



BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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KNOWING SOMEBODY CARES BUOYS RETIREE

By ERICH BRIDGES | GuideStone Financial Services

Robert Baker has learned a few things during 91 years of life and more than half a century in ministry:

- Don't complain about tough times or hard work. Listen, learn and trust the Lord.
 - Preach the Bible and love people.
 - Do what you're told when God (or someone He sends into your life) tells you to do it.
- "It's all part of the call," Robert explains.

He learned obedience early, growing up as a farm boy in Depression-era North Carolina. His father didn't issue commands twice. There were chores to do every morning before breakfast and the mile-and-a-half walk to the school bus.

Milking Blackie the cow, for instance.

"She gave about a gallon," Robert recalls with a



twinkle in his eye. "Well, she didn't give it; you had to take it."

Those chores developed discipline – and muscles – in Robert, the seventh of 14 children. He grew stronger carrying his handicapped sister to school (she weighed about the same as the field pack he later carried during two years in the army).

Small and wiry, he was fast, too. "I had the fastest feet in the county," he says.

In school races, he would leave other runners half a block behind him. The quickest girl in the county, by the way, was named Ruth. She would later become Robert's beloved wife of 64 years and the mother of their three children.

Farming didn't work out for Robert as a young family man, so he tried his hand at shipyard work in Newport News, Va. Then he hired on at the Amoco Oil refinery in nearby York County. "Refinery work," he says, "was tough, interesting and dangerous."

The dangerous part didn't much appeal to him as a husband and father. But he persevered and advanced on the job. "Miss Ruth" was always waiting at home with a

See Retiree page 6

They signed for your freedom

In a few weeks, our nation will celebrate the birthday of the “land of the free and the home of the brave.” On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed by 56 courageous men who represented 13 colonies.

In celebration of one of the greatest freedoms we enjoy, religious liberty, the *Biblical Recorder* reserved page 16 of this issue to provide our readers with some quotes on the subject. We hope you will use this information for personal edification and that you will generously share it with others. The page can serve as a poster in your church or for display in another prominent place – before and after July 4.

While researching the North Carolina connection to the Declaration of Independence, I learned some interesting facts about the 56 signers that you will appreciate.

Eight of the signers were immigrants who were born in Ireland (3), Scotland (2), England (2) or Wales (1). All of the signers from the five states of Massachusetts (4), Rhode Island (2), Maryland (4), Virginia (7) and South Carolina (4) were born in the states they represented. None of the signers from the three states of New Hampshire (2), North Carolina (3) and Georgia (3) were born in the states they represented.

N.C. had three signers of the Declaration of Independence. Joseph Hewes was born in New Jersey; William Hooper in Massachusetts and John Penn in Virginia.

Born into a Quaker family, Hewes moved to Edenton, N.C., at the age of 33. He built a profitable shipping business before he was elected to the state legislature in 1766. The state sent Hewes as a delegate to the first meeting of the second Continental Congress. Like most Quakers, Hewes was a peace-loving man who wanted to avoid all forms of violence. Initially, he did not favor a war to gain independence from England. However, at the second Continental Congress, John Adams convinced him to change his mind. Once he signed the Declaration, he never wavered in working untiringly for the American cause.

Hooper, our state’s second signer, was born in Boston, Mass., in 1742. He was the son of a Congregational clergyman. For a short time, he studied for the ministry. Hooper shifted his focus and graduated from Harvard at the age of 18 with a degree in law. He moved to Wilmington, N.C., set up a law practice and was elected to the N.C. colonial legislature in 1773.

Known as a gifted orator, Hooper was despised by the British. They harassed his family, forcing him to hide with friends in Edenton while the rest of the family moved to Hillsboro. He fell ill with malaria, was nursed back to health but died from poor health at the age of 48.

Born in Caroline County, Va., in 1741, John Penn had no formal education. He taught himself the disciplines of law and qualified for the Virginia bar at the age of 21. His family moved to a community near Henderson, N.C., where he practiced law.

The provincial congress soon elected Penn as a delegate to the Continental Congress. He was passionate about

independence, serving the state and the new republic sacrificially in spite of great personal financial loss.

Penn was buried at his home near the town of Stovall, but his body was moved to Guilford Courthouse National Military Park about 100 years later in honor of his leadership in battles against the British invasion led by Cornwallis.

“My first wish is that America may be free,” Penn said.

For the gift of religious liberty, we

are indebted to many other courageous men and women of the colonial era.

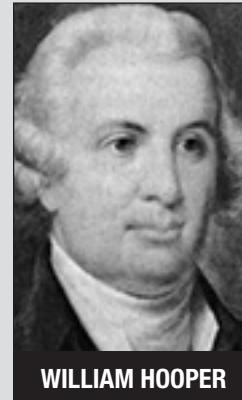
One of Virginia’s seven signers, Patrick Henry, is best remembered for his “Give me liberty, or give me death!” speech. But his influence on the religious liberties we enjoy today is much broader than his famous quote.

With the blessing of the tax-supported Anglicans, Virginia’s civil magistrates regularly persecuted Baptists, Presbyterians and Quakers. These Christian groups found one of their most stalwart defenders in Henry, whose father’s side

N.C. signers of the Declaration



JOSEPH HEWES



WILLIAM HOOPER



JOHN PENN

of the family had a rich heritage with the Anglican Church, and whose mother was a devout Presbyterian.

Stirred by the preaching of Presbyterian evangelist Samuel Davies and the persecution of Baptist evangelist John Weatherford, Henry frequently defended the unhindered public preaching of the Bible, and arranged the release of many Baptist preachers from jail.

The website of Lehigh Valley Baptist Church in Emmaus, Pa., tells this story: In 1768, Henry rode many miles on horseback to a trial in Spotsylvania County, Va. He entered the courtroom where three Baptist ministers were being tried for preaching the gospel without approval of the Anglican church. In the midst of the proceedings Henry interrupted, “May it please your lordships, ... Did I hear an expression that these men, whom [you] are about to try for misdemeanor, are charged with preaching the gospel of the Son of God?” The judge released the preachers.

This was one of many times when Henry stood up for the freedom to preach

the gospel unhindered in the colonies and in the newly formed United States of America.

Religious liberty is a treasure that must be guarded with intense passion and

unending intentionality. We must not surrender this valuable jewel to the failed thinking of today’s moral relativists. Many courageous leaders of the past stood tall and paid a high price to give us this priceless gift.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention said, “One thing we need to be very clear about is that religious liberty is not a government ‘benefit,’ but a natural and inalienable right granted by God. ... When we say – as Baptists and many other Christians always have – that freedom of religion applies to all people, whether Christian or not, we are not suggesting that there are many paths to God or that truth claims are relative. We are fighting for the opposite. We are saying that religion should be free from state control because we believe that every person must give an account before the Judgment Seat of Christ.”

Let freedom ring! Not for the sake of nationalism but for the sake of eternal, biblical truth, let freedom ring! **BR**



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IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Growing in the Lord at Youth Weeks

When the days get longer and warmer, I become more and more grateful for God's gift of the seasons – for the upcoming beginning of summer and for all of the exciting activities that come with the changing of the seasons. It is around this time of year that I also feel especially grateful for BeDoTell Summer Youth Weeks at Fort Caswell.

Year after year, youth from all over the state make their way to beautiful Fort Caswell to participate in Summer Youth Weeks. These weeks, orchestrated by the convention's own Merrie Johnson, have long been an incredible highlight of the summer.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

During Youth Weeks, students participate in personal and group Bible studies and times of worship and fellowship, all in addition to typical camp activities. Students also spend time packaging food for those less fortunate in Haiti. I am always so impressed by the way the Lord has given these students His servant's heart. What a testament to the Lord's character and great love!

I hope that you will be encouraged by the way that God works in the lives of these young people. Since

2001 alone, a recorded 6,016 students accepted God's gift of salvation during Youth Weeks at Caswell, 43,925 re-dedicated their lives to Christ and 3,441 answered a call to ministry. In addition, these students have packaged a total of 1.5 million meals for Haiti.

I truly believe that the Lord blesses Summer Youth Weeks at Fort Caswell – the way that these students' hearts turn to Him every year is absolutely incredible. Often, Youth Weeks are a sending point for students – many camp attendees go on to become strong Christians who serve in our churches, and many of them also develop a missional outlook on life, seeing their lives lived in response to a calling and their surroundings as their mission field. These young people are going into college prepared to live the gospel and to be a witness for Christ wherever they go. I cannot think of a better way to help these students become disciple-makers for God's glory.

I would like to ask you to keep the students and the leadership in your prayers in the upcoming weeks and months, as BeDoTell Youth Weeks begin June 12. Every year, the Lord works in miraculous ways and calls students closer to Him during the camp weeks. It is my hope that more students than ever will understand the fullness of the Father's love for them this summer while at Caswell as they grow in the knowledge of His love and grace.

