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Fruitland starts satellites



EXPANDING — David Phelps, left, director of missions in Atlantic Baptist Association, lobbies Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute President David Horton for a Fruitland satellite campus in New Bern.



BR photos by Norman Jameson

CHANGE — Austin Rammell, pastor of Venture, moved the board to ask its executive committee to consider removing “non-priority missions items” out of the Cooperative Program budget in favor of priorities funded in the North Carolina Missions Offering.

Exec. Comm. asked to consider CP priorities

By Norman Jameson
BR Editor

Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute will begin three satellite campuses by October President David Horton told the Baptist State Convention (BSC) board of directors May 26.

Other business of the board, meeting on its regular schedule at Caraway Conference Center, was routine until the closing minutes. Austin Rammell, pastor of Venture, moved that the board ask its executive committee to study the feasibility of replacing “non-priority missions items” in the Cooperative Program budget with items “we say are our priority” that are now funded primarily through the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO).

Before he made his motion Rammell apologized to BSC Executive Director-Treasurer Milton Hollifield Jr., saying “God had to grow me up some” in his four years on the board and his “passion sometimes gets ahead of me and I’ve sometimes been over critical and that can come off as arrogant.”

During his board term Rammell has often pushed in discussions for the budget to fund the priorities currently included in the North Carolina Missions Offering. He feels that will both diminish the need for special offerings and increase the eagerness of churches like his to support the Cooperative Program (CP). The NCMO’s priority items are church planting and Baptist Men, which coordinates two of the highest profile ministries under the Convention’s umbrella: partnerships and disaster relief. If those are truly Convention priorities, Rammell reasons, they should be fully funded through the Cooperative Program and not dependent on a special offering.

“The problem is not marketing for the Cooperative Program,” Rammell said. “GenX pastors get it. The problem is CP itself ... changing how we spend our money is the key, not just changing how we market how we spend our money.”

(See Fruitland Page 5)

Baptist Men take ministry to new heights

By Rick Houston
Special to the Recorder

In Ephesians, Paul writes that some Christians are called to be apostles, others to be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Today, still others are called to be pilots. Members of the North Carolina Baptist Men’s Aviation ministry have combined their passions for flying and Christ to touch countless lives in countless ways. There really doesn’t seem to be a job description as such ... if someone needs help, the group will do everything in its power to help out. That’s borne out in what could best be described as a rather eclectic resume.

Partnering with the Angel Flight organization, fliers of the North Carolina Baptist Men’s Aviation Ministry have flown people in a number of different emergency situations. There have been trips to Haiti and areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Patients and their families have been flown to and from Randleman, N.C.’s Victory Junction Gang Camp, a sprawling complex for chronically and terminally ill children.

Prayers have been prayed over — quite literally — the North and South Carolina state capitol buildings. Youngsters receive plane rides to help foster a love for aviation.



Contributed photo

TRANSPORTING — Bob Joyner enjoys being able to share his love of flying with serving those in need through North Carolina Baptist Men’s aviation ministry.

At the heart of a long list of services, the N.C. Baptist Men’s Aviation ministry is a group based on passion for what it does.

Bob Joyner has long loved aviation. A member of a Mooresville-based flying club that owns two four-seat,

(See Baptist Page 5)

Servant stands strong

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

Mount Vernon Baptist Church on Falls of Neuse Road in Raleigh once sat in a rural part of town. The two-lane road out in front of the church didn't seem to lead much of anywhere, and city planners said the area would never grow and the 35-member church would always be a rural church.

That was 32 years ago. The two-lane road turned into a four-lane road leading to shopping malls and restaurants, and 35 members turned into more than 600. Shannon Scott is the first and only full time pastor of Mount Vernon. When he met with church leaders 32 years ago they told him their church would die soon if something did not change. Scott did not let their honesty and a seemingly unpromising situation turn him away.

"Do I know God called me here? Absolutely," Scott said. When he came the church did not have a big facility or many ministries; they didn't really have much at all. Yet, Scott said during those early years "God was building a base of dedicated people. They came because God called them." Scott can still look out Sunday mornings and see scattered throughout the congregation leaders who have been with him for nearly 32 years.

When Scott arrived at Mount Vernon he preached God's word, and people came to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. When he first arrived the church had no Sunday School teachers, but after praying for laborers

to be sent into the field, Sunday School teachers came. "God's hand was on it," Scott said. "The Lord saved us."

Throughout the years Scott faithfully served the Lord, and the Lord has changed lives through the ministry of Mount Vernon.

The church is now intentional with their evangelism efforts and people are being called out to share the gospel in areas of the world with no gospel witness. Scott continues to watch as new families come into the church and God grows them up to be leaders in the church and community.

Change did not happen overnight and at times Scott did consider leaving. When God never provided a way out Scott knew he needed to stay where he was, for God had work left for him to do. Scott encourages younger pastors not to get discouraged when life is hard, for sometimes the church needs to see that the pastor "can take a storm. Sometimes God's people need to see if this man is going to stand up in trouble."

Serving in one place so many years has challenged Scott to "dig personally." "I can't preach the same sermons I preached 10 years ago," he said. Preaching to the same congregation week after week requires even greater Bible study and sermon preparation. "You've got to give them something new. You can't live off what you've gotten in seminary or at a Bible conference."

Scott plans to continue serving the Lord many more years. "I'm ready to do whatever He wants me to do," he said. "With God, you can't dream big enough."



BR photo by Norman Jameson

CHATTING — Shannon Scott, center, visits at the May Baptist State Convention of North Carolina board meeting with Joel Stephens, left, and Don McCutcheon.

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BSC exec will vote 'yes' on GCR report

By Norman Jameson
BR Editor

North Carolina Baptist Executive Director-Treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr., will be voting "yes" for the recommendations of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force when messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., consider them June 15.

In his first public comments on the work of the task force commissioned last year by SBC President Johnny Hunt to find ways, "Southern Baptists can work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission," Hollifield told members of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) board of directors May 25 that while some structural changes might help Southern Baptists only "a super unusual movement of God's Spirit in our lives" will make them effective in accomplishing God's plan.

Hollifield expressed appreciation for the spiritual aspects of the report, because too often Southern Baptists are guilty of not practicing what they preach, he said.

They have been ineffective in reaching the nations, especially "our own," he said.

While the task force recommendations and conversation focus on pushing back lostness in the nations, Hollifield said if we lose North America there will be no resources to send missionaries to other parts of the world.

Great Commission Giving

Hollifield spoke longest in his one-hour address about the task force recommendation to adopt a new giving parameter called Great Commission

Giving that would "celebrate" all mission gifts from a local church.

It would make the Cooperative Program simply the "primary" element of the category, instead of an exclusively recognized missions giving channel that supports all the work.

He said that recommendation created "angst" originally but said "If the Cooperative Program remains the priority and supreme way our SBC leaders recognize church support for SBC missions, then I have no disagreement with celebrating the additional gifts that churches make to support Southern Baptist missions."

Hollifield's voice broke as he advocated emotionally for the Cooperative Program.

North Carolina Baptist churches give below the six percent national average to missions through the Cooperative Program, he said, and he challenged them "to become a leading state convention in demonstrating that the Cooperative Program ... is the single most effective way to support the multiplicity of missions and ministries that have empowered our churches to accomplish great and mighty deeds in building the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hollifield recounted his youth in a Free Will Baptist home in which his family entertained missionaries who had to return from the field to raise their ongoing support.

"Let us really practice what we preach and take the lead in demonstrating to our Southern Baptist missionaries around the world and across North America, to the orphan and the widow in our own state, to the hungry and needy and to the lost sinner everywhere that North Carolina Baptists are individuals who pray, go and also give to support missions and I think the Coop-

erative Program is the greatest way to do that," Hollifield said.

Next generation leaders are not interested in what the Cooperative Program has accomplished in the past, but only what it can accomplish in the future, he said.

So Hollifield encouraged board members to mentor younger pastors to help them understand the Cooperative Program is the best financial vehicle for missions and ministry into the future.

"I am not a supporter of Cooperative Program because what it does for me or my preferred state convention," he said. "I am a supporter of Cooperative Program because of what it does for God's Kingdom."

Cooperative agreements

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) operates through cooperative agreements with Baptist state conventions and the task force recommends those agreements be phased out over seven years to "liberate" NAMB to create and deploy a national evangelism strategy.

North Carolina Baptists share the expense of nine ministry positions with NAMB, basically on a 50-50 basis. Some smaller state conventions can only provide 10 or 20 percent of a ministry position cost. Most of these positions are in church planting and missions.

To remove funding from cooperative agreements and potentially lose the ministries they support, NAMB would need to establish a "new national strategy for which it does not possess the staff to accomplish," Hollifield said.

Yet Hollifield would support the Baptist State Convention losing shared funding from NAMB if the money would go instead "to fund effective and strategic efforts in the underserved areas of North America."

Hollifield said he informed one of the task force members that they have "no idea how much money" the more established conventions already put back into the underserved areas in strategic partnerships such as the one between North Carolina and the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association.

