? Are you casting your cares on Him, knowing He cares for you? As a grateful child of a faithful Father, do you intentionally stop to give Him thanks as you see Him answer?

June 9

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

June 16

On Mission

Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 2:1-15

In his book *The Generals*, Thomas Ricks relates the changes that took place in the United States Army leadership during the 20th century. Beginning with World War I, Ricks describes shifting philosophies that worked or didn't work during the century's conflicts. In WWII, George Marshall developed a teamwork leadership model and implemented a strategy with the clear purpose of working together with all the allies to defeat the Axis Powers.

Clear mission with a clear strategy resulted in success. In contrast, Army strategy and leadership philosophy in Vietnam faltered.

The conflict lacked a clear mission, failed to develop adequate leadership, experienced stateside political distraction and did not hold officers or enlisted men to the high standard that had been set in previous conflicts. It is unsurprising then that WWII is remembered as a victory and Vietnam is not.

In 1 Timothy 2:1-15, Paul advocates a similar approach to pastoral leadership. Our mission must be prioritized – God desires the salvation of people through Jesus Christ (vv. 4-6). We should pray

for government officials so that distractions and geopolitical difficulties will not inhibit the spread of the gospel (vv. 1-3). We should carry ourselves with an attitude of prayer and peace so that anger and quarreling will not distract from the mission (v. 8). We should not focus on outward appearances, personal image, nor allow gender and theological divisions to hinder the mission (vv. 9-15).

In short, Paul admonishes Timothy to keep his priorities straight. Major on the gospel. Keep minor issues from becoming major distractions. The implications of 1 Timothy 2 are vital for pastors and church members.

When we pray together faithfully, the priority of the gospel takes center stage. When we focus on the gospel, we necessarily focus less on our image, our platform or our opinions. When we organize our church leadership upon a biblical framework, we operate out of God's expectations and can more faithfully live on mission.

Are you clear about the mission of the gospel? Or are you living distracted?



CHRIS HEFNER
Pastor,
Wilkesboro Baptist
Church

Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Good leaders prioritize well, execute tasks and communicate vision. Great leaders set an example for others.

First Timothy 3 outlines the expectations for the two offices in the church – pastors and deacons. In my experience in church life, I've heard many stories and watched many pastors.

Sometimes churches treat pastors and other leaders unfairly. Sometimes pastors and church leaders fail to lead by example and damage their churches.

Paul describes for Timothy the character of those who will lead the church in the role of elder and those who will serve the church in the role of deacon.

When viewed as a list of character traits for church leaders, I think we get the correct interpretation for who elders and deacons are to be.

Competencies matter for pastors and deacons, but competencies alone do not qualify one for office.

Setting the Example

In a conversation recently, a pastor friend shared that a nearby church called a man because they "liked the way he talked."

But now the church is divided, and it is possible the pastor will resign soon. Character counts.

Pastors and deacons must exhibit godly character because they are to set an example.

I've always believed that the best pastors will be good husbands and fathers who admit their flaws and imperfections but strive for holiness.

The same could be said of deacons and any other church leader for that matter.

One's ability to communicate or teach is important, but dishonesty, immorality or arrogance will undercut one's credibility in an instant.

To church members, have high expectations first for the character of your leaders, then explore his competencies. To church leaders, prioritize your character. Submit yourself to the Word of God. Pursue personal accountability. Learn from your critics. Seek to become like Jesus.

Then, by all means, improve your competencies. But beware lest your competencies and gifts take you farther than your character can keep you.

Funds

Continued from page 1

“This month, there was \$3.27 in the bank when the Mission:Dignity check came in,” Rick said. “Our Social Security pays the bills, but the Mission:Dignity gift pays for our groceries. We can’t tell you how many times we have thanked the Lord for your help. Many months, we would not have bought food without your assistance.”