I wish that every N.C. Baptist pastor and every youth leader from our churches would experience what happens during these BeDoTell weeks at Caswell. If your youth have never attended our BeDoTell weeks, I challenge you as a pastor or as a church youth leader to visit and observe just one full day of camp and see if you will not want to bring your students next summer.

“Remember now your Creator in the days of thy youth, before the difficult days come...” Ecclesiastes 12:1. **BR**

Timeless truths for fathers

The Lord gave Mary and Joseph the privilege to be the earthly parents of Jesus. Unfortunately, we have little information about this young couple, especially Joseph. However, the Bible does give us some insight into their lives just before Jesus was born.

In Matthew 1:18-24, we learn three valuable principles from Joseph's life. He was a man of integrity who loved the Lord and lived out his convictions. Here are three principles that guided Joseph's life and should guide our lives, as well.

● Stand firm on God's Word.

The Bible refers to Joseph as a *“husband faithful to the law”* (Matthew 1:19a). When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, it was reasonable for him to think that Mary had been with another man. He felt he could not go through with the marriage because he was not the father of the baby. This would violate his moral standards that were based on scripture.

Joseph had every right to divorce Mary. In this situation, we see a man who stood firmly on God's Word. He was a student of the Bible and was determined to live his life according to God's standard. Joseph was a man who made his decisions based on the Word of God, no matter what the situation.

● Put others first.

Although Joseph would have been justified to divorce Mary, the only question was how would he carry it out? Because of his love and kindness toward her, he did not want to put her through “public disgrace,” let alone have her put to death. Instead, he decided on another alternative. The Bible says Joseph *“had in mind to divorce her quietly”* (Matthew 1:19b).



MARK SMITH
Guest Column

Here we see that Joseph was more concerned for Mary's reputation. He had every right to expose her sin publicly and humiliate her in front of the whole town. However, his concern was not for himself. He decided to make the divorce a private matter with only two other people as witnesses. He did this because he wanted to protect his former “wife to be” as long as he could. In this passage, we see a man who put Mary first. Joseph was a man who put others before himself, no matter the situation.

● Be a man of action.

As Joseph pondered what to do, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream explaining that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit and not to be afraid of taking her as his wife. When Joseph woke up from his dream, the Bible says that *“he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him”* (Matthew 1:24).

Even when faced with an embarrassing situation, Joseph lived by God's laws and made them the standard by which he lived. When God gave him a new assignment through a dream, hesitation was not in Joseph's character as he acted on God's command. He wanted to live a righteous life before God no matter what it cost. I can imagine he felt liberated by the angel's announcement. Joseph was a doer of God's Word.

This Father's Day – and every day – be the man of integrity the Lord has designed you to be. Strive to obey God's Word, live humbly and be the dad of action your children need to imitate.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Mark Smith serves as the senior consultant for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's Faith at Home ministry. He can be reached at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5647, or msmith@ncbaptist.org.) **BR**

Sharing the gospel with Muslims – What if?

In the 1960s and '70s churches seemed to be thriving with members and money, especially among Southern Baptists. The Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (now the International Mission Board) began setting goals to appoint several thousand missionaries. The promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions produced tens of millions of dollars.

As I reflect on 50 years of serving as a pastor, an international missionary and a seminary/divinity school professor, several observations stand out in my experience with Muslims.

I have often wondered, what if we had responded to Muslims differently?

Today, Islam is the fastest-growing world religion with an estimated 1.7 billion Muslims worldwide. In 1980 there were 800,000 Muslims in Europe. Presently there are tens of millions of Muslims across the European continent.

My wife, Joan, and I were in the FMB's first extended missionary orientation at Ridgecrest, N.C., in the fall of 1967. In previous years, missionaries had a one-week orientation in Richmond before leaving for their overseas assignments.

At Ridgecrest, there were about 100 missionaries with several hundred children living in close quarters, eating meals together and attending classes from early morning into the evenings for 16 weeks. It was a boot

camp. Of the 100 missionaries going to all continents, only two couples went to Europe (Italy and Switzerland) and one couple – my wife and I – went to the Middle East (Iran).

Some couples were assigned to Muslim people groups in Asian and African countries, but very few went to the historical heartland of Islam in North

Africa, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There were openings for missionaries, but very few responded.

Joan and I were appointed as the first Southern Baptist missionaries to the country of Iran in 1967. With our three children, we arrived in Tehran and were befriended by Presbyterian missionaries who assisted us in obtaining legal work permits.

I taught world religions as the only non-Iranian on the faculty of Islamic theology at the University of Tehran. I taught Muslim clergy that would be preachers in mosques, teachers in universities and chaplains in the military. I also served as associate director of Armaghan Institute, operated by the Presbyterian mission. The institute offered English classes to more than 600 Iranian high school and university students using the Bible as a study source. It was located strategically across the street from the main gates of the University of Tehran with an enrollment of 25,000 students.



GEORGE W. BRASWELL
Guest Column



Houston leaves mark on

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

When he was sleeping in his car at the track trying to break into writing about NASCAR, Rick Houston never imagined he would author a book or be part of a film. “I just think that a guy from Yadkinville, N.C., having the opportunity to work with a team from England on a film like ‘Mission Control: The Unsung Heroes of Apollo’ is pretty much the definition of a miracle,” Houston said, “just how everything came together and how beautiful a film it is.”

After writing *Go, Flight! The Unsung Heroes of Mission Control*, Houston became an associate producer and consultant for “Mission Control,” a documentary inspired by his book written with Milt Heflin, a former flight director and retired chief of the flight director’s office for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

“He has become the greatest long distance mentor I could have ever imagined,” Houston said of Heflin. “He has become a true friend.”

Houston described Heflin’s assistance on *Go Flight* as “absolutely invaluable.” Heflin made himself available for procedural or technical questions. “He really made that book far better than it would have ever been had he not been involved,” Houston said. “I couldn’t be more pleased with how well the film came out and how proud I am of the team that put it together.”

In the book, Houston shares stories of the early race to space between the United States and the Soviet Union. The men who worked in mission control were students straight out of college, soldiers toughened by their service and even blue collar workers. The movie is directed by David Fairhead and produced by Keith Haviland and Gareth Dodds.

Houston hosted screenings May 25-26 of “Mission Control” at the Yadkin Cultural Arts Center’s Willingham Theater. About 300 people came to see the film and participated in a question and answer time with Houston.



RICK HOUSTON

“Ever since this whole process started, I would run by the theater where the showing was held,” Houston said, dreaming of the day when he would be able to show this movie to his hometown. “This town means a lot to me. It’s home now.”

Although Houston is a Nashville, Tenn., native, he has called Yadkinville home for many years. “This is where my family is; this is where my friends are; this is where my home is. I just wanted to do something for them because they had supported me for so long. To see it finally happen was a huge blessing.”

Houston, who is a member of Maplewood Baptist Church in Yadkinville, is a freelance writer as well, including some articles for the *Biblical Recorder*, North Carolina’s Baptist news journal.

Houston found his first space-writing job in the message board of *collectspace.com*. An author had backed out of a book deal with University of Nebraska Press and an editor was looking for individuals with space knowledge to divide the chapters for the project. Houston’s writing experience ratcheted him to the top of the list. He was given the lead chapter of the book on Apollo II.

“I really didn’t want to take it,” Houston said. “That was a story that had been told a million times. I really didn’t know how to do it in a way that would be fresh and interesting. But I jumped into it.”

Not long after that project – *Footprints in the Dust: The Epic Voyages of Apollo* – Houston was asked if he would like to do a book on the space shuttle program, *Wheels Stop: The Tragedies and Triumphs of the Space Shuttle Program, 1986-2011*. That led to *Man on a Mission*, a children’s biography about David Hilmers, an astronaut, which then led to *Go Flight*.

“Once I got my foot in the door, I kind of kicked the door down,” he said. “That’s what any writer has to do. They take advantage of every opportunity they can get.”

Reality check

When Houston was working on *Wheels Stop*, he had the opportunity to operate an actual shuttle simulator but his weight kept the buckle from being able to fasten. That started him on a journey of weight loss and wellness. Although his weight has fluctuated, he has lost about 100 pounds and strives to exercise on a regular basis.

The astronaut helping him was “really nice” about the awkward situation, but “to this day, almost seven years to the day later, that memory still drives me,” Houston said. “I’m not skinny now. I’ll never be skinny, but when I’m out walking or running or working out, I’ll flash back to that, and I’ll keep going.”

What’s next?

Houston’s next book comes out in August. He’s back to his National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) roots with *Dale vs. Daytona: The Intimidator’s Quest to Conquer the Great American Race*.

“I really enjoy the process,” Houston said.

Another book came out in early 2018 on the life of Dale Earnhardt Jr., a beast to write about. Houston explained the quotes, you know, and you’re done. The paper or on computer requires planning.

While it is a



shared a bit about sleeping in his press box for launch.

“I cannot be alone I felt,” Houston said at that time. “I had a name. That was it.”

His child was born and it hurt Houston.

He asked a friend for a call, and the friend said Houston used to be a bar. “It was by the way,” he said. “I pray every night than I ever did.”