Hollifield agreed with the task force that one of the greatest harvest fields is "reaching our own young people."

Hollifield believes the next spiritual

awakening "will begin with the younger generation of believers," and he asked, "Are we entertaining our students or equipping them to recognize God's call upon their lives?"

The first two recommendations are "spiritual" and "clarify the motivations of the task force" he said. They include a mission statement that reflects the Great Commission, and they offer a set of core values.

The task force recommendation to remove geographic restrictions so that international missionaries can work among their people group in the U.S. is fine with Hollifield, but he cautions that it not lead to the very duplications that the task force "has worked so diligently to remove."

He is less enthusiastic for the additional one percent of Cooperative Program funds recommended for allocation to the International Mission Board (IMB) to come exclusively from the budget of the SBC Executive Committee. He would like part of the additional \$2 million to the IMB to come from another area of the budget.

Hollifield believes the task force report ignores a significant area of denominational service, that of church health.

He "bristles" he said when he reads that "thousands of unhealthy churches simply need to die."

If that was the Lord's view, he said, we would not have the pastoral letters of the New Testament, written by the Apostle Paul to help unhealthy churches.

"These epistles were written not to help those congregations die, but to help them find newness of life through obedience and faithfulness to Christ Jesus our Lord," Hollifield said.

Ultimately, Hollifield said he will vote yes for the task force report because it met its assigned task and because once approved, the recommendations will go to the SBC Executive Committee and to the boards of the SBC entities where they will receive the study and input from Southern Baptists they deserve and require.

"I believe their work has begun a critical discussion among Southern Baptists related to numerous issues that impact our effectiveness, or lack thereof, in fulfilling the Great Commission," Hollifield said.

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➤ **Green Street Baptist Church**, High Point, volunteers work at the Baptist Children's Homes Mills Home campus in Thomasville. Dan Yates, left, and other church members landscaped the flowerbeds around the archway entrance May 1 as part of the church's Operation Inasmuch efforts. Find another photo from this event as well as more coverage of Operation Inasmuch at www.biblicalrecorder.org in the "Photo Gallery."



Contributed photo

Church News



Contributed photo

➤ Volunteers from **Mission Gaston** at Highland Hills, Gastonia, chose a beautification project at Rosewood Assisted Living Center for their Operation Inasmuch project April 24. Above, Kelly June and her husband deliver plants to Rosewood. More than 50 volunteers helped with the effort. For more photos from Mission Gaston, visit the Operation Inasmuch Photo Gallery online at www.biblicalrecorder.org.



➤ **First Baptist Church**, Whitnel, celebrated its 100th anniversary April 25. Ila Bolick, 93, left, was recognized as the oldest member. Dale Fisher, director of missions for Caldwell Baptist Association, preached. The special service followed a weeklong revival led by men who were called into ministry from the church. Stuart White is pastor.

➤ At left, two young boys from **Enterprise Baptist Church**, Littleton, work on a garden as part of Operation Inasmuch on May 1. Using 196 volunteers of all ages, Enterprise participated in 28 projects at 11 different agencies. Visit Enterprise's photo album at www.biblicalrecorder.org; click on "Photo Gallery" and choose Operation Inasmuch to see more photos from this and other churches.



Obituary

DR. ANDREW LEROY PARKER JR., 95, died at his home in Brookridge Retirement Community on May 24.

A graduate of Birmingham Southern College, Parker received his medical doctor's degree from the University of Tennessee. He also graduated from Southern Seminary. Parker's first pastorate was First Baptist Church, Honea Path, S.C., where he served for seven years before becoming pastor of the Asheboro Street Baptist Church (now Friendly Avenue Baptist Church), Greensboro, where he led for 32.5 years. He was named pastor emeritus when he retired in 1982, and was interim pastor of 13 churches before moving to a retirement community in 1998.

He was moderator of the Saluda Association in South Carolina and the Piedmont Association in North Carolina. He was vice president of the General Board, chairman of evangelism, and president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. His interdenominational leadership positions included: president of the General Ministers Conference in Greensboro, chairman of the Billy Graham Crusade, and president of the North Carolina Christian Action League. He was a lifetime member of the Lions Club.

He is survived by wife, Sara Frances Kanoy Parker; daughter, Sandra Parker Adams of Winston-Salem; son, William Andrew Parker of Asheville; four

Around the state

grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Memorials to: The Leroy and Sara Parker Endowment Fund at the North Carolina Baptist Foundation (201 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511-4257), Friendly Avenue Baptist Church (4800 West Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410), College Park Baptist Church (1701 Polo Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27106), Hospice and Palliative Care (101 Hospice Lane, Winston-Salem, NC 27103), or a charity of the donor's choice.



Staff changes

J. DARRYLL HESTER has been called as pastor at Nakina Baptist Church, Nakina.

He was minister of youth/music at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, Supply.

Watkins Chapel Church has called **BRETT CODY** as minister of music. He was music minister at Creedmoor Road Baptist Church, Raleigh.

SCOTT COLESON has been called as minister of children and youth at

Fairview Baptist Church, Dobson. A student at Liberty Seminary, this is his first ministry position.



Retirement

J. RANDOLPH BROWNING has retired after 43 years of pastoring. He led Sea Level Missionary Baptist Church, Sea Level; Huggins Memorial Baptist Church, Harkers Island; Hamer Creek Baptist Church, Mt. Gilead; Long Branch Baptist Church, Lumberton; First Baptist Church, Star; Midway Baptist Church, Lumberton; and Westside Baptist Church, Red Springs. Browning lives in Montgomery County and is available for pulpit supply. Contact (910) 439-0075.



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Fruitland starts satellites

Exec. Comm. asked to consider CP priorities

(Continued from Page 1)

John Butler, BSC executive leader for business services, said because all entities share the rise or fall of Cooperative Program giving, the priorities in the NCMO would have received less money had they been in the CP budget last year than they received through the special offering.

Board member Don Greene said such a change would require a reeducation process for everyone and “there would be chaos in all the churches” because “it takes years to do that, to reeducate everybody.”

After a clarification that the motion’s only intent is to ask the executive committee to examine the feasibility of such a move, the motion passed on a raised hand vote with many abstentions. The executive committee’s findings are due back to the board in September.

Fruitland satellites

Horton, making his report one year after starting as president of the Bible Institute, (Watch for a feature story on Horton in the June 19 issue) said satellite campuses were a clear dream from his first days.

He learned when he took office that directors of missions had advocated for Fruitland satellites for years.

Two hispanic satellites will open in July, one in Winston-Salem and one in Warsaw at Eastern Baptist Association. A third satellite, to open by October, will be in Union Baptist Association in Monroe.

Horton anticipates as many as five new satellites starting in 2011.

“We want to move slowly but methodically, to make sure the campuses we start will be done right to assure long-term success,” Horton said.

He anticipates costs to be just \$150 per course, including textbooks.

Acknowledging the “difficult days for all of us,” Horton said, “I’m just a firm believer that we’ve got to put something out there in front of people so they have something they want to give to and be a part of ... We’re gearing up to move forward. We’re not crying retreat.”

Chaplaincy

Three soldiers in uniform received a standing ovation when they came to report on chaplaincy ministries in which North Carolina Baptists are involved.

Larry Jones, who works with military/chaplaincy ministries in BSC’s congregational services, is a colonel in the National Guard about to begin a four-month leave of absence from the BSC to direct a government funded study to determine ways faith communities can be more effectively utilized in helping soldiers deal with the stresses of returning from the battlefield.

Chaplain Capt. Tommy Watson, who just returned from Iraq, said chaplains have an opportunity to minister to the “subgroup” that is soldiers.

“We have a group of people who want to put their lives on the line, literally, to serve their country and to serve you,” Watson said.

“Many are in our churches. If they’re not in your church, they’re probably in your neighborhood.”

The chaplains want to see churches

rally around soldiers and soldiers’ families, even those outside the church family.

Watson said when that happens, both the military family and the church will be strengthened.

When soldiers tell him about a problem at home Watson said his best resource is always to call a church at home and ask them to go see the family.

Watson said he hears so many stories for which he has no answer other than Jesus. But churches can fill in gaps at home that will make a real difference.

Military families are real workers, Watson said. Their involvement in a local church will strengthen that church.

“They want to get in there and do something,” he said.

“They need to be invited. They’re probably not going to come to you first unless it’s like they come to me with a bank account that’s empty or a home torn apart.”

Other reports

With CP income through April 9 percent below the same period last year, budget committee chair Steve Hardy said he anticipates a lower budget for 2011.

Cameron McGill, chairman of the social services committee, reported enthusiastically about the 125th anniversary activities of Baptist Children’s Homes, the thousands of persons receiving

counseling through Baptist CareNet and of the new senior adult ministries through North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministries, which receives an average of 30 calls per day asking for help connecting to services.

“These are great days in spite of a few bumps along the road because of the ministries that are being done, and I’m thankful for that,” said McGill, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dublin.