Mission:Dignity Sunday is June 23. It’s a day to remember and honor retired ministers, workers and their widows living on low retirement incomes. It’s also a time to give generously to help the nearly 1,700 individuals and couples assisted by the ministry.

More than \$7 million is distributed annually, with most of the funding coming from the direct gifts of

individuals, Sunday School classes and churches. One hundred percent of gifts provide monthly grants with nothing used for operating expenses. An endowment covers the administrative costs of the ministry.

GuideStone Financial Resources President O.S. Hawkins noted, “One of the great blessings of our ministry is knowing that so many of the good and godly pastors and their wives we serve are able to have a measure of security and, yes, dignity in their declining years thanks to the individuals, churches and Sunday school classes who give to Mission:Dignity.”

“We are thankful that we can be Christ’s hand extended to these Southern Baptist pastors and their widows who sacrificed to serve His churches throughout their ministries,” he said.

For churches, Sunday school classes and others interested in supporting Mission:Dignity, GuideStone

provides free bulletin inserts, promotional posters and a DVD with several brief testimonies of people assisted by Mission:Dignity. The materials are undated and can be used anytime.

The free resources can be ordered at MDSunday.org or by texting MDORDER to 41444 from a mobile device. Individuals wishing to donate, or wishing to refer potential recipients, to Mission:Dignity can do so through *MissionDignity.org*.

The ministry – now beginning its second century of service to Southern Baptist pastors – has been a blessing, Rick said.

“We just want to thank you so very much,” he said. “We know that God cares for us, and the assistance from those who give to Mission:Dignity is one way He has helped us. It’s amazing and we can’t thank you enough.” **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denominational

The Pee Dee Baptist Association, located in Richmond/Scotland counties, is seeking the man that God has prepared to be our next **DOM**. This man will be one who is relational with our churches, people and pastors. He will possess integrity and be a leader to guide us to fulfill Jesus’ Great Commandment and Great Commission. Please submit résumés before July 31 to peedeebaptist@bellsouth.net.

Pastor

Center Grove Baptist Church, Ahoskie, NC, is seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor**. We are a mission-minded Southern Baptist church searching for the man God desires to lead His church into the future with an emphasis on evangelism and missions. Bachelor’s degree or Master’s degree from an accredited seminary/divinity school and affirmation of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message is required. At least 5 years of pastoral experience preferred. Send résumés and sermon links to vmasbell@gmail.com. Résumés deadline June 30th, 2019.

Shady Grove Baptist Church, Staley, NC 27355, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time**, mission-minded, community-focused **pastor** who believes in the inerrancy of the Bible. We are a SB church in Eastern Randolph County with a parsonage and a family life center. Our Sunday average is 55. Church event attendance is 100+. Pictures/info are on our Facebook page. Please send résumés/sermon samples to John Fields, 111 Smith St., Franklinville NC 27248, or to sbgstaleyncpastorsearch2019@gmail.com. Questions can be texted to 336-301-4278. Text response will be as time permits.

Winterville (NC) Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor** to lead and equip us to build the Kingdom in our community. Our church is 211 years old and has a blended worship style. We are affiliated with the South Roanoke Baptist Association, the NC State Baptist Convention, the SBC, and the CBF. Applicants should have at least five years of pastoral experience, and a master’s degree (e.g., M.Div. or Th.M.) from a seminary is preferred. Interested candidates who feel God is leading them to minister in a small, but rapidly growing town within ten miles of East Carolina University and a major medical center may send a cover letter, personal statement, and a detailed CV to wbcsearchcomm@gmail.com by 30 June 2019.

Clement Missionary Baptist Church, Autryville, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative, mission minded, rural church with an average attendance of 105. Applicant should be licensed and ordained by a Southern Baptist church. Mail résumés to Jennifer Matthews, PSC 60 Waterwheel Ln., Godwin, NC 28344, or email to Clementpastorsearch@gmail.com.