Houston’s first newspaper the day he worked there to full-time job was in 1992.

Houston, 49, has twin boys, and a daughter.

Having grown up, he received a degree in journalism (now university) and the next Billy Graham was born.

But he quickly became comfortable behind the wheel of a pit.

Email Houston at missioncontrol.mh@missioncontrol.mh

book is expected late this year or the 2001 Daytona 500 race where he was killed. "It is a much different book than to write a news story," he explained. "With a news story, you get the interview, you write it up. To put 140,000 words down on a computer is a much different beast. It takes a lot of time and a lot of thought." The leap from news writing to penning a book, Houston said, "I think any ink-stained wretch, as most journalists would call themselves, dreams of the day where they can expand their horizons and write a book."

His first two to three books were written while he was still covering NASCAR.

Although Houston did have a niche in NASCAR and now in NASA, as a writer, he just wants to tell the story.

“That’s the thing that I love about being a journalist,” Houston said. “Everybody has a testimony. Everybody has a story.”

In the introduction of NASCAR's *Greatest Race: The 1992 Hooters 500*, Houston

begin to tell you how frightened and Houston said of his divorce around and no money. I had zero to my s rock bottom.”

as calling another man “daddy,”
aston to his core.

riend for money to make a phone
end provided him \$2, an amount
to buy a bag of chips and a candy
far the worst moment in my life,”
red harder and more sincerely than
er did before.”

friend told him about a job at a local newspaper the next day. Houston applied and was hired two years before moving on to a job at a newspaper with a racing newspaper. Houston, has since remarried (1996) and is now 66 years of age 16.

own up in the church, Houston re-
in religion from Belmont College
) in Nashville. "I was going to be
Graham," he said.

ly found he was “far more com-
a keyboard than I was in a pul-

on at apollo18cdr@yahoo.com. Visit
ovie. **BR**



Retiree

Continued from page 1

smile – even when he came in after midnight, dirty and exhausted from another long shift.

“I had as much support as I needed from day one,” he remembers. “My darling always sent me away with a hug and a kiss. I never left home without it.”

His spiritual turning point came the day a serious fire broke out at the refinery.

Robert helped quench it and saved the lives of a number of men on the scene. While they celebrated survival, he heard the voice of God:

“That’s what I want you to do with your life,” the voice said.

“I want you to spread My Word that men may live.”

Robert knew he had been called to preach the gospel. “That fire served as the ignition point for me,” he says.

When he got home and told his wife he had been called to ministry, she sobbed softly for a while. Then she smiled and said, “I’ve been knowing that for months.”

That was 1964. The Bakers picked up and drove to Fort Worth, Texas, where he attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He went on to serve as pastor or associate pastor of five churches in North Carolina and Virginia – most recently, Spring Hill Baptist Church near his current home in Cobbs Creek, Va.

He retired from full-time pastoring in 1994 but continued to serve in interim and pulpit supply roles.

“It’s all part of the call,” he repeats. “I preach the Bible, and I love the folks.”

Robert still preaches from time to time, particularly at memorial services for relatives in the wider Baker clan. He also enjoys tending the garden behind his house, where he grows collards, kale and sweet potatoes.

If the rototiller breaks down, he remembers how to use a good old-fashioned hoe. He tills the soil in the hot sun without breaking a sweat.

However, age and medical issues have slowed Robert a bit in recent years. “Miss Ruth” died several years ago.

“She’s up there now,” he says quietly, pointing toward heaven.

His children faithfully check on him, and he can handle most of his living expenses. But the “little foxes” (as he calls them) of unexpected costs creep in – needed medical prescriptions, shots and the like.

“You don’t stop living when you retire,” he explains. “You still have the same needs.”

That’s where Mission:Dignity comes in. A monthly stipend from the ministry enables Robert to cover medical expenses – and other needs – and keep the “little foxes” at bay. After so many years of serving God and caring for people, he appreciates the tangible way Southern Baptists now care for him in his twilight years.

Mission:Dignity Sunday is June 25. It’s a day to remember and honor retired ministers, workers and their widows living on low retirement incomes. It’s also a time to give generously to help the nearly 1,800 individuals and couples assisted by the ministry. About \$7 million

is distributed annually, with most of the funding coming from the direct gifts of individuals, Sunday School classes and churches. Every dollar given provides well-deserved monthly grants with nothing used for operating expenses.

GuideStone® has free bulletin inserts, promotional posters and a DVD with several brief testimonies of people assisted by Mission:Dignity. The materials are undated and can be used anytime. Order online and find additional resources at MDSunday.org.

Mission:Dignity continually reminds Robert of the love and care of his Southern Baptist family. And that gives him the energy to head out to the garden and plant some more greens.

“It’s a ministry that is often ignored,” he says.

“The help is more than a dollar. It’s knowing that somebody cares.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Erich Bridges is a freelance writer who can be reached at Erich.Bridges@gmail.com and wrote this story on assignment for Mission:Dignity.) **BR**

Home disciple-making in the daily rhythms of life

Nestled in the passage of scripture known as the Hebrew *shema*, the Lord describes His perfect plan for parents to be the primary disciple-makers of their homes.

The Bible says, “... *impress them on your children.*”

This may appear to be a simple phrase with little meaning, but a deeper look into the word “impress” may surprise you.

The Hebrew word Moses uses that the NIV translates “impress” is *shanan*. According to Allan Moseley, professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, “*shanan* means to sharpen as you would sharpen a sword.”

Moseley describes Moses’ use of *shanan* in Deuteronomy 6:7 as unique.

He said, “This is the only place in scripture where *shanan* is used this way. God is commanding parents to start at home and intentionally sharpen their children with His Word.”

After Moses commands parents to “impress” God’s Word into the lives of their children, He gives instruction on how to make that happen within the daily rhythms of life. He says, “*Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up*” (Deuteronomy 6:7b).

What is Moses describing?

As the primary disciple-makers of the home, the Lord has given parents the privilege to engage children intentionally with

spiritual conversation. Moses simply tells parents to “talk” to their children. That is simple enough, but the big push back for parents is “when.”

Moses strategically maps out a simple framework that fits into every family’s daily schedule. Within the rhythm of each day we sit at home, drive down the road, go to bed and get up the next morning.

Scripture gently gives us instruction to be intentional with our time.

Therefore, as you sit at home, talk about last week’s Sunday School lesson. While you ride down the road in the minivan, talk about the pastor’s sermon he preached last weekend. When you are getting ready for bed,

talk to your children about something you saw God do in your life that day.

Even in the rush of getting ready for a new day, you can share what the Lord taught you during your quiet time that morning.

Mom and Dad, rest assured, you can do this.

The Lord has given you more than enough power and wisdom through the

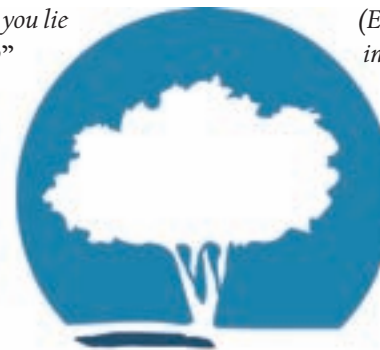
Holy Spirit to be the disciple-maker your children need.

He simply asks you to be intentional.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – If you are interested in learning more about how this new ministry can help your congregation, contact Mark Smith, senior consultant for Family Evangelism and Discipleship, at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5647, or msmith@ncbaptist.org.)



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Steven Johnson's enduring faith motivates others

Steven Johnson began playing football at a young age in Media, Penn. He's now an accomplished professional linebacker, but the road to his dream hasn't been easy. What seemed difficult at the time, Johnson now sees as part of a plan that has made him stronger both on and off the field.

During his teen years, Johnson's parents divorced, he faced bullying at school, and he didn't make the varsity squad until senior year. Johnson got a break after being named team captain and winning all-state and regional recognition his final year. But it wasn't enough to win him scholarships to major university football programs, so he went on to play at a small prep-school.

In his first season, Johnson received a devastating knee injury that put him out for the year. Depressed and physically hurting, he learned to rely on God in ways unknown to him before.

He walked on at the University of Kansas the following season, and received a scholarship the year after. Again Johnson proved his talent on the field. He won awards and led the team in tackles.

After graduating from college, Johnson participated in the National Football League's (NFL) Scouting Combine. It did not result in a draft pick, but the Denver Bronco's offered him a chance to compete for a position at their pre-season camp. Johnson made the team and continued on the roster for three years, playing beside one of the game's greatest quarterbacks, Peyton Manning.

He then spent one year with the Tennessee Titans, and now enters his fifth season with the Pittsburgh Steelers, hoping to gain a starting position. Johnson and his wife, Stephanie, have started The Faith Motivated Foundation, which seeks to encourage kids and adults to set and achieve their goals and to live a healthy lifestyle, by motivating through Christ. Johnson has taken a rocky road into the NFL, and it's required a large measure of faith in God and lots of hard work.

Q: What is it like to play for a quality, successful head coach like Mike Tomlin?