Dana Hall, president of N.C. Baptist Men said the older of two widely used medical/dental buses is worn out and must be replaced. A new vehicle will cost as much as \$400,000.

The Church Planting and Missions Development Committee reported 112 churches in the funding cycle for the first quarter of 2010. Todd Marlow, pastor of Westmoreland Baptist Church of Charlotte, credited these churches with 209 baptisms and \$47,497 in Cooperative Program giving.

Embrace women’s ministry is taking its first international mission trip — to Argentina. They plan to hold teas to host locals, prayer walk, visit in the schools and do evangelism activities.

Fifteen teams are scheduled to help Baptists in the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association this summer, including two construction teams and 13 evangelism teams.

Fruitland students will participate in an Urban Plunge in New York, as well.

Baptist Men take ministry of service to new heights

(Continued from Page 1)

single-engine Cessna 172s, Joyner first began using his talent and interest in flying to serve others about 10 years ago. Now, he is the state coordinator for the North Carolina Baptist Men’s Aviation Ministry.

“I really couldn’t see myself involved in anything that I really couldn’t use to serve the Lord and serve others,” Joyner says. “Anything that I did like that, I would want to ensure that I was able to do that, to use it in some way to serve. It’s just a way to use my talents, skills and gifts that God gave me to serve others.”

Obviously, flying isn’t for everyone. For Joyner, however, it’s a great way to get away from it all.

“To me, flying is exciting,” Joyner says. “It’s not something that everybody does. It’s a little bit different. When I’m by myself, when I go up, I just feel a sense of freedom. On a Friday evening, if I want to go up to just knock around and leave the work week behind, I’ll shoot an e-mail to a couple of buddies and they’ll want to go up, too. The people that are involved in the ministry, everybody has the same passion.”

Another rather unique ministry opportunity for the group amounts to a “church of the week” program.

“We fly over, maybe take a picture, get it developed and (put it in the mail) with a note on the back, ‘Prayed for you today.’”

Imagine the impact that kind of contact could make on a congregation. The wide range of ministry opportunities that it takes on is quite humbling, from fun days at a local airport with a group of children to somber trips transporting family members in the midst of crisis.

Here’s how different the missions of



Contributed photo

SMILING — Bob Joyner enjoys flying patients like Juliana, who was traveling with her mother.

the North Carolina Baptist Men’s Aviation Ministry can be. A few years back, members flew local Royal Ambassador and Girls In Actions groups out of an airport in Elkin.

“We took the kids up and most of them, their churches were close enough to where we could just fly over and let them say a prayer over their church,” Joyner says. “We had real good participation that day. We spent most of the day at the airport ... it was a good day.”

On the other hand, however, Joyner recalls this sad mission as one of his most memorable.

“On Labor Day (2009), I had someone who had a relative who had passed away up in Manassas, Va.,” Joyner concludes. “His son had been killed in a traffic accident, and that was his sister I was flying (home from the funeral). He was telling me how much it meant to have her there. Every (mission) is different and has different meaning, but that kind of touched me, just knowing that we helped facilitate having her there in his time of need.”

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GCR: A call to renewed passion

Several years ago I read about a particular restaurant that specialized in serving breakfast items. Their daily specials usually included items such as pancake breakfasts, eggs and bacon breakfasts, omelets, waffles, biscuits and gravy, hash browns, and of course the one item that makes a breakfast distinctly southern — grits. But one day the advertisement read: Grilled chicken sandwich with spicy Mexican sauce. It was at this point that I realized the restaurant had lost its focus.

The church, like that restaurant, can easily get sidetracked and forget its primary mission. If we are not careful our mission can become distorted with an unhealthy focus on programs, or personalities, or politics, or even on our past. While none of these are necessarily bad, the church's primary focus is to be people, specifically lost people whose greatest need is a Savior.

Jesus said his mission was "to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). He gave the church the same mission before his ascension when he said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force has done an excellent job in its report in reminding the church of

her purpose and in calling individuals and Baptist institutions to pursue this purpose with a renewed passion. As I have read this report my heart resonates with its call and challenge for several reasons.

1. It is a call that is centered on foundational doctrines. What can be more fundamental than embracing the Great Commission? The Great Commission is based upon the truth that without Christ we are dead in our sins, under the wrath of a holy God, and if left in our sins, we will be eternally separated from God in a place called hell. Our only hope is found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through faith. Because there are 3.5 billion people who have never heard of the name of Jesus, and billions more who have rejected his love, they are but one breath away from God's judgment. Therefore, it is urgent that we renew our passion for this task. Our going must be intentional, relational, confrontational, and transformational.

2. It is a call that is fellowship driven. The GCR Task Force affirms that the greatest way to reach the world for Christ is through the local church. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:10 "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." The report encourages each local church to adopt a missional strategy aimed at uniquely reaching its community for

Christ. While institutions and conventions certainly assist churches in their ministries, they can never replace the significance and influence of the local church. Pastors and staff must lead the way for such a resurgence to occur.

3. It is a call to be financially dedicated to the Cooperative Program. Since 1925 the Cooperative Program has been the major stewardship tool used to mobilize Baptists around the world through mission giving. The GCR Task Force affirms the CP as the most effective way to establish missionaries and to extend our reach to the remote areas of the world.

The report calls for an increase in our sacrificial giving and to aggressively increase our goals for the Lottie Moon Christmas offering and for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. In our economically depressed times this challenge might seem daunting. But we must ask ourselves, "What is the cost of a soul?"

4. It is a call for focused direction. Perhaps one of the most sensitive parts of the report is the call for IMB and NAMB to rethink how they can effectively minister to unreached and underserved people groups that have relocated within the boundaries of the United States. With the removal of geographic limitations we can be free to focus on people and not borders.

The Great Commission Task Force Report reminds us to follow the words of Adrian Rodgers: "Keep the main thing the main thing."

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Ortego is pastor of Scotts Hill Baptist Church in Wilmington.)

GUEST COLUMN



Phil Ortego

◀ Pro vs. Con ▶

Two perspectives on GCR report

On June 15 at the annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., Southern Baptists will consider the final report and recommendations of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force, commissioned last year to find ways "Southern Baptists can work more faithfully and effectively together in serving Christ through the Great Commission."

The report (full copy available at www.pray4gcr.com) has engendered significant reaction and conversation across the Southern Baptist Convention. Following are the perspectives of two North Carolina Baptist pastors who were asked by the *Biblical Recorder* to share their opinions on the task force recommendations.

— The Editor

Winners named in 2010 State Bible Drill

BSC Communications

On Saturday, May 15, 30 middle and high school students competed in the state Bible Drill Finals at Pleasant Garden Baptist Church in Pleasant Garden. This year more than 850 students participated in church and associational level drills, with about 575 advancing to state drills. The winners from the six state drills advanced to the state Bible Drill Finals.

Fifteen students participated in the Youth Bible Drill competition. Paul Summerville of Salem Baptist Church, Raleigh Baptist Association, was named the 2010 Youth Bible Drill winner.

In the high school division, 10 students competed with Britney Strickland, who represented Mt. Airy Baptist Church, Burnt Swamp Association, and won the High School Bible Drill.

Coming in first in the Youth Speakers' Tournament was Luke Roberts of Clarks Chapel Baptist Church, Caldwell Baptist Association.

Each winner received a \$2,500 college scholarship



Photo by Walter Stanford

WINNERS — From left: Paul Summerville, Britney Strickland, Deborah Robson, and Luke Roberts. from the Baptist State Convention.

This scholarship is made possible by gifts from North Carolina Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

All three winners will compete in the June 25 National Bible Drill Finals in Mesquite, Texas.

Villegas wins Womble Christian Service Award

MURFREESBORO — Recent Chowan University graduate Jason Villegas of Garland was presented the Vera Parker Womble Christian Service Award, which recognizes Christian faith and commitment expressed in service benefitting the college and community, classmates and friends, faculty and staff.

The award is named in recognition and memory of Vera Parker Womble, a Murfreesboro native and long time resident of Wilson, who died in 2003.

Religion major Villegas, who has also been inducted into the Order of the Silver Feather, and named Best All Around Student at Chowan, received the award humbly and said, "Because the powers that be believe this much in me, and most importantly because I live for Christ, I will try my hardest to live as the man that has been honored."



Villegas

Connie Daniels and Penny Womble, representatives of the Womble family, presented the award at the senior banquet.

Villegas will be continuing his education at Duke University Divinity School in Durham through the Rural Ministries Fellowship scholarship, a full merit-based scholarship sponsored by The Duke Endowment and awarded each year to Duke Divinity School students who exhibit the gifts, passion, and signs of a calling to ordained leadership in rural United Methodist churches in North Carolina.



Opportunity Corner

Color of Church conference

The Color of Church conference will be held June 26 from 9 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at Immanuel Baptist Church in Greensboro.

Rodney Woo, author of *The Color of Church*, is the featured speaker. Woo is half Anglo-American and half Chinese. He grew up in a predominately black neighborhood with black friends, attended a predominately black school and married Sasha, a Latino.