Southern Baptist Church in Ruth, NC, located in the foothills of NC is seeking **full-time pastor**. Due to the retirement of our pastor after 37 years, we are searching for the man God will send us to lead our congregation into the future. We are a small semi-moderate church with traditional music and average attendance of 83. Submit résumé to Anita Tessnear at Southern Baptist Church, 140 Church St., Rutherfordton, NC 28139, by June 15, 2019.

Stallings Memorial Baptist Church, Salisbury, NC, is seeking a **full-time Pastor**. Being a mission-minded Southern Baptist church, we are searching for the man God desires to lead His church into the future with an emphasis on evangelism and missions. Applicants should be SBC ordained with a seminary education from one of the SBC seminaries and affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. Send résumés to: smbcpastorsearchcommittee@gmail.com, or PO Box 438, Rockwell, NC 28138.

Trinity Baptist Church in Newton, NC, is seeking the **full-time pastor** that God has been preparing to lead our church. We are looking for someone who is interested in ministering to all age groups, as we are a multi-generational congregation. Trinity is a welcoming church that loves to worship God through beautiful music, Christ-centered messages, Bible study, fellowship and community outreach. We are dually affiliated with the CBF of NC and the BSCNC. We have an average attendance of approximately 120 for Sunday morning worship. Located in western NC, in the heart of Catawba County, we are a diverse, safe, family-oriented community that offers good schools, many cultural activities, sports and business opportunities. Our ideal candidate will have a theologically sound education from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Salary commensurate with experience. Please send résumé to our search committee email address: trinitynewtonresumes@gmail.com. Résumés accepted through July 15, 2019.

Church Staff

Seeking **Part-time Music Minister** who can develop and promote music/creative arts programs which aligns with the vision and mission of the church to make growing disciples of Jesus. Primary responsibilities include worship music selection, rehearsals and Sunday worship. Also responsible for directing age group choirs, holiday presentations and wedding/funeral services. For more information email: paul@jilcpa.com. To apply, send résumé to Pittsboro Baptist Church, PO Box 696, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

Minister of Music. This position is responsible for providing leadership to a comprehensive music ministry including choirs, orchestra, vocal groups, audio & video teams, etc. The preferred candidate would have experience directing a blended style (traditional & contemporary) of congregational worship. This position is part of the pastoral team of the church. Oxford Baptist Church adheres to the 2000 BF&M. Please email résumés to pastorjoel@oxfordbaptist.com or mail to Oxford Baptist Church, Attn: Senior Pastor, 5965 Springs Road, Conover, NC, 28613. All résumés should include references, statement of faith, salvation testimony, and a DVD or URL of sample of candidate leading a worship service.

Cub Creek Baptist Church, Wilkesboro, NC, is seeking a **part-time music director**. This individual must be a committed Christian, have some musical training, be a team player and have good time management skills. Hours and salary are negotiable. For more information contact Edwin Taylor at 336-831-5926. Email résumés to brian.sampson@cubcreekbaptistchurch.com or mail to CCBC, P.O. Box 86, Wilkesboro, NC 28697.

First Baptist Church of Morehead City, NC, is seeking a **full-time Associate Minister of Children and Youth**. This person shall work with and be responsible to the minister of education and the director of youth and senior adults in planning and executing spiritual, educational and recreational ministries. Preferred qualifications include a clear sense of calling to vocational ministry to children and families, relevant experience in Christian ministry and a degree from an accredited seminary and/or ministry certification. A complete job description can be found at www.fbcmhc.org/fbc_ministry_position. Please submit a cover letter, résumé, and list of references to fbcminc2016@gmail.com by June 15th.

Miscellaneous

MOVED? Don’t forget to change your address with the *Biblical Recorder*. Contact Liz Tablazon at (919) 459-5693 or liz@BRnow.org.

Placing a classified ad in the *Biblical Recorder*

Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: alison@BRnow.org.
- Purchase ads at BRnow.org/Advertise.
- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

For more information, call the office at (919) 459-5691.