A: When you play for a coach that has a spiritual compass like Mike Tomlin, you feel a sense of favor and you can't really explain it. With Mike Tomlin



Steven Johnson, right, loves being part of the Steeler Nation. He also uses his platform as an NFL player to spread the gospel through his daily life and The Faith Motivated Foundation, an organization he started with his wife, Stephanie. Johnson wants to encourage kids and adults to set and achieve their goals and to live a healthy lifestyle by motivating through Christ. (Contributed photos, graphics)

– and I've only told a few people this – he kind of feels like my dad.

Literally, it's that kind of trust in a coach. When you mess up, he will get on you, but he won't beat you down. He wants to make you better, and he always tells the truth. And that's all you can ask for in this business, for guys to be honest with you and tell you the truth.

Q: That has to be a confidence builder. Do you want to play harder for a coach that tells it like it is?

A: Yes. "Do I need to work on something? Do I need to get better at this?" – he will say, "Yeah, you do."

Some coaches don't necessarily do that. With Coach Tom you get it straight. I love "Steeler Nation," and being in Pittsburgh is truly a blessing.

I hope I can be a Steeler for the rest of my career. It's definitely an honor and a privilege to be a part of that organization.

Q: Our organization, FSN, was honored to have you as one of our keynote speakers at our "Faith and Football" live Super Bowl outreach.

How did that experience impact you?

A: It was great. I had a chance to give fans an inside look into my life: what I have been through; my relationship with God; how I was brought up in my faith; and how I am still living by that today. I think it's cool that many guys in the NFL today are active in sharing their faith in God. That's what it's all about, spreading the gospel.

Q: You have such a great heart for kids, but you are straight up in your message to them.

A: Exactly. Not everyone is going to be an NFL athlete or an NBA All-Star. That's just how it is. We need doctors, teachers, firefighters and lawyers. That gift God gives us – did you use it in the right way and give back to the next generation?

That's what it's all about, you know. It's a never-ending cycle. And we have to continue to better ourselves.

We should all have one common goal, and that's to be successful in what we're called to do.



Q: You reach so many kids through your faithmotivated.org foundation. I like that you take the time to personally interact with many young people.

A: Through my Faith Motivated Foundation, that's how I do outreach to a lot of kids.

I have kids come up to me all the time wanting to talk to me. I'm like "Wow!" Sometimes we exchange information – it can be a phone call or sometimes I have opportunity to treat them to lunch. That's what it's all about.

When I was little, I followed guys (of faith) like Brian Dawkins and Duce Staley, because I was a huge Philadelphia Eagles fan.

I didn't realize it at the time because I was so young, but the gifts that God gave us, we have to pass it on to someone else and keep this thing going.

Johnson Continued from page 7

Q: What I enjoy about you is you're down to earth, with a very positive message, and you show kids that side of you.

A: Yes, I'm an NFL football player, but I'm also just a regular person, you know what I mean? I eat pizza on the weekend. I love French fries. We're regular people just like you, and we love God. I know that if you love God and trust in Him, He can take you farther than you could ever imagine.

Q: Who are some current players that you look up to in the NFL?

A: I talk to Matthew Slater (Super Bowl Champion, New England Patriots) throughout the off-season. He's always sharing his faith with me, along with his trials and tribulations; how he's been in this league for so long; his accomplishments – so many Pro Bowls and accolades. I want to go to the Pro Bowl, and God knows that's the desire of my heart. I'm going to continue to stick it out, and go forward.

Visit faithmotivated.org and connect with Johnson on Twitter: @smj2852.

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



Pittsburgh Steeler Steven Johnson, center, enjoys working with and encouraging children through his foundation. (Contributed photo)

New Huckabee show to 'encourage, edify, entertain'

Baptist Press

Former Arkansas Governor and U.S. presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee looks for his new talk show to be a “wholesome, watchable program for the whole family.” Huckabee recently announced the fall debut of his show on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN).

“Anybody who ever watched the show that I did on the FOX News Channel will be familiar with the idea of information and inspiration,” Huckabee said when he announced the show from TBN’s Jerusalem studio May 24. Huckabee was in Israel for President Donald Trump’s visit to the nation. “It’s not so much a Christian program ... but it will be a program hosted by a believer, so we’ll have a worldview that will never offend the people of faith,” Huckabee said. “It hopefully will encourage, edify and even entertain.”

Promoted simply as “Huckabee,” the hour-long show will broadcast live from the heart of downtown Nashville, Tenn., TBN Chairman Matt Crouch said from Jerusalem.

“Basically, the Huckabee show is coming back,” Crouch said, “and ... it’s going to be on Trinity Broadcasting,” Crouch praised Huckabee for the success of his FOX News talk show that received top ratings airing from 2008-2015. The religious broadcasting station will schedule Huckabee in the same weekend time slot as did FOX, where the show drew 2 million viewers, half of them among 25-year-olds to 54-year-olds, TBN said.

TBN describes Huckabee as “one of the nation’s foremost Christian and political voices.” TBN airs in more than 175 nations, in 14 languages and on 30 global networks. **BR**

Muslims Continued from page 3

From 1968-70 I communicated with FMB officials through letters and telephone calls, asking them to send young college graduates in the newly formed missionary Journeyman program to Tehran as English teachers. Iranian students were eager to learn English at Arma-ghan Institute. We believed it would be easy to get work permits from the government of Iran for a dozen Journeyman each year to teach English, using the Bible as the textbook. Also, I asked FMB to send professors to teach in several Iranian universities in Tehran and Shiraz.

No Journeymen or professors were sent to the Iranian people.

What if dozens of missionaries would have been called and sent to Iran?

I persuaded FMB to sponsor a conference on “Witnessing to Muslims” in Tehran in 1969. It was the board’s first conference on that theme. Two missionaries from each of 14 countries gathered to present papers. Bishop Hassan Deqhani, the first native Iranian Bishop of the Anglican Church in Iran and a Muslim convert, addressed the missionaries.

The conference inspired missionaries to call for expanded efforts to reach Muslims.

The bishop and his wife were later attacked in their home and forced to flee Iran at the beginning of the Iranian Revolution. Arriving in England, they learned their son, who had been my colleague at Damavand College, was murdered in the streets of Tehran. Thus, another clarion call was sent out by field missionaries to send others to the Muslim peoples.

During my first sabbatical at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1980-’81, FMB asked me to

travel to Europe to meet with Baptist church leaders and missionaries to ascertain the conditions of the new immigration advance into the Netherlands, France and Germany.

Thousands of Muslim immigrants were entering these countries from South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. They were gathering in religious ethnic ghettos, forming Islamic associations and building mosques.

It seemed obvious they planned to stay in those countries and maintain their own nationalistic, ethnic and religious heritage.

The limited number of national Baptist pastors and FMB-sent missionaries began to show concern about relations with the Muslims in their new cities. They voiced their concerns and asked for help in reaching Muslims.

Upon my return to the states, I sent a report of my research and findings. I sounded the alarm voiced by the pastors and missionaries of the region, asking for immediate assistance with personnel that are equipped with the language of the various immigrant groups and that have an understanding of Islamic beliefs and cultures. We reasoned that if Muslims could be reached in the early days of entry into Europe, before they settled into the emerging Islamic communities, they would be more open to the gospel.

There was little measured response by FMB to the Islamic advance into Europe by Muslim immigrants from Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Arab Middle East, Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Morocco.

What if personnel from stateside churches had re-

sponded to the presence of Muslims in Europe?

What if the vision had been caught and missionaries had been called and sent to the heartland of Islam when nations were more open to receive them?

I am most thankful to all who have responded to the call to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslim peoples through the years. I am thankful to have had the strength in these latter years at Southeastern and at Campbell Divinity to take several thousand students and others into mosques so they could learn, as well as share our witness.

Ring in my ears and pressing on my heart are two hymns of my earlier years that influenced many in the call to missions to Muslims: “All to Jesus I Surrender” and “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go.”

“Surrender,” “wherever” and “He leads” are the foundational and operative words in all mission journeys and opportunities. God loves Muslim peoples.

What if more Baptists had responded to a call to take the gospel to Muslims? With IMB’s recent strategies and an increased burden for missions within our churches, more Baptists are willing to go to the Muslim populations of the world today. God willing, more will respond in the future. “Go into all the world and preach the gospel...” Matthew 28:19-20.

(EDITOR’S NOTE: George Braswell is the author of nine books, the Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Missions and World Religions of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and recently retired as senior professor of world religions at Campbell University Divinity School. He is the founding director of the George W. and Joan O. Braswell World Religions and Global Cultures Center at Campbell.) **BR**

Wilkes County church to build inclusive play park

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

Fairplains Baptist Church in North Wilkesboro is sending a message to their community by introducing the area's first inclusive play park.

Pastor David Dyer said the congregation wants families with special needs children to know "there is a church that's thinking of them and wants to show the love of Christ to them in a real, tangible way."

Inclusive play equipment is specially designed to allow children with both physical and mental special needs to play alongside their peers, overcoming challenges posed by traditional playground equipment.