Woo's book establishes a biblical foundation for multicultural ministry and details the current landscape. He will also dialog on multiethnic ministry Saturday evening and speak to combined Sunday School classes and in morning worship the next day.

Registration is \$25. Call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5641.

Campus connect wants input

Baptist campus ministers at colleges and universities across the country want to connect with incoming freshman students, and one way they are doing this is through www.sbccampusconnect.net.

Youth ministers, parents, Sunday School teachers and church staff are encouraged to visit the site and enter contact information for high school seniors headed to college. This information is then sent to the Baptist campus minister.

Bivocational ministers, wives July conference dates set

North Carolina Bivocational Ministries Conference is set July 9-10 at Caraway Conference Center.

The theme is "Communicating Christ to our Culture: Outreach Skills for the Minister" based on Luke 19:10. Speakers include Ken Holland, Renea Henderson, and Lisa Horton with music by Tony Pangle.

Friday's events begin at 2 p.m. and goes through noon on Saturday.

There is a spouse track that meets during the conference as well.

Cost is \$50 per person. Contact Betsy Roland at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5507, or broland@ncbaptist.org.

Why I will vote 'no' on the GCR report

I want to thank the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force (GCRTF) for their hard work in trying to come up with specific recommendations to help local churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to be more effective Great Commission churches. They have succeeded in generating much discussion about doing the Great Commission better in our churches. For that, I am very grateful. However, the final recommendations from this Task Force are not the solution. We need change, but this is not the change we need.

In the GCRTF final report, much is made of the local church and our responsibility to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world. Unfortunately, almost nothing in the recommendations set forth in the final report will actually help the local churches accomplish the task.

The first two components of the report specify a new mission statement and core values. These are nice and there is nothing here with which to disagree. The problems come with the remaining components.

Component 3 calls for a new type of giving which will be known as "Great Commission Giving." In essence, this is advocating designated giving outside of the Cooperative Program. The language in this component seeks to convince the reader that the Cooperative Program is still the "the central and preferred conduit of Great Commission funding."

However, this encouragement to give primarily through the Cooperative Program is degraded by encouraging the churches to give directly to SBC entities outside of the Cooperative Program.

If the recommendation encouraged local churches to give 10 percent to the Cooperative Program and anything above and beyond the 10 percent can be designated as the church sees fit, then there would be no controversy here, but that is not what the report says.

Designated giving to the SBC from the local churches has always existed in the form of "offerings," such as Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, and the N.C. Missions Offering. These offerings have always been presented as giving that is over and above the church member's tithe, not as a part of the tithe. However, now the

GCRTF seems to want to get us to designate part of our tithe directly to SBC entities instead of through the Cooperative Program. This attempt to redirect local church member's tithing to SBC entities outside of the Cooperative Program is dangerous to the financial health of the local church, local associations, and state conventions. The potential for Great Commission Giving to severely damage the Cooperative Program is a real concern.

Component 4 calls for a total restructuring of the North American Mission Board (NAMB). This restructuring includes a seven-year phase out of the cooperative agreements that NAMB

has with the state conventions. If this is implemented, this would be devastating to the state conventions in pioneer work areas which depend on NAMB funding for up to 75 percent of their total budget.

Component 5 addresses giving the International Mission Board (IMB) permission to work within North America with the people groups with which they work overseas. One of the concerns that the GCRTF was to address was duplication of effort among SBC entities. However, this component actually adds to potential duplication of efforts between IMB, NAMB, state conventions, local associations, and local churches. In addition, this only adds to the problem that IMB currently has with financing additional missionaries. If they cannot fund the missionaries needed overseas, then how are additional missionaries going to be funded to work in North America?

Component 6 asks for the state conventions to take over the task of promoting the Cooperative Program and stewardship education from the Executive Committee. Elsewhere, the report encourages state conventions to give a higher percentage of their Cooperative Program dollars to the SBC. In this

component, they are asking the state conventions to take on additional work while encouraging them to reduce their budgets at the same time.

Component 7 stipulates that the Executive Committee, who does the work of the national convention while the SBC annual meeting is not in session, should reduce their budget by one-third so that an additional one percent can be added to IMB. While this two million dollar increase is fairly insignificant to IMB, it will be devastating to the Executive Committee.

To me, the bottom line question in evaluating the GCRTF report is the following question: "How will the recommendations in the GCRTF final report help local churches bring one more person to Christ?"

In the final analysis, the recommendations as set forth by the GCRTF will not help local churches accomplish the Great Commission any more effectively than they are now. Everyone agrees we need to change. But these recommendations miss the mark in accomplishing any true Great Commission effectiveness in SBC churches.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Puryear is pastor of Lewisville Baptist Church in Lewisville.)

GUEST COLUMN



Les Puryear

What do you think?

The Great Commission Resurgence report has produced a lot of feedback from pastors and other leaders in North Carolina and across the country. What do you think?

Send a 300-word or less letter to the editor to editor@biblicalrecorder.org or mail to *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 18808, Raleigh, NC 27619-8808; attn: Editor.

Director of Camp Cale takes own life

Camp Cale Director Steve Carter, on administrative leave pending resolution of sexual misconduct charges, was found dead in his parked truck on land he owns in Virginia Beach, Va., at 10 p.m. May 24. He was 51.

Margie Hobbs, public information officer with the Virginia Beach Police Department, said the wooded property on which Carter was found in the 4800 block of Blackwater Road is listed in his name.

Initial reports said Carter committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning.

His body is being examined at a local hospital, but no foul play is suspected.

Carter was first charged in July 2009 with taking indecent liberties with a child and first degree sex offense involving a child under the age of 13.

Additional charges involving two other children were added in November. Charges were pending and no court date was imminent.

He was on administrative leave from Chowan Baptist Association, which operates Camp Cale.

He had directed Camp Cale since February 2002.

His indictment restricted him from the camp property.

His wife Gracie and children lived in the director's house onsite.

Gracie Carter is part-time assistant director of the camp, which is enrolling students for summer camp weeks.

On Sunday before his death, Carter had attended church where graduating high school seniors were recognized, including his son.



Carter

Alexis seeks, meets neighborhood needs

Alexis Baptist Church has responded in the past couple years with specific ministries to meet community needs that involve members "reaching out at home."

Recognizing they are "bombarded with requests" prompted by needs created by wars, disasters, and by people suffering without basic necessities, church members decided they would no longer overlook the suffering of neighbors "in their own backyard."

Alexis has begun an ongoing home missions project to find and meet needs of those around the church. Since they started the project last year, members have met needs "from the most basic, to the most drastic," according to church member Rebecca Rebels.

"The Alexis family understands there are things in this life that cause reasons people cannot accomplish things on their own, whether it be from lack of money, lack of skills or lack of assistance," said Rebels in a story provided to the *Biblical Recorder*.

The church built a growing list of volunteers with a variety of talents who are following the Great Commission to go and tell, and they are telling and showing by going and caring.

Volunteers have remodeled and repaired a kitchen, a bathroom and an entire mobile home that was damaged by renters' dogs.

They have replaced steps, repaired decks, painted storage buildings and garages. They've repaired gutters and downspouts to direct water away from home foundations.

Others have had handrails installed or entire wheelchair ramps. They have cleaned decks, built walkways, repaired roofs and installed storm windows. They have built a turtle box, a dog entrance and a bunk bed.

Together they have repaired, rebuilt and installed playground equipment, cubbies and book storage for a preschool. They have even stepped up as a well-honed, well-equipped team and built a home.



Contributed photo

WORKING — David Lanham, leader of Alexis Baptist Church's Neighborhood Missions Ministry, wears protective gear while serving on a project.

"From the simple to the extensive, nothing has been too difficult when it comes to caring for our neighbors," said Rebels.

"Our Lord instructed us to take care of the poor and the widows. He instructed us to minister to those in need."

"The faithful at Alexis have taken that to heart to show our neighbors the love and compassion of Jesus, our Lord and King."

This ongoing community care "snowballed" into a volunteer response of 80 persons for each of two Operation Inasmuch weekends this spring, said pastor Sandy Marks.



Blessings from Coast to Capitol

By D.E. Parkerson

Special to the Recorder

One of the things I have learned from having spent more than 60 years as a Christian minister is that our five senses are incomplete without a sixth — a sense of humor. A sense of humor reduces people and problems to their proper size.

Those who have a sense of humor are able to view the hardships they face and the slip-ups they make as lessons rather than mistakes. These are transformed into opportunities to learn something about human behavior — especially our own.

Humor and laughter are also extremely important in relationships. Sharing a good laugh with someone does wonders. This is no doubt why Victor Borge said, “Laughter is the closest distance between two people.”

The health benefits — both mental and physical — of humor are well documented. A good laugh can diffuse tension, relieve stress, and release endorphins into your system, which act as a natural mood elevator.