Cost for Baptist churches/organizations is \$1.25 per word, number and stand-alone initial (\$1.45 for commercial and non-Baptist entities) with a minimum charge of \$35. Classifieds also are carried online.

SEBTS celebrates first graduates from Hunt Scholars Program

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

As Chad Welch and Kevin Cox crossed the stage of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SEBTS) Binkley Chapel, they celebrated not only a personal accomplishment but a monumental milestone in the life of the seminary as the first two graduates from the Hunt Scholars Program.

"This program allows hardworking students to maximize both their time and finances," said SEBTS President Danny Akin.

"But even more importantly, it provides a very intensive five-year program of sequential studies that prepares them well for the ministry. My hopes for this program have really exceeded my expectations."

The Hunt Scholars Program began in 2015, allowing students to receive their bachelor of arts and master of divinity in pastoral ministry in as little as five years.

Since its inception, the Hunt Scholars Program has exceeded its enrollment projections each year and has doubled in size in the last academic year.

"I'm elated! I pray every student sensing God's call to pastoral ministry will look at this program at SEBTS. I could not hope for a better seminary, faculty or program," said Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church Woodstock, Ga. for 32 years and senior vice president of evangelism and leadership at the North American Mission Board.

The program allows for students like Welch and Cox to learn under exemplary professors who have extensive experience in pastoral ministry in the local church.

Chad Welch remembers his call to ministry clearly after the death of his grandfather in 2013. Anxious about the



Kevin Cox, left, and Chad Welch, right, are the first two graduates to come out of Southeastern Seminary's Hunt Scholars Program, which began in 2015 as a way for those called to the pastorate to receive both their B.A. and M.Div. in as little as five years. (SEBTS photo)

eulogy he was asked to deliver at the funeral, he distinctly remembered that the moment he stood up to speak "was the most comfortable, relaxing feeling I'd ever experienced."

From that moment on, Welch resolved to follow Christ in the same way his grandfather did.

As Welch read scripture daily, he found himself inescapably experiencing God's confirming call on his life in numerous ways.

"Every single day for four weeks I prayed with a different excuse and every single day I'd have that excuse [addressed] in scripture the next day," Welch said.

As Welch realized that his call truly was from the Lord, he contacted his longtime friend, Matt Capps, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Apex, N.C. Capps encouraged him to look into en-

rolling in the Hunt Scholars Program.

Kevin Cox heard the call to ministry as a teenager but ignored it for many years. After graduating high school and attending trade school, Cox went straight to work.

It wasn't until many years later at a men's retreat that Cox committed to follow through with the call God had placed on his life as a boy. With that call, he knew he would need to go back to school for training. That's when his brother-in-law told him about the Hunt Scholars Program.

Cox remembers being hesitant about what job prospects would look like graduating from SEBTS at 53, but he stepped out in faith and enrolled, along with Welch, as one of the first students in the Hunt Scholars Program.

"For me, it was just that confirmation of what I ran away from in my teenage

years," said Cox, who lives in Maryland with his wife of 32 years.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Hunt Scholars Program for both Welch and Cox has been through the pastoral ministry enhancement course, which connects students and pastors through roundtable discussions. These discussions take place with the other Hunt Scholars over breakfast, allowing for them to ask questions and hear the pastor's transparency on successes, failures and struggles he has experienced through his years of ministry. In the 2018-19 academic year, students had the chance to hear from pastors Crawford Loritts, Vance Pitman, David Platt, Bryan Chapell and many others.

Cox believed his calling is to full-time vocational ministry, which he hopes to pursue after graduation.

In addition to serving in a local church and looking for new ministry opportunities, Welch hopes to continue pushing his app, CrossTalk, into new outlets, including K-Love and the Billy Graham Chaplain's Rapid Response Team. The app helps people grow in their faith, share the gospel and connect people to a church they can call home.