For example, the often humorous buildup of static electricity that occurs when children play on plastic slides can short-circuit cochlear implants worn by those with a hearing impairment. Also, loose playground surfacing, such as mulch, can render the space inaccessible to a child with a wheelchair or other mobility device.

The Wilkes Play Park proposed by Fairplains would offer a metal roller slide to eliminate static and poured rubber surfacing to facilitate mobility. Other features include bucket seat swings with harnesses; an accessible zip-line; and a number of sensory-rich play stations to engage visual, tactile and auditory systems.

"The goal is to have children with special needs playing alongside children without special needs," said Dyer in a phone call with the *Biblical Recorder*. "Most places aren't set up to accommo-



An artist's rendering of a future playground shows a variety of equipment to suit different children's needs. (Contributed photo)

date that kind of interaction. We want those kids playing together."

A newsletter released by the church said, "We can change the way our future citizens and leaders identify people with special needs. By embracing and celebrating different abilities, everyone can develop understanding and compassion for others like never before."

The pastor also emphasized the project's community focus.

"We want people to know this is not a church playground," he said. "This is a community play park that happens to be on church property."

The inclusive playground, along with an adjacent ADA-compliant building and outdoor seating area, will be available for birthday parties and other events by reservation at no cost. The area will be open for use seven days a week, and it will feature nighttime lighting.

Dyer said it's the only place of its kind, not only in Wilkes County, but

in the surrounding areas as well. The church wanted to meet "a real need that exists in our community," and this is how God led them, according to Dyer.

The congregation views the project as an outreach ministry. Several panels with Bible verses and a cross will feature prominently throughout the play area.

"I don't have to be down there for those kids and families to see the gospel," Dyer said.

"First, they see it in our action: we've done this because of Jesus. Second they see it in the actual pieces. There's scripture everywhere in this park. The cross

is literally part of the surfacing. You can't get around it; you've got to go over it. All that is very intentional."

With the financial support of the community, local businesses and other churches, Fairplains has raised more than \$107,000 of the \$221,000 needed to complete the project, which they hope to unveil Sept. 9.

For more information, contact Dyer at (336) 452-9221. Donations can be made online at GoFundMe.com/WilkesPlayPark or checks mailed to Fairplains Baptist Church, 141 Fairplains Church St., North Wilkesboro, NC 28659. **BR**

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 STREAMS OF WATER, WHICH YIELDS ITS FRUIT IN
 ITS SEASON AND ITS LEAF DOES NOT WITHER;
 AND IN WHATEVER HE DOES, HE PROSPERS.

Psalm 1:3

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How to involve more women in SBC life

Over the past several years, the culture of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has begun to shift as more pastors and leaders desire to see the convention grow in diversity. This is encouraging, as the SBC should not be known as a club for white, male pastors but rather a united body, which reflects the Kingdom of God.

Intentional steps are being taken to move the convention forward, though to be sure, there is much work left to do. As the SBC continues to focus efforts and leadership influence toward racial reconciliation and increasing diversity in other ways, another challenge has emerged: how to better engage female leaders in the life of the SBC.

The convention traditionally provides community and support for women in several different contexts. The annual meeting, along with state convention and local associational gatherings, host various luncheons and breakouts for women, the majority of which are designed for pastors' wives.

The SBC often reaches and connects this segment of women effectively through traditional methods. However, in the midst of a changing culture, where women occupy many roles beyond that of a pastor's wife or children's ministry leader, we must ask how the SBC is going to involve other women more fully.

We should not discount the efforts that have already been made – it is good to support and connect ministry wives and offer networks for women living on mission. These circles are filled with women who benefit from the resources and the fellowship. Yet there are many women leading in today's SBC churches in other ways.

Female leaders are now sitting at tables in strategic meetings, heading ministry departments and occupying high capacity positions in SBC churches and entities. Many of these roles are traditionally thought to be roles

for men, but a quick survey of growing SBC churches reveals that women too are stepping into new director and executive-level leadership. They are excelling alongside their male counterparts.

So how will the SBC engage these women?

The days of limiting women to a "Ladies Tea" and narrow-focused small-group gatherings are no longer sufficient.

Creating social networks are important, but most women today want not only to be brought into the social aspects of the SBC but into the work of the convention as well.

As women serve as strong leaders in their local church contexts, we should be working to see them represented in the SBC both at the annual meeting and other gatherings.

Some may question the increase in female leadership, but this is primarily an issue of culture, not theology. No one is talking about challenging complementarian views, and women are not demanding to be elected elders or seeking to fill the pulpit.

Most women in SBC churches are simply seeking to serve alongside men in their respective, God-designed roles.

For women, these roles are not limited to women's ministry alone – though we certainly value female discipleship and should work even harder to equip women leading in this ministry area.

Especially in non-traditional SBC churches, women may occupy roles such as "Connections Director" or "Membership & Assimilation." The duties of these roles may be similar to what another church would call a "Discipleship Pastor."

Does this mean that those two people, both leading at high levels, can't take part in the same kinds of networks and gatherings? Certainly not.



DEAN INSERRA

Guest Column



ASHLYN PORTERO

Outside of programming designed specifically for senior pastors, the SBC should work to involve more women through its messaging, networks and events. When the majority of content is directed toward pastors alone, many think that in order to engage women, we must create special, accessory events.

Many women are already working alongside men in their churches, so to neglect them in SBC life is to do a disservice to both genders and the convention.

What is the simple answer to engaging women more in SBC life? Just ask them.

Many are eager to be a part of the work of the convention in more active, hands-on ways. We should see more women on the platform at the annual meeting, encouraging their presence on committees and in panel conversations.

We must involve the women who also care about the future of SBC seminaries, entities and initiatives, and educate more women to do the same.

To be sure, women have a long history of ministry service in the SBC that should be acknowledged, but perhaps there has never been such a contingent of theologically conservative female leaders serving in local churches as exists today. As a result, the leadership and activity of the SBC should reflect this reality by equipping and empowering more women to engage with SBC polity.

There is an opportunity before us to display the many possibilities for women to connect to SBC life.

Many women play the critical supportive role of ministry wife, but there are many others who play different roles. The need for women's involvement does not stop there. A healthy convention will be one that values the flourishing of female leaders in the church. Within our complementarianism there should exist a common delight and mutual support. In the past, a seat at the table may have earned women a cup of tea. Now it is time to invite them to the main course.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Dean Inserra is lead pastor at City Church in Tallahassee, Fla. Ashlyn Portero serves City Church as executive director.) **BR**

Ways to save your church's history

By MARCIA PHILLIPS | Guest Column

The Historical Committee of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) values the collective story of what God has accomplished in our churches and knows you do also. That story can only be known and told to our present congregations and future generations if it is first captured and preserved. A few simple, responsible steps can ensure that together we save this story.

First, the records – minutes, photographs and personal remembrances, as well as other bits and pieces that speak to the unique story of your church – must be collected and kept in a safe place. What you may find scattered among storage closets, filing cabinets and old desk drawers could be the only documents that support personal recollections. Mind you, the memories of long-term members

are also valuable and should be captured in oral interviews that become written documents or electronic copies.

The memories and the paperwork together support the account of what actually happened. Every church should have a church historian that proactively oversees the collecting and saving of its history.

Second, your church building may have storage space available for historical documents but it should meet some basic requirements. Facts show that the second greatest threat to old artifacts is moisture in any form; the third is fire, but the single greatest threat to the survival of historic records is humans who lose, destroy or neglect protecting the documents.

The storage space should be dark with consistent temperature and humidity. This can be as simple as a locked closet or filing cabinet, but should never be

an attic or basement where water risk is highest in the form of flooding or leaks.

If any of your documents predate the 20th century, those records should be stored separately from newer papers, which are more wood pulp, highly acidic and damaging.

For the same reason, older papers and photographs are better stored in metal containers (like filing cabinets) than wooden or cardboard or even plastic boxes.

Due to the risk of fire or other catastrophes, your church might consider placing records in a place specially designed to protect them – archives. Some churches choose their local library or historical society, but they may not be well-trained or capable of providing the best preservation resources.

There are two great options available to Baptist churches in North Carolina that are ideally suited for church hold-

ings and that the Historical Committee highly recommend.

Wake Forest University (WFU) in Winston-Salem has been historically the official repository for the BSC, and its library archives hold the physical records of hundreds of churches. They are kept in secure and protective housing, and are currently being scanned to be made available online.

WFU has been very responsible in its role of protecting Baptist history in North Carolina and continues to make papers available to researchers and genealogists.

I recently found a gentleman's ancestor in church records in WFU's holdings, both as a slave before the Civil War and a freedman afterwards. You never know what purpose these records will serve in the future.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in the town of Wake Forest also

See History page 12

ACP: Churches up in 2016; baptisms, membership decline

By CAROL PIPES | LifeWay Christian Resources

Southern Baptists experienced growth in the number of churches that cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 2016, according to the latest Annual Church Profile report (ACP).

However, other key measures declined in 2016, including membership, baptisms, average worship attendance and total giving, according to the ACP compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in cooperation with Baptist state conventions.