Norman Cousins, in *Anatomy of an Illness*, describes the regimen he followed to overcome a serious, debilitating disease from which he had suffered. It included large doses of laughter and humor. Published in 1976, his book has been widely read and accepted by the medical community.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, in *Solitude*, emphasizes the value of laughter in all our relationships by saying, “Laugh and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you will weep alone; For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth, But has trouble enough of its own.”

Laughter keeps you from taking yourself too seriously,

even during extremely difficult moments. It causes misery to vanish, and enables you to gain a new perspective. It helps you to take your eyes off yesterday’s problems so you can count today’s blessings and begin to see the opportunities tomorrow offers.

Have you ever heard it said of someone, “If he were to laugh, his face would break in two?” Such persons give evidence of having been born in the objective case, because they live every day in a negative mood. I have known people like that, and I suspect you have also. Life does not have to be lived that way.

The Psalmist tells us, “When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting” (Psalm 126:1-2a). It is easy to be filled with joy and laughter at such times, isn’t it?” It is a different story when it looks as though the sky is falling.

John Masfield once said, “He laughs longest who laughs last.” It is also true that he who laughs, lasts! Those who don’t know how to laugh tend to develop ulcers hypertension, and other physical problems.

Laughter will not cause your problems to instantly disappear. It will, however, enable you, with God’s help, to gain a new and healthier perspective on what you are facing so you can move forward in a positive and more joyful way.

You don’t stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing. So, give yourself permission to laugh. It will brighten your day.

(EDITOR’S NOTE — This item is from *The Paper Pulpit*, a blog on the *Biblical Recorder* web site. Visit Parkerson’s and other blogs at www.biblicalrecorder.org.)

Amp your youth camp

By Diana Davis

Baptist Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Kids are leaving for church camp. What does that have to do with you — a church member? Youth camp and kids’ camp offer an amazing focus for Christian growth, building Christian friendships, and knowing God’s will. Small encouragements from you can enhance that experience. Need fresh ideas?

- A church can order vinyl write-on wristbands, add a camper’s name, and ask members to wear a band all week, praying for God to work in that student’s life.

- As kids depart for camp, show up with individually wrapped Rice Krispie treats for the trip.

- Your choir, deacons or Bible class could ask the youth leader for a camp-enhancing idea, then collect money to purchase it (i.e. camp T-shirts, ping pong table, contest prize, sports equipment, money for ice cream or pizza en route to camp.)

- You or your group could write and mail prayer notes to each camper.

- Mail a giant container of fireball candies for campers to share. Jot a prayer note right on the container and add an address label.

- Invest personally as a volunteer camp counselor, sponsor, nurse or sports organizer.

- Donate a partial camp scholarship(s). Even better, do it as a class or anonymously. Some churches provide camp for minimal cost using budget or a special offering.

- Prioritize camp on your family’s summer calendar if you have a child.

- Fill a pretty bowl with fruit and snacks for a cabin. Provide replenishments for the week, and gift the bowl to the cabin counselor.

- A youth worker who can’t attend could pack individual goodie bags for their students, with a small gift, snacks, quarters and scripture note. Or write daily personal encouragement notes for the cabin counselor to distribute.

- Help the camp leader with last-minute details the week

before camp or with check-in and luggage duties on send-off day.

- Invite campers’ parents to Wednesday prayer meeting that week. Pray for their kids.

- Attend worship or help behind the scenes one night, if camp is nearby.

- Celebrate the results. Ask campers to tell you about their experiences. Enthusiastically attend any post-camp report, testimony service or baptismal celebration. How will you help make your church camp a highlight of summer for kids this year?

(EDITOR’S NOTE — Davis is the author of “Fresh Ideas,” “Fresh Ideas for Women’s Ministry” and “Deacon Wives” and the wife of the Indiana Baptist State Convention executive director. Visit www.keeponshining.com.)



Tar Heel Voices

Daniel Vestal makes unsubstantiated statements

The article “Vestal confident as CBF passes through adolescence” (May 8) contains two statements that are troubling to me.

Daniel Vestal is quoted as saying, “The Southern Baptist culture that denies women can be pastors is not only out of touch with the Spirit, it’s out of touch with scripture.” And, “Our (CBF) understanding of the gospel is that commitment to justice is as important as personal salvation.”

These statements cannot be substantiated with scripture. To make such statements as these by a man of Dr. Vestal’s stature and position apparently shows a disregard for scripture or acknowledges and advertises ignorance of the scriptures. It is hard to believe the CBF coordinator would make such unscriptural statements about the SBC. We can be proud that the SBC leadership believes all the Bible.

M. Ray Davis
Winston-Salem, N.C.



REACT:

Tar Heel Voices is your forum

- Letters are limited to 300 words and may be edited for style, length and clarity.
- Name may be withheld only for sufficient reason.
- Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number.

- Only one letter from a writer will be published in a 90-day period.

E-mail to:

editor@biblicalrecorder.org, or

Mail to: Editor, P.O. Box 18808, Raleigh, NC 27619

Let all nations praise the Lord

By Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

BSC Executive Director-Treasurer

Let all nations praise the Lord
In my last column I shared with you about how North Carolina Baptists are serving through our international partnership with Biju Thomas and the Transformation India Movement. As North Carolina Baptists are serving in so many places around the world through international partnerships, I want to

take one more week and share with you several other opportunities.

If you have not read the latest issue of *Baptists on Missions* I encourage you to do so.

In this publication you will find information and personal



testimonies about all kinds of different trips.

For example, our partnership with Hungarian Baptists and the New Life Gypsy Church in Munkacs, Ukraine.

Volunteers from North Carolina are helping renovate a building for this gypsy congregation and are leading Vacation Bible School with gypsy children. These gypsies are among the poorest people in the country and need our help to meet even the most basic needs.

In July, teenagers from across the state will travel to Honduras to participate in Deep Impact. Deep Impact is a weeklong, hands-on missions experience being done in locations stateside and internationally. Teenagers in Honduras will help with construction projects, Vacation Bible School, medical clinics, distribution of hygiene kits and sports ministry.

We have a partnership in Honduras and Mike and Ginger Greene are our on-site coordinators.

If your church members come to Honduras the Greenes will help make sure you have what you need to do your ministry among the Honduran people.

Your Baptist State Convention staff is involved with partnerships in Ukraine and Honduras, and they can tell you stories of how God used a mission trip to change their lives.

One staff member and her husband joined a Ukraine team last year and this month they will lead a team to Ukraine. Their daughter is also joining them this summer.

Others on our staff have traveled to places such as Cuba, Armenia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Sometimes they share with us during a staff chapel time about their trip and it always amazes me to hear how God transforms their hearts.

They come back with even more of a burden to see people from all nations come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

I believe the reason why they experience such a change is because they see firsthand how desperately people need the gospel — and how so many people have never had even one opportunity to hear the gospel.

It’s not too late for your church to visit www.ncmissions.org and sign up to go on a summer mission trip with one of our partnerships.

If you go, you’ll never be the same again.

“O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.” Psalm 117:1

Will a statesman arise?

It appears that more people are lining up behind the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force recommendations than are advocating for their rejection. The task force has done a good job in utilizing all the media available to get its message out, and task force members have made themselves available across the nation and on numerous conference calls to answer questions and advocate for their recommendations.

As June 15 approaches when the recommendations will be debated and decided upon by messengers to the annual Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) meeting in Orlando the danger arises that the vote will create “winners” and “losers.” That often happens after debates in which both sides are adamantly convinced their perspective is the only right way to see things.

If discussion and vote on the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force findings result in a divided body, it will be a great and devastating tragedy. I asked Danny Akin, task force member and president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, what happens if his “side” loses.

He said for himself he could only say that nothing would change. He would continue to work as hard, as passionately and as diligently as he has been working, for the Kingdom and for the seminary he leads.

I asked because some high profile Baptists have put themselves on the line during this debate.

When Akin, Johnny Hunt, Al Gilbert, Al Mohler, Ronnie Floyd and others bare their souls and say “this is essential” to keep the Southern Baptist Convention from sinking into irrelevancy by the next generation what happens if their perspective “loses?”

Human reaction would be to pick up their marbles and go home, to say, “A pox on all of you.”

Everyone on the task force has spoken strongly for the Cooperative Program as the primary method of funding the common work of Southern Baptists. Several have made significant verbal commitments to increases in their churches and several others have already started making significant increases.

If messengers do not adopt their perspective do they pull back?

If messengers do not adopt the perspective of the SBC Majority, those churches that comprise the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists and who have carried the freight for cooperative work forever, do those churches throw up their hands and turn inward?

Southern Baptists have lamented for a generation the lack of a statesman among us whose wise and reasoned presence and well-spoken word could sway a room and unite a crowd.

That’s not to say we’ve not had influential leaders, men who could rally those of like mind to advocate for a cause.

But it is the man who could rally to unity those of other minds that we’ve lacked.

Such men typically do not rise from among the ranks of the winners.

Their words — no matter how kindly intended and graciously delivered — sting like salt. It is hard to speak for unity from the winner’s podium without sounding patronizing or condescending.