For both Cox and Welch, the Hunt Scholars Program is worth the time and effort and has shaped them relationally, academically and spiritually.

"We are thrilled that our Hunt Scholars Program has produced its first graduates," said Scott Pace, director of the Center for Preaching and Pastoral Leadership and the Johnny Hunt chair of biblical preaching.

"These pastors are tangible expressions of God's faithfulness to SEBTS and they embody the godly character, spiritual giftedness, and ministerial skills that our program is designed to cultivate and develop." **BR**

GRADUATES

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of arts in apologetics and Christian philosophy: Brandon Thomas Ayscue, Henderson; Brandon M. Terry, Raleigh; and Casey Ryan Evans, Hildebran

Master of arts in Christian studies: Eon Leeanne Hahn, High Point; Megan Nichols Lively, Wilson; Paul A. Neal, Raeford; Cody R. Padmos, Youngsville; and Jessica Kelly Dell, Raleigh

Master of arts in Old Testament: Luke Albert Boone, Nashville

Master of arts in biblical counseling: Sepideh Gholibeig, Wake Forest; Kelsey Bridges Hamilton, Raleigh; and Phillip Earl Page, Raleigh

Master of arts in Christian education: Brian Russell Post, Raleigh

Master of arts in church planting: Haley V. Hyman, Wake Forest

Master of arts in ministry leadership: Stephen Daniel Britton, Wake Forest; Anton Capo, Raleigh; and Christopher John Siemers, Wake Forest

Master of arts in ministry to women: Alexa Grace Mahan, Wilmington

Master of divinity, advanced standing: James Christian Campbell,

Statesville; Ethan Lee Drum, Wake Forest; Ryan Michael Guzouskis, Wake Forest; and Zachary Darin Leonard, Raleigh

Master of divinity in Christian ministry: David J. Bass, Littleton; Preston Anthony Beaver, Troutman; Philip Carico Black, Raleigh; Kellen Dean Blythe, Pinehurst; Luke Tyler Brakefield, Lenoir; Cameron Andrew Brooks, High Point; Travis Dale Brooks, Durham; Mason William Keith Carpenter, Burlington; Jacob Aaron Collins, Raleigh; Grayson Furlough, Willow Springs; Samuel Gallagher, Camp Lejeune; Zachary Macrae Hines, Asheville; Ricky Alan Lee, Fuquay-Varina; Zachary Jordan McNeill, Trinity; Paul Ashby Pruitt, Louisburg; Joshua Luke Redmond, Raleigh; Jonathan Lee Shelton, Lowgap; Kenneth D. Throckmorton, Winston-Salem; Jonathan Peyton Tyndall, Rocky Mount; William Lawrence Moore, Asheville; and George Tyler Womble, Apex

Master of divinity in expository preaching: Stephen Kail Brown, Rockingham

Master of divinity in pastoral ministry: Chad Welch, Monroe

Master of divinity in student ministry: Robert Alan Tatum, Cedar Creek

Master of divinity in worship leadership: Jonathan Stanely George, Wake Forest

Master of theology: Brandon Shay Andrews, Granite Falls; and Jordan L. Steffaniak, Wake Forest

Doctor of ministry: Nelson Eddy Bunton Jr., Morganton; Timothy Lee Callicutt, Bonlee; Gary Frederick Hallquist, Cary; Samuel Lewis Knight, Winston-Salem; Jason Andrew Little, Raleigh; James Patrick Riddle, Apex; and Russ Andrews, Raleigh

Doctor of education: Jerry Calvin McKinney Jr., Wake Forest; and Donna Long Navey, Indian Trail

Doctor of philosophy: Justin Matthew James, Bunn; Joel Warren Paulus, Monroe; and Stephen Tillis, Raleigh

The College at Southeastern

Master of arts in intercultural studies: Ted Jones Hawkins, Ellenboro; Elizabeth Hope Schofield, Wake Forest; and Matthew Christopher Carsner, Shelby