The number of churches cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention grew by 479 to 47,272, a 1 percent increase over 2015. The number of Southern Baptist churches has increased the last 18 years. Southern Baptist churches also reported 4,492 church-type missions last year.

Although the number of cooperating Southern Baptist congregations grew, reported membership of those churches declined by 77,786, down 0.51 percent to 15.2 million members. Average weekly worship attendance declined 6.75 percent to 5.2 million worshippers.

Southern Baptist churches baptized 280,773 people in 2016, a 4.89 percent decline from the 295,212 reported in 2015. The ratio of baptisms to total members was one baptism for every 54 members.

“We would be remiss in not giving thanks for every baptism and every new follower of Christ,” said LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer.

Southern Baptists have seen a decline in the number of baptisms for several years, he said. “It’s clear that evangelism and discipleship are waning. I don’t believe it is due to the lack of opportunities, though. Instead, there is a lack of engagement.”

Rainer said while most churchgoers believe it’s their personal responsibility to share their faith, most never do.

“We should follow Christ’s example and pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers,” Rainer said.

Rainer said he is thankful for SBC President Steve Gaines’ emphasis on prayer for spiritual awakening at this year’s annual meeting.

Frank S. Page, SBC Executive Committee president and CEO, noted “virtually everyone who sees these figures will react negatively and lament the poor state of our churches, our lack of evangelistic fervor and our increasingly irrelevant programs. Indeed, we all should.

“However, the stark reality of these numbers should cause each of us to look inwardly,” he said. “Am I sharing the gospel as I should? Am I developing relationships with family, friends, coworkers and others with whom I can gain an opportunity to share the Good News? Am I burdened for the lost and praying for their salvation?”

Giving & missions expenditures

Giving among Southern Baptists was down slightly in 2016. Undesignated church receipts increased 0.67 percent to \$9.2 billion. However, total church receipts reported through the ACP decreased 0.73 percent to \$11.5 billion.

Total missions expenditures also decreased 1.3 percent to \$1.19 billion.

Giving through Southern Baptists’ Cooperative Program (CP) mission initiative is not broken out in the ACP annual report. Instead, CP totals are reported by the SBC Executive Committee, which facilitates the mission gifts to the SBC’s national and international missions and ministries.

With the release of the total number

Annual Church Profile Statistical Summary

Southern Baptist Convention Statistical Summary – 2016

Item/Statistic	2016	2015	2016-2015 Numeric Change	2016-2015 Percent Change
State Conventions	42	42	0	0.00%
Associations	1,136	1,139	-3	-0.26%
Churches	47,272	46,793	479	1.02%
Church-type Missions, Operating ⁽¹⁾	4,492	4,648	-156	-3.36%
Total Members	15,216,978	15,294,764	-77,786	-0.51%
Total Baptisms	280,773	295,212	-14,439	-4.89%
Ratio of Baptisms: Total Members	1:54	1:52	—	—
Weekly Worship Average Attendance	5,200,716	5,577,088	-376,372	-6.75%
Undesignated Receipts	\$9,216,198,700	\$9,154,427,472	\$61,771,228	0.67%
Cooperative Program ⁽²⁾	www.dlc.net/cpi/statistics.asp	www.dlc.net/cpi/statistics.asp	—	—

NOTES:

1. Some state conventions no longer use the designation of church-type mission to categorize congregations which are not self-determining, self-sustaining, and self-propagating. This practice has impacted the number of churches and church-type missions.
2. Cooperative Program as reported on the Annual Church Profile is not broken out in this table. CP, based on the actual amount given through the state convention, is provided in the SBC Annual in the Executive Committee Annual Report.

Other 2016 Items – Not Asked by All State Conventions¹

Item/Statistic	2016	2015
Other Additions ⁽¹⁾	204,365	244,645
Sunday School/Bible Study/Small Group Average Attendance ⁽²⁾	3,303,164	3,605,303
Total Receipts ⁽⁴⁾	\$11,461,572,538	\$11,545,861,631
Total Mission Expenditures ⁽⁵⁾	\$1,189,656,873	\$1,205,295,079
Great Commission Giving ⁽⁶⁾	\$646,017,306	\$613,201,805

NOTES:

1. Totals for items in this table have incomplete data for 2016 due to the fact that not all state conventions asked the item or did so in a way not comparable with the standard definition. Similar actions occurred in 2015. Thus, comparisons between the two years may not be appropriate. See the Notes in the 2015 SBC Statistical Summary for specific details to determine if a comparison is desirable.
2. California Southern Baptist Convention, Florida Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the item.
3. Florida Baptist Convention did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the item.
4. California Southern Baptist Convention did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the item.
5. Alabama State Board of Missions, California Southern Baptist Convention, Florida Baptist Convention, Georgia Baptist Mission Board, and the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the item.
6. Alabama State Board of Missions, Arkansas Baptist State Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the item.

Prepared by: LifeWay Insights, LifeWay Christian Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0127

June 5, 2017

of churches through the ACP report, the Executive Committee has calculated the average CP percentage from the convention’s cooperating churches for 2015-2016 as 5.16 percent, down 0.02 percent from last year’s 5.18 percent, according to Page. The states reported receiving a total of \$475,212,293 in CP gifts in 2015-2016, of which \$190,468,781, or 40.08 percent, was

forwarded to the Executive Committee for distribution through the SBC Cooperative Program allocation budget.

The ACP is an annual statistical report churches voluntarily provide to their local Baptist associations and/or their state conventions. National totals are compiled and released after all cooperating state conventions have reported. **BR**

2018 VBS aims to help kids get their ‘Game On!’

By AARON WILSON | LifeWay Christian Resources

As fans across the nation celebrated the NBA and NHL finals, LifeWay Christian Resources added to the sports enthusiasm by announcing “Game On!” as its 2018 Vacation Bible School (VBS) theme.

The theme is designed to help kids gear up for life’s big game by teaching them Jesus has provided all they need for the journey to which God calls them, LifeWay VBS specialist Melita Thomas said.

“Kids are under so much pressure – to perform well, to be the best, to balance schedules that are full to the brim, to excel in every arena,” she said. “From that vantage point, life’s big game can seem like no fun. But when we step back, we realize the goal is not competing in our own strength. God has already given us everything we need.”



“Game On!” was announced June 5 via a Facebook Live reveal party hosted by LifeWay. The video garnered more than 35,000 views in less than a day and was shared 543 times.

“What’s impressive about those numbers is they show that so many dedicated VBS workers will take time in the middle of the day, many of them on day one

of this year’s VBS, to look forward to what’s in store for the next year of ministry,” Thomas said.

Each day of next year’s VBS, students will learn about a way Jesus equips His followers.

These lessons will each contain the gospel message and will revolve around the key verse, 2 Peter 1:3: “His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by His own glory and goodness.”

VBS remains a strategic evangelism tool for many churches. LifeWay’s VBS alone serves more than 25,000 churches reaching more than 3 million children. LifeWay also announced the locations of its 2018 VBS preview events.

The events will be in January at Ridgecrest, N.C.; Fort Worth, Texas; Hendersonville, Tenn.; and for the first time, Houston, Texas.

Visit LifeWay.com/VBS. **BR**

Bethlehem builds for future

From press release

Almost two years ago, Bethlehem Baptist Church in Taylorsville, N.C., was struck by lightning, triggering a fire that destroyed most of its facilities.

Sun., June 11, members broke ground on new facilities to include a sanctuary, family life center and educational space.

“Our community has been amazing,” said Wayne Caviness, senior pastor, in a press release sent to the *Biblical Recorder*. “Fire departments from Alexander, Catawba and Caldwell counties, EMS, law enforcement, county personnel and many business and community volunteers helped save the educational building from a complete loss. These efforts were just the beginning of an overwhelming outpouring of love and support.”

The church invited the community to a special groundbreaking service followed by worship and a meal.

A fire, ignited July 18, 2015, after multiple lightning strikes, destroyed two-thirds of the church’s facilities. The *Biblical Recorder* published an article about the fire in its Aug. 1, 2015, issue.

“Our location has changed for a while,” Caviness said, “but the God we serve is never-changing, and we are con-

tinuing in the mission to which He has called us.”

The day after the fire in 2015, the church met at Bethlehem Elementary School for its Sunday worship.

The church continued to meet at the school until renovations were completed on the remaining portion of the building Dec. 20, 2015.

The large cross, which displayed painted messages and is considered a landmark that many identify with the church, was unharmed in the front yard of the sanctuary. To make way for the new construction, the cross was moved to the front of the existing youth house building.

Winstead Architecture and Moss-Marlow Building Company were chosen for the projects.

In addition to much prayer, discussion and a church-wide needs assessment, the building committee visited numerous churches to determine God’s direction for the project.

Winstead Architecture took the input from the committee and produced architectural renderings for the proposed construction, which were presented to the church on July 17, 2016.