That leaves the search for a statesman among us confined to the ranks of those who end up on the short side of the vote.

It is the gracious “loser,” the magnanimous man in defeat, who can say, “The people have spoken. Let us unite around the decision.”

While the recommendations of the task force are billed as “unanimous,” debate leading up to those decisions was not always so. But the committee did as any committee should.

Once the discussions are held, opinions voiced, arguments heard and vote taken, no matter which side of the decision you’re on, you come out of committee with one voice.

What we will desperately need by the evening of June 15 is the calm, strong, unifying voice of a respected leader from the short side of the vote who will embrace the decision, pledge his support both for the decision and for the Southern Baptist Convention, and who will urge all of those who voted with him their continuing support as well.

This will be most difficult for those on the task force because they have poured themselves so urgently into their study.

They have said the North American Mission Board is “broken;” that next generation leaders will be lost to the SBC without a change; that church members and state conventions are selfish with money that should go to the nations; and that the way Southern Baptists have been doing evangelism and missions does not work effectively.

If messengers vote against the recommendations, can a task force member who believes those things and made those statements swallow hard, rise up and say he remains on board, fully supportive of the Convention and will work hard to help move the Convention forward to meet the challenges it faces — even as it has rejected his efforts of the past year?

Can a person outspoken against the changes promised by adoption of the task force recommendations rise up to affirm the SBC even as it takes a step in a direction that leader feels is misguided?

A statesman who would be embraced by persons of all perspectives will never wear the garland of triumphalism. A statesman for our day must arise from the ranks of those whose preference was denied.

Failure of such a statesman to arise threatens any potential for the SBC to move forward in the strength and effectiveness that only unity can provide.

EDITORIAL



Norman Jameson

Rammell recommendation tough call

Venture pastor Austin Rammell moved the Baptist State Convention board of directors May 26 to ask the Executive Committee to consider the feasibility of taking out of the Cooperative Program budget non-priority items in favor of priority items now funded through the North Carolina Missions Offering (Story page 1).

The intent is transparent and pure. Rammell, who has advocated for such a move during his term on the board, says let’s budget those things we say are our priorities, and leave the special offerings to fund non-priority items.

The result of a special offering for “non-priority” items is obvious. But that result also is OK with Rammell and others of similar mind. They would say if churches do not support those items in a special offering, then obviously those items have no real merit and should be allowed to fade away.

From a development or fund-raising perspective, however, you want a special offering to include items that have significant merit and appeal, so people give

to them. If you look at Cooperative Program and special offerings as one basket in which the total funds ministries, you want that total to be as large as possible. Special offerings for high appeal items assure the highest total.

Years ago when the Baptist State Convention (BSC) responded to complaints of “too many special offerings” being collected among the churches, the BSC combined offerings for Baptist Retirement Homes, Baptist Hospital, Baptist Children’s Homes and the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) into one. The result was unmitigated disaster.

So the Convention after a couple years pulled the Retirement Homes, Children’s Homes and Hospital out and into a “Homes and Hospital Offering” and kept a separate NCMO offering. Still, disastrous.

The first year each entity was allowed to resume its own offering, income from the Thanksgiving Offering for Baptist Children’s Homes alone was as high as the offering for all three entities had been the year before.

The Cooperative Program is the undergirding force for funding cooperative ministries. But some of the

money pays the light bill that if left on its own could never raise its own funds.

When Tom Elliff was pastor at First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., he had to take the drastic step of laying off every staff member, including himself. Those who could work without pay did so as long as they could before the church could start hiring some of them back.

In the midst of the financial straits the church endured, he shared that he allowed special offerings to be received among his people. Why? “Because the more they give, the more they give,” he said.

Giving begets giving. Giving begets generosity. Generosity begets a loving, fruitful spirit in the life of a congregation. And in the life of a Baptist state convention.

No church must receive any special offering. Every church is completely autonomous in that and every other matter. While the executive committee has been instructed now by the board to examine the feasibility of creating an impotent North Carolina Missions Offering, to do so would be a return to disaster.



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Lesson for June 13

Formations

Lesson for June 20

Sins of Desire: Greed and Envy

Focal Passage: Proverbs 3:27-28; 11:24-28; 23:17-19

Each lesson in the *Learner's Study Guide* begins with a question: today, "Whom do I harm in my desire to acquire things?"

I once heard John Vannorsdall, long-time chaplain at Gettysburg College and Yale University, distinguish between what he called "hot" and "cold" sins.

He identified the hot sins as sins of passion, excess, and losing self-control — well-known sins, easily identified, widely condemned. Examples from vice lists in the New Testament include theft, murder, fornication, adultery, sodomy, licentiousness, wickedness, drunkenness, carousing, reveling, a hot temper, and filthy language.

In contrast, the cold sins are calculating, callous and unsympathetic — interior sins, often more effectively concealed, more plausibly denied. Jealousy, conceit, haughtiness, selfishness, anger (as in vengeance or grudge-bearing), gossip, slander, backbiting, deceit, lying, and bitterness make the New Testament lists. So do greed and envy. (Could we add bigotry and prejudice?)

Vannorsdall noticed that most of us are quick to spot the hot sins and focus our moral attention on them. After all, they get the most publicity. It also helps when they're done by somebody else.

The cold sins get less scrutiny. Besides being lower on the radar, they just don't seem as bad. Is it because that's where we do so much of our own per-

sonal sinning? Better to point the finger in another direction.

All sin is harmful: some hot sins, like murder, especially so. But Vannorsdall wondered, which sins — hot or cold — cause *more* harm to more people more of the time? (A clue: In the Gospels, Jesus says more about money than any other topic besides the Kingdom of God.)

Greed is when I want more. Envy is when it belongs to someone else. Both are harmful.

Greed harms those I take advantage of, pursuing more. Greed harms those I neglect, chasing after more. Greed harms those I look down on after I get more. Greed harms people the world over who must live on less because I must have more. Greed robs me of my own joy and contentment, desiring more.

Envy does the same, with a dose of resentment, spite and bitterness thrown in. The antidotes to envy and greed are trust and generosity: "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity" (2 Corinthians 9:8,11).

A bumper sticker says, "Whoever dies with the most toys wins." Don't you believe it.

Sins of Indifference: Sloth

Focal Passage: Proverbs 6:6-11; 24:30-34

Bernard Boyd taught New Testament at my college. One day he lectured on Mark 3:28-30: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the famous unforgivable sin. It wasn't some legal technicality, he said, some secret word that, once spoken, damned you forever. People were accusing Jesus of getting His power from the devil, not God (v. 22). The sin was unbelief.

And it's unforgivable, Dr. Boyd said, because if you don't believe in Jesus, you certainly won't ask for or accept His forgiveness.

He told about a woman who was terrified that she had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, whatever it was, and that

God would never forgive her. Dr. Boyd told her, "Madam, if you're worried about it, you haven't done it."

Sloth is like that. If you're worried about it, you're probably not doing it — not yet. But it can slip up on you.

Sloth is not common laziness, like not doing your chores. It's a spiritual condition.

Neither is it just being spiritually slack, like sleeping in on an occasional Sunday morning. It's much worse.

The Latin term is *acedia* (a-SEED-ee-a), from a Greek word for "carelessness." It means deep malaise, utter

indifference, apathy, unconcern. Spiritually, you couldn't care less.

It can also mean failing to nurture or cultivate: not taking care.

The metaphor in Proverbs 24:30-34 is perfect: "a vineyard in ruin due to sloth's neglect," the *Learner's Study Guide* says. The weeds take over, the walls fall down, and nobody cares.

It happens. Spiritual neglect can lead to spiritual "care-less-ness," then spiritual ruin. Skip enough church, and eventually church no longer matters. Don't read your Bible, and one day you can't find it. Fail to live intentionally for God and for others, and you'll forget how.

The opposite of sloth is caring: loving God and neighbor, and showing it. But love, untended, fades. Not overnight, but sooner or later.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told a parable: A wild duck, migrating south, stops in a barnyard for the free food and decides to spend the winter. Next spring his wild cousins soar overhead, flying north. The duck tries to join them, flapping his wings and echoing their calls, but he's grown too fat to fly.

The wild ducks come again, southbound in the fall. The grounded duck watches the sky longingly as they go. Years pass, until the day comes when the wild ducks wing their way over the farm, uttering their haunting cries, and the duck in the barnyard no longer notices at all.

That's sloth.



Ed Beddingfield
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Dale Austin Jr.
associate pastor, Wakeminer Baptist Church, Raleigh

Lesson for June 13

Bible Studies for Life

Lesson for June 20

When Religion Fails

Focal Passages: 1 Samuel 4:3-5, 10, 20-22; 5:1-4; 6:19-21

Christianity is not a religion. Religion is man's attempt to reach God, while Christianity is God reaching down to a sinful man to provide salvation and fellowship.

Christianity is not a religion, but it is a perfect relationship initiated by God and sealed with the blood of Jesus, the Messiah. Religions always fail.

The passages we will be studying this week show us how religious actions on our part do not influence God to follow our lead or for God to support our choices and actions.

Our study this week picks up where we left off in our June 6 study. Samuel confronts Eli, the priest, with the behavior of Eli's priestly sons, and he informs Eli of God's displeasure.

A period of time has passed, and Israel is encountering issues with the Philistines.

The sons of Eli (Phinehas and Hophni) take the Ark of the Covenant to lead Israel's army to battle the Philistines.

This initially looks to be a good idea, but what happens is a disaster for Israel, because God had not authorized the Ark to be moved.

The Ark ends up being captured, the armies of Israel are defeated, and the sons of Eli perish.

Eli is so distraught that he falls out of his chair, breaks his neck, and he also dies. Things don't go much better for the Philistines. They do not respect the

Ark of the Covenant, and God sends a curse on each city that ends up housing the Ark until the Philistines, in desperation, send the Ark back to the people of Israel. The people of Israel were misled by the leadership of the priests, Phinehas and Hophni.

These two priests treated the Ark as a good-luck charm instead of something holy that belonged to God.

They had wrapped religion around the Ark, and it had replaced the leadership of God.

Today, it is so easy to fall into the same trap that the people of Israel did. Our society displays crosses on common jewelry not as a declaration of the crucifixion but more as a good-luck charm just like these priests did.

I can remember a co-worker from many years ago that had a keychain full of various religious symbols that she kept attached to her purse.

When I asked her about it, she said that she had them "just in case."

Well, that is not how God works.

He wants us to have a relationship with Him and to follow Him by active prayer, Bible study, and meditation on Him instead of trying to use some religious symbol, donation, or some other religious action to influence God's hand into standing with us.

Do you treat your time with God as a religion, or is it a growing relationship where we become more like Him?

When External Threats Come

Focal Passages: 1 Samuel 7:2-17

We are bombarded with alarming news every day — the economy is faltering, jobs are scarce, food prices are going up, there is unrest around the world, and no one

has an answer. Life does bring challenges and tribulations, but will we have the courage to seek and rely on God? We are not the first generation to face such trials; our passage this week details a revival that began to take place in the lives of the people of Israel and how they were able to seek the Lord, get rid of their false gods, and dedicate themselves only to the one true God.

Our Bible study picks up 20 years after the Ark of the Covenant was captured (and returned) by the Philistines.

Samuel begins to lead the Israelites as their judge. During the previous 20 years, the people of Israel had fallen back into worshipping false gods as well as keeping lip service to the Lord, but something begins to change, and a spirit of revival begins to take hold across the nation. Samuel leads the people in returning to the Lord with all of their hearts, ridding the land of their false gods, and dedicating themselves to the Lord. As a revival begins, the Philistines decide that this is a good time to march toward Israel. Of course, fear strikes in the hearts of the Israelites as a result of this impending danger. We are so similar to the people of Israel when we are faced with challenges. Just when we begin to grow closer to God, we allow other things in our lives to creep in

and shake our very foundations. Samuel does not falter; he cries out to the Lord on behalf of the people of Israel, even in the midst of a terrible threat, and God listens. God moves the Philistines into total confusion so that they flee the land.

There are a number of things that we can learn from this passage and apply to use in our lives:

1. God wants us; He wants 100 percent of us. God was not willing to share His people with false gods, and He feels the same about us today. We must put away anything that comes between us and God.

2. The people of Israel rededicated their lives to God with repentance, confession of sins, and a commitment to God. We need to do the same thing with Jesus Christ as our focus.

3. When trials came to the people of God in the form of the encroaching Philistines, the people cried out for God to protect them. Trials and tribulations are a constant occurrence in our lives. We need to rely on God to take care of us.

Samuel's words to the people of Israel remind us that a relationship with God is founded on a decision to give our hearts to God and to trust Him with all we are.

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SBC baptisms up, membership down

After four years of decline, the single number that identifies “success” for Southern Baptists’ evangelical efforts ticked upward in 2009: baptisms increased by two percent.

The same report, accumulated from the statistics that churches self-report on the annual church profile (ACP), showed membership declined for the second year. A small membership decline of .42 percent — to 16.1 million — elicits little dismay in a Convention in which many churches are actively purging their rolls of inactive members.

Baptisms in the 45,000 churches that identify with the Southern Baptist Convention totaled 349,737 in 2009, a two percent gain over 2008, which had been the lowest total since 1987.

In North Carolina, baptisms leaped 20 percent and surpassed 26,000 for the first time in seven years, an increase to which evangelization director Don McCutcheon credits, “The blessing of our God upon His people evidenced by a heightened awareness and concern by pastors, churches and associational missionaries for those in our state who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

North Carolina’s baptism numbers are higher than listed in the national report because some churches reported after the LifeWay deadline.

LifeWay accumulates and distributes information gleaned from the ACP.

“The fact that more people were baptized this year than last year gives us a reason to hope we’re on the right path,” said Thom Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay.

“At the same time, we as Southern Baptists continue to show signs of drifting from our historic commitment to evangelism, as reflected in the fact that it still takes 46 Southern Baptists to lead one person to faith in Christ.”

McCutcheon believes the North Carolina Baptist emphasis on evangelism, a focus on praying intentionally for non-Christians by name and a desire by state convention staff and church leadership to be intentionally and effectively evangelistic is leading to a renewed evangelism effectiveness among churches.

Nationally, Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, is glad for an increase in baptisms, but did not get too excited about labeling it a trend.

“Saying this year’s increase in baptisms is good news is like bragging your state moved from the 47th to 46th state in educational achievement,” he said. “It’s better, but it’s not time for a parade.”



News Briefs

Americans say morals in decline

(RNS) Three-quarters of Americans say the country’s moral values are worsening, blaming a decline in ethical standards, poor parenting, and dishonesty by government and business leaders, Gallup reports.

The number of Americans who say the nation’s moral values are in decline grew by 5 percent since last year. Other reasons Americans mentioned were a rise in crime, a breakdown of the two-parent family and a moving away from religion or God.

Only 14 percent of respondents believe that the country’s moral values are getting better. An increase in diversity and Americans pulling together in tough times are two of the reasons these respondents gave.

Pollsters also found 45 percent of Americans believe that current moral values are in a poor state. This number is equal to last year’s, which was the highest since 2002. Only 15 percent of Americans believe the country’s morality is in an excellent or good state.

Supreme Court to rule on school choice tax credits

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. Supreme Court will rule on an Arizona tax-credit program that allows donations for scholarships to religious schools, it announced May 24.

The high court is expected to hear oral arguments in the case during its next term, which begins in October.

The justices will review an April 2009 decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which deemed parts of the school-choice program as unconstitutional.

In 1997, the Arizona legislature passed a law enabling citizens to receive income tax credits for donations to private nonprofit “student tuition organizations” (STOs). Those organizations are required to provide at least 90 percent of their funds to private schools in the state.

Under the program, STOs have been established to fund specific kinds of schools, including religious ones. According to the Ninth Circuit Court, the two largest STOs are, in order, the Catholic Tuition Organization of the Diocese of Phoenix and the Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization (ACSTO), which limits scholarships to use at evangelical Christian schools.

In overruling a federal court, the Ninth Circuit’s three-judge panel said the program “lacks religious neutrality and true private choice.” It breaches the First Amendment’s ban on government establishment of religion, the appeals court ruled.

Study: American ‘Millennials’ value family above all else

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — When asked what’s important in life, most American “Millennials” — those born between 1980 and 1991 — say family comes first, ahead of friends, education, careers and even religion.

That’s the finding of LifeWay Research based on a wide-ranging August 2009 survey of 1,200 Millennials in the United States. The study forms the basis for the upcoming book *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation* by Thom Rainer and his son Jess Rainer. Sixty-one percent of Millennials place family at the top of their priority lists, followed by friends (25 percent), education (17 percent), careers/jobs (16 percent), spouses/partners (13 percent), and spirituality/religion (13 percent).

Land touts immigration reform

Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission is among evangelicals calling the new Arizona immigration law misguided and pushing for federal immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

According to a story on CNN, the group, which includes Mathew Staver, dean of the Liberty University School of Law, will soon begin lobbying Republican leaders in Washington to support comprehensive immigration reform under President Obama.

But a big part of their job is to first persuade rank-and-file evangelicals to get on board. Staver and Land have partnered with Samuel Rodriguez, an influential Hispanic evangelical figure to try to draft a consensus evangelical position on immigration reform.

“After securing our borders, we must allow the millions of undocumented and otherwise law-abiding persons living in our midst to come out of the shadows,” reads a recent draft of the document, which is still being finalized. “The pathway for earned legal citizenship or temporary residency should involve a program of legalization for undocumented persons in the United States.”

Other news ...

- A top British judge has ruled that Christian beliefs have no standing under secular law because they lack evidence and cannot be proven.

- Belgium is poised to become Europe’s first country to ban the face-covering Islamic veil, after lawmakers approved such a measure April 29.



Classified Advertisements

Pastor

First Baptist Church, Hickory, NC (www.fbc.cc), is seeking a **Senior Pastor** to lead an outstanding staff and congregation with a heart for missions. Average attendance is over 500 combined in contemporary and traditional worship services. The church is affiliated with CBF and SBC. Applicants should possess or be pursuing an earned doctorate from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Deadline is July 15, 2010. Send resume, references and statement of faith to: First Baptist Church Search Committee, 339 2nd Ave NW, Hickory, NC 28601-4943.

Lakewood Baptist Church, Kannapolis, NC, is seeking a **full time Pastor**. We are a small conservative Southern Baptist church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. We are in a growing community near the NC Research Campus. Contact Pastor Search Committee, 806 Klutz Street, Kannapolis NC 28081.

Pastor for First Baptist Church, Williamsburg, Kentucky. Beautiful, small town setting located near University of the Cumberlands. Diverse membership with an average Sunday attendance of 140 and active youth group. Must be able to work with both SBC and CBF. Parsonage available. Seeking someone with a minimum of M.Div. degree and pastoral experience. Send resumé to First Baptist Church, 230 S. 5th Street, Williamsburg, KY 40769.

FULL-TIME PASTOR. Vesuvius Baptist Church, Vesuvius, Virginia, is seeking a full-time pastor. Candidate must have a degree from a recognized seminary. We are affiliated with BGAV, SBC, and Augusta Association. Submit resumes to Pastor Search Committee, 7025 South River Road, Vesuvius, VA 24483.

Pastor. Seeking full time pastor. Member of Brushy Mountain Baptist Association and SBC. Resident membership of 200. Resumes by July 16, 2010. Cub Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 86, Wilkesboro, NC 28697.

Pastor. Hallsboro Baptist Church, Hallsboro, NC, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small, rural church with a diverse congregation. We support both CBF and SBC. Applicants should have a master’s degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Please send resume and references to Search Committee, 3815 Sam Potts Hwy., Hallsboro, NC 28450.

Ephesus Baptist Church, Sanford, NC small rural CBF/SBC church with blended traditional and contemporary worship styles serving Lee/Moore counties is seeking **Interim Pastor**. Please send resume and letters of recommendation thru July 15, 2010, to: Interim Search Team 2724 White Hill Road, Sanford, NC 27332-1319.

Buena Vista Baptist Church is seeking a **pastor**. We’re a CBF congregation located 10 minutes from VMI, Washington and Lee University, and the Blue Ridge Parkway; serving the cities of Buena Vista and Lexington and the county of Rockbridge. The church has a strong music program, a growing youth ministry, and eight staff members. Roy Thomas has been our intentional interim minister for three years. We’re looking for a pastor with gifts and passion for preaching, training leaders, and developing small groups and ministry teams. Visit our website at buenvista-church.org. Please send resumes or inquiries to Jim Cox, Coxjg2003@yahoo.com/540-570-9423/135 High Ridge Drive, Lexington, VA 24450.

Antioch Baptist Church of Lincolnton, NC, is a rural church with 100 to 150 members & seeking a **full-time pastor** who is dedicated to serving God, passionate for God’s people, and committed to helping the church grow in membership and service to the Lord. Salary depends on experience & will include housing. Please send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, 3387 East Highway 150, Lincolnton, NC 28092.

Church Staff

Southern Baptist church seeking **full time Children and Youth Pastor**. Please send resume to First Baptist Church 101 S. First Avenue, Mayodan, NC 27025 or email: joinus@mayodanfb.org. Attn. Search Committee.

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RA winner fights terminal disease

By Melissa Lilley
BSC Communications

“There’s me giving him a high-five,” Zackary said pointing to a picture of him and Buzz Lightyear. Buzz, the character from Disney’s Toy Story, is the Disney star he was most excited to see during his trip to Disney World last year.

Zackary flipped through each page in the album his mom made, giving extra commentary when he came to photos of his favorite rides and Disney characters. Zackary loved the Tower of Terror ride and the ride that let him pretend to drive a car.

The whole McGowan family — two sisters, a brother, mom (Patsy) and dad (Scott) — joined Zackary for his trip to Disney World, made possible because of the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

At two months old doctors diagnosed Zackary with neurofibromatosis (NF), a genetic disorder that causes tumors to grow on nerve endings anywhere in the body. Zackary’s tumors, two of them, are on his brain. For Zackary, now eight years old, the disease is terminal. Zackary has already lived longer than doctors anticipated.

Living with NF means Zackary tires easily and sometimes uses a wheelchair. Visits to the doctor for MRIs and other procedures are common for the McGowan household. Seizures are nothing unusual for Zackary. While Zackary is often in a lot of pain, he rarely asks for pain medication. Mom and dad know when he does ask, the pain is at its worst.

Since Zackary is very sensitive to light, temperature changes and loud sounds, the McGowans brought the outdoors indoors by putting a swing and a slide in Zackary’s room.

Scott and Patsy are honest with their children, and with Zackary, about the severity of NF. “He knows everything,” Patsy said. At age 8, Zackary knows that no one is really sure how much longer he has to live.

The fear of death has not crippled Zackary. Just a few months ago Zackary’s army tank won Best in Show at the state Royal Ambassador (RA) Racer Day at First Baptist Church in Salisbury. “He wanted to make something

different from everyone else,” Scott said. Dad helped with some of the gluing, but other than that, the tank is all Zackary. Twenty hours worth of work to earn Best in Show.

Zackary enjoys participating in RAs at First Baptist Church in Mebane because “they talk about the Lord.” Talking about the Lord is something Scott and Patsy say their son has always been doing, for as long as they can remember. In fact, it’s because of Zackary that the McGowans started going back to church after being away from church for awhile.

Zackary wants to help others. He participates in service projects with RAs, such as making care packages for shut-ins.

He also raised money for Songs of Love, a nonprofit organization that creates personalized, original songs for children and teenagers with a life-threatening illness. Zackary got inspired to help when he received his own song from the group.

Earlier this year Zackary was baptized at First Baptist. Scott remembers the day when Zackary went to talk to the pastor about being baptized. “He was so weak that day,” Scott said.

Scott wanted to carry his son down the aisle, but Zackary insisted on doing it himself, even if it meant holding onto the pews to get there. “He said he wanted to be baptized before he died,” Scott said. Zackary’s family, doctor, dentist and school teacher all attended his baptism.

Scott understands some of what his son endures on a daily basis, as he also lives with NF. Scott battled acute leukemia for about 10 years as a child and was diagnosed with NF at age 12. Although not as severe as Zackary’s case of NF, Scott has his own challenges. The disease has gotten worse in recent years, forcing Scott to quit work and have his driver’s license revoked. His memory is getting worse and so is his reading ability.

For Scott, on a bad day the pain is like having needles all over his body. “I don’t know how Zackary deals with it,” he said.

In 2004, Patsy quit her full time job so she could devote her time to caring for her family. Although it’s close every month, and not much is left, if anything, the bills get paid and the Lord provides.

curred on the same day.

In his defense Keough said he never inappropriately touched women at the food bank. He claimed one of his accusers was angry because she was refused food. Keough did say that he hugged one of the women, but said he did so because his church is a loving church.

While on the witness stand, Keough said that he couldn’t have done anything wrong because he has erectile dysfunction.

On May 24, several women testified against Keough. They all said the assaults happened while visiting the Bessemer City church-run food bank.

Keough’s arrest came in November 2009 after a woman complained to police. After his arrest, others began to share similar stories.



BSC photos by Melissa Lilley



TROPHY — Zackary McGowan, left, with Rodney Poston, RA director at Mount Sinai Baptist Church in Shelby. Poston was one of the volunteers helping during RA Racer Day. McGowan’s tank, at left, won Best in Show at the state Royal Ambassador Day at First Baptist Church in Salisbury.

On June 19, the McGowans are hosting a Ride for Life to help raise money for medical treatments for Zackary. Zackary is already hard at work himself, contacting classic car owners and motorcycle riders and asking for their participation. For more information call (336) 512-7045 or e-mail daisyjean123@yahoo.com.

The McGowans do not know how much longer they have to spend with Zackary, but the uncertainty of the future does not cloud their joy for living now.

They have learned to be thankful. Every morning when they wake up and hear Zackary say “good morning” they are reminded to be thankful.

Bessemer City pastor gets suspended sentence, probation

From wire reports

A Gaston County judge found King James Baptist Church’s pastor guilty May 25 of two counts of sexual battery.

Harley Michael Keough, 73, was charged with 10 counts of sexual battery and one count of assault on a female. His sentence: a 60-day suspended sentence and 18 months probation. Keough will also undergo a sexual offender evaluation, submit a DNA sample to the state and be added to the sexual offender registry.

Keough has been charged with 10 counts of sexual battery and one charge of assault on a female for instances that allegedly happened between 2006 and 2009. Only two of the counts were being tried at this time because they oc-

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