“We were blown away by what they did,” said Dwayne Simmons, building



Plans for Bethlehem Baptist Church include a new sanctuary, baptistry and prayer room. “It is our desire that these facilities will honor God, and that He will bless them to be powerful tools to impact our community and world for Jesus Christ now and for generations to come,” said Wayne Caviness, senior pastor. (Contributed photo)

committee chairman. “We never really talked about a ‘look.’ We expressed the needs we wanted the facility to meet, and turned it over to them. The results far exceeded our expectations.”

The new facility includes a 9,000-plus-square-foot sanctuary, a new baptistry and prayer room as well as a centralized welcome center. The new family life center will accommodate a basketball and volleyball courts, a commercial grade kitchen and storage for tables and chairs.

Nearly 20,000 square feet of administrative and classroom space offer room for the church to grow.

Moss-Marlow received working drawings for the construction in November 2016. Once these plans were accepted, they went through an approval process with Alexander County.

“We are excited about the plans for a new worship center, educational space and family life center,” Caviness said. “It is our desire that these facilities will honor God, and that He will bless them to be powerful tools to impact our community and world for Jesus Christ now and for generations to come.”

Contact (828) 495-7250 or visit bethlehembc.org. **BR**

History Continued from page 10

has well-developed and professional archives that include some special collections, like the papers of the Conservative Resurgence movement and recent convention leaders. They welcome the donation of church records and have an equally strong preservation environment and, like WFU, make records very accessible to patrons.

Both of these archives can be contacted through the links at their online websites.

Finally, we encourage each church to write its story and produce it in a book or other form for its members, and as a testimony to the community of what God is doing inside your church walls.

Include the details from minutes along with personal accounts of what makes your church unique, such as missions emphasis or community outreach. Show your church’s heart.

The Historical Committee gives an award each year to the best written book.

It’s now also granting an award for the best church history in another format, such as a timeline, compact disc or other media.

Submissions can be made for the 2017 contest through July 30.

So, collect your church’s history, preserve it in a safe way and then find a way to communicate it. And by all means, make sure you give a copy to the BSC so we can all rejoice with you in God’s goodness in your local congregation.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Marcia Phillips is the chair of the Baptist Records and Documents Subcommittee of the BSC’s Historical Committee. She has a master’s degree in historic preservation and has worked as an archivist for several Christian universities. Phillips’ husband, Bill, serves as pastor of Blaise Baptist Church in Mocksville.) **BR**

Lottie Moon offering nears \$153 million

By **DAVID ROACH** | Baptist Press & *BR* staff

The 2016-17 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions reached its fourth highest total ever, closing at approximately \$153 million, according to data released June 7 by the International Mission Board (IMB).

The 2016-17 LMCO was down 7.7 percent from the previous year’s record total (\$165.8 million). An IMB spokesperson called last year’s record-setting spike in giving an “anomaly,” alluding to the generous response of Southern Baptists as the IMB implemented a staff reduction plan to counteract deep budget deficits from previous years.

The five-year LMCO giving record is as follows:

- **2016-17:** \$153 million
- **2015-16:** \$165.8 million
- **2014-15:** \$153 million
- **2013-14:** \$154 million
- **2012-13:** \$149 million

This year’s total is within 1 percent of 2013-14’s \$154 million total, which was the second highest LMCO ever given by Southern Baptists.

The exact 2016-17 total, which was released to Baptist Press, is \$152,982,560.94. That amount approached the offering’s \$155 million goal and is approximately equal to the IMB’s 2016-17 LMCO budget projection of \$153.5 million.

“As we consider billions of people who have yet to hear the gospel, we as Southern Baptists realize the best way we can play our part in fulfilling the Great Commission is through cooperative effort in pray-

ing, giving, going and sending,” said IMB President David Platt in the press release. “Thank you, Southern Baptists, for giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to support a growing mission force working to make disciples and multiply churches around the world. Through the generosity of every single Southern Baptist who gave, the grace of God is resounding to the glory of God among more and more people and peoples.”

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director/treasurer of national Woman’s Missionary Union which promotes the offering in partnership with IMB, expressed her gratitude for the gifts.

“It is amazing to realize that since 1888, Southern Baptists have given nearly \$4.4 billion” to the LMCO, Wisdom-Martin said. “We are grateful for the countless churches that continue to keep missions as a priority.

“Today I intensely feel the weight of my personal call to help Christians develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle,” she said. “We must be profoundly aware of God’s work in the world, bold in our prayers and sacrificial in our generosity. The cause of Christ demands nothing less.” **BR**

BRnow.org

BE SURE TO CHECK
OUT OUR WEBSITE

NCBAM develops HomeMeds pilot program

By CAROL LAYTON | NCBAM Communications

With the mission to help aging adults maintain their independence, North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) targets its programs and services on the key reasons older adults lose their independence. Medication-related problems and errors endanger the lives and well-being of a high percentage of adults over age 65 – putting them at increased risk of falls, dizziness, confusion and other side effects.

To reduce these risks, NCBAM partnered with HomeMeds – an evidence-based national program that addresses medication safety as well as quality of life issues. The HomeMeds partnership began in January as NCBAM's regional directors, Yvetta Smith (east area) and Debra Kuykendall (central west area), formed a pilot program in eastern North Carolina. The HomeMeds program was started with funds donated by Rocky Hock Baptist Church in Edenton. Rocky Hock generously donated the proceeds of its 2016 fishing tournament to NCBAM.

Seventeen volunteers from eight churches were certified in the HomeMeds program at the January



training held at Rocky Hock. Another of NCBAM's partners, Nicole Hiegl, aging service coordinator for the High Country Area Agency on Aging, trained the volunteers to implement the program.

HomeMeds volunteers visit the homes of aging adults at risk – documenting medications and recording blood pressure and pulse. A computerized assessment is created and then reviewed by a licensed pharmacist who makes any recommendations for improvement. Primary care physicians are alerted if the pharmacist notes any immediate medication interactions. There is no charge for participating in the program and confidentiality is guaranteed. Volunteers make return visits to participants to deliver lists of their medications along with letters to share with their physicians.

While in the home, volunteers are trained to offer additional benefits from NCBAM's Priority #1: Prevention program. Each participant receives an NCBAM Red Bag for storing all medica-



NCBAM regional directors, Debra Kuykendall, center, and Yvetta Smith, right, worked with High Country Aging Service Coordinator, Nicole Hiegl, to develop a HomeMeds pilot program in eastern North Carolina.

tions in one place. An NCBAM home safety assessment can also be performed which includes checking for working smoke alarms, sufficient lighting and grab bars. Participants are also informed about SHIIP (Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program) – a service of North Carolina's Department of Insurance that helps Medicare recipients choose the most cost-effective prescription drug plan.

While NCBAM's HomeMeds pilot program ended in May, it will be evaluated for effectiveness and sustainability.

Sandy Gregory, NCBAM's director, would like to introduce HomeMeds across the state. "Medication errors are a very serious, but preventable, problem among aging adults," Gregory said. "With help from North Carolina Baptists, we hope to make a big difference across the state as we use this evidence-based tool to help aging adults safely remain in their own homes and enjoy improved quality of life."

Contact Yvetta Smith at ysmith@bchfamily.org, Debra Kuykendall at dkuykendall@bchfamily.org or call (877) 506-2226. **BR**

GRADUATES

Campbell University Divinity School

- **Doctor of ministry** – Lillian Wells Galphin, Fuquay Varina; David John Hailey Jr., Chapel Hill; Bennie David Jones Jr., Charlotte; Charles Kenneth Royal Jr., Buies Creek; Jeffrey Dean Sholar, Fayetteville; Virginia Ross Taylor, Chapel Hill; Wendy Briscoe Tingle, Buies Creek; William Christopher Turner, Angier; Ricky J. Warren, Dunn; and Joshua Michael Whitfield, Deep Run.
- **Master of divinity** – Johnny O'Brian Ashe, Henderson; Jonathan Levi Blackburn, Angier; Stephanie Diane Bohannon, Wilmington; Lakisha B. Caldwell, Raleigh; Jonette Laureen Camp, Fayetteville; Graham Culbertson, Lincolnton; Cameron Thomas Dunn, Dunn; Roosevelt Ethridge Jr., Wilson; Danielle Glaze, Leland; Thomas Jeffery Greene II, Hamlet; Raynard Felister Griffin, Wilmington; Amy Elizabeth Hill Herring, Durham; Charlie Melvin Lane, Hope Mills; Tonia Lynn Lea, Yanceyville; Brandon D. McLaughlin, Fayetteville; Katie Medlin, Durham; Amber Nichole Mitchell, Lillington; Susan Sierer Morin, Raleigh; Daniel Ryan Mullens, Bethel; Mary Blake Lindley Needham, Snow Camp; Lisa Lynn Orr, Fayetteville; Wallace Marvin Ownley, Hertford; Xavier D. Page I, Durham; Jessica Lauren Smith, Spencer; Shekanah Elisa Solomon, Raleigh; Sharon Thompson-Journigan, Fayetteville; Jordan David Tripp, Weldon; Elizabeth Ann Villegas, Morehead City; Holly Willenbrock, Buies Creek; and Genetta Williams, Fayetteville.
- **Master of arts in Christian ministry** – Allyson Harper Cook, Wilmington; Howard Lee Herring, Dunn; and Ashley Coley Sasser, Elizabethtown.

Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity

- **Doctor of ministry in pastoral ministries** – Richard Lee Hamrick, Lawndale; Kimberly Denise Moore, Gastonia; Jeffrey Cook Hayes, Fletcher; and Martha Dixon Kears, Charlotte.
- **Doctor of ministry in pastoral care and counseling** – Diane Lee Tugel, Waxhaw.
- **Master of divinity (concentration in pastoral care and counseling)** – Jamie Carroll Hazel, Morganton; Astra Lavette Aker, Harrisburg; and Michael Robert Mitchell, Concord.

- **Master of divinity (concentration in biblical studies)** – David Wachter Jr., Hickory; and John Randolph Wright, Shelby.
- **Master of divinity (concentration in Christian education)** – Joanne Jacene DeVoe, Lattimore; Sandra Camp, Gastonia; and Jeanna Sherrill Spiker, Cherryville.
- **Master of divinity (concentration in pastoral ministries)** – Nicholas Hall Clanton, Charlotte; and Cedric Djuan Starr, Shelby.
- **Master of divinity (concentration in pastoral care and counseling)** – Jacqueline Hampton, Forest City; and Yolanda Mechell Wilson, Shelby.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Master of theological studies** – Timothy Burriss, Sanford.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Doctor of philosophy** – Jared Thomas, Gastonia.
- **Master of theology** – Josh Peeler, Charlotte.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Master of arts in Christian studies** – Luis C. Jerezbre, Raleigh.
- **Master of arts in ethics, theology and culture** – Zachary Dan Parks, Garner.
- **Master of arts in Old Testament** – Robert Coleman, Wake Forest.
- **Master of arts in philosophy of religion** – Amber Bowen, Raleigh.
- **Master of arts in biblical counseling** – Lindsay Foti Baggett, Fayetteville; Bethany Lee Carey, Charlotte; Christine Nicole Fowler, Monroe; and Sarah Hope Fowler, Monroe.
- **Master of arts in Christian education and biblical counseling** – Christopher Michael Thomas, Durham.
- **Master of arts in church planting** – Cassandra Davis, Wake Forest.
- **Master of arts in ministry to women** – Christina Renee Devlin, Raleigh.
- **Advanced master of divinity** – Stephen August Bradley, Greenville.
- **Master of divinity with biblical counseling** – Johnathon Curtis Baggett, Fayetteville.

- **Master of divinity with Christian ethics** – David C. Quackenbos, Raleigh.
- **Master of divinity with Christian ministry** – Brandon Shay Andrews, Granite Falls; Daniel William Blackburn Jr., Selma; Ryan Wilson Doty, Kings Mountain; Dennis Daren Funderburk, Cary; Sheldon Green, Hickory; Freddie Gene Jackson II, Apex; Bradley David Johnson, Wilmington; Christopher Krycho, Raleigh; Zach Long, Advance; Kevin Moore II, High Point; Christopher R. Pauley, Statesville; Evan Alexander Phillips, Charlotte; Joshua Mark Reid, Cary; Jonathan Stafford, Winston-Salem; and Brian K. Young, Durham.
- **Master of divinity with worship leadership** – Jonathan D. Stout, Wake Forest.
- **Master of theology** – Matthew Brian Foshee, Wake Forest; and Joseph Lee Thigpen, Raleigh.
- **Doctor of ministry** – Kelly Mark Bullard, Fayetteville; Joshua David Franklin, Wake Forest; Derrick Shad Hicks, Monroe; James Telford Kendall, Apex; and Joshua Dean Via, Rolesville.
- **Doctor of education** – Samuel Thomas Currin, Oxford; and Andrew I. Ham, Wake Forest.
- **Doctor of philosophy** – Peter Micah Anderson, Wake Forest; David Carter Crowther, Pittsboro; Robert O. Herrington, Greensboro; and Thomas Andrew West, Raleigh.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Doctor of ministry** – Frank Anderson Lackey Jr., Statesville
- **Doctor of philosophy** – John D. Morrison, Elkin.
- **Master of divinity** – Brian Karl Davis, Charlotte; Lacy G Hudson, Asheville; Brad Lovin, Andrews; Elias C Still IV, Harrisburg.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

- **Master of theological studies** – Marcus D. Hayes, Hendersonville.

The College at Southeastern

- **Master of arts in intercultural studies** – Brian Mark Goodwin, Kings Mountain.

June 25

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

July 2

See Their Worth

Focal passage: 2 Samuel 11:1-9, 14-17

All of us have a tendency to think we are the center of the universe.

The self-absorption each of us has with ourselves explains the popularity of social media. Yet, the worst self-absorption is the kind that allows a person to value their own pleasure or interest at the expense of others. In 2 Samuel 11, we find that even David, a man after God's own heart, was guilty of such an attitude.

David looked from his palace roof upon the housetops below where he saw a beautiful woman bathing (2 Samuel 11:2).

First, David was not viewing Bathsheba as another person with feelings, emotions and a family but as a sexual object that he could use for his own pleasure.

Second, David allowed his own desires to outweigh his responsibilities to his neighbor, his God and as king.

When David learned that Bathsheba was the wife of one of his trusted soldiers, this did not prevent him from bringing her to his bedroom (2 Samuel 11:3-4).

In a situation that continued to spiral downhill, David acted against Uriah by taking his wife and, eventually, his life

(2 Samuel 11:14-17). The story is a sad and sobering reminder that all of us, no matter how much we love Jesus, can fail to see others as God sees them.

On the other hand, Christ, although He is the true center of the universe, chose to act in the interest of others. Mark 10:45 says, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life – a ransom for many."*

Rather than seeing others as objects to be used, God saw even in sinful humans valuable souls to be loved and cherished.

Paul reminds us that all of us are to emulate Christ's sacrificial act in the way we treat and view others: *"Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:3-4).

When we see others as Christ sees them, we will choose to act in their best interest. To start, it will mean that we see others at least as valuable and human as ourselves and practice the "Golden Rule."

goodness. We should always thank God for answering our prayers.

In the next three verses, David goes on to state that all the kings will bow down. This foreshadows Philippians 2:10-11 where we are told that *"every knee will bow ... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."*

Some will bow out of reverence and awe and still others out of fear, but all will bow down.

Finally, David finishes this Psalm by pointing out that even if things are going wrong in life God is present with him. God will bring His purpose in your life to fruition.

"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

It is reassuring to know that God is not yet finished.

When He is, His purpose for our lives will be accomplished.

Focal passage: John 1:35-49

As a child I remember my pastor, Bob Marcaurelle, always saying, "Christianity is just one generation from extinction." He was right; we have a faith meant to be shared.

We do not mind sharing good news with friends and family. We recommend restaurants, businesses, doctors and even churches if we have had a positive experience in these places or with these persons.

On the other hand, many Christians say that Jesus is "the best thing that ever happened to me" but never recommend Him to a friend or family member.

We must share Christ with others by telling them what He has done for us and inviting them to meet Him.

In just a few short verses, John the evangelist paints a picture of how we are to share Christ.

First, John the Baptist introduces two of his disciples to Jesus (John 1:35-36). Then, one of those disciples, Andrew, introduces his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40-42).

**DAVID CROWTHER**

Pastor,
Mount Olive Baptist
Church, Pittsboro

**EMILY CARTER**

Member,
University Hills Baptist
Church, Charlotte

was a good teenager, but one night I left a church youth event, and after dropping off a friend at her house, I headed back into town to hang out with friends from school. No problem, I still had two hours until curfew.

Except the father of the girl I dropped off called my dad and said I was on my way home.

Since this was before everyone had a cell phone, you can imagine my dad's worry as he searched for me not knowing where I was. When I got home, my father was both relieved and annoyed, so much so

that he didn't speak to me until the next morning.

His worry had been relieved, but he was undone. From that point forward, I called before starting to drive home. Why? Because my father, who loved me, was waiting for me.

Share Christ

Likewise, another man, Phillip, met Jesus (John 1:43) – possibly because of the testimony of Andrew and Peter – and immediately he found his friend, Nathaniel, and introduced him to Jesus (John 1:43-46).

It is clear that Christians must pass on their faith – your experience with Jesus cannot stop with you.

Not long ago I had the honor of officiating at my own grandmother's funeral. When I was a child, my grandmother shared Jesus with me and prayed that I would meet Jesus. Although she suffered from Alzheimer's for the past decade, I will never forget her godly Christian witness for so many years.

As I flipped through her worn and tattered Bible, I found where she had recorded her own testimony of faith that involved how she heard the gospel from others. On the next page, I saw my name – along with the names of my brother and cousins – along with the date of my salvation.

My grandmother's Bible reminded me that though nearly 20 centuries have passed since Jesus rose from the dead, the faith has been kept alive as it has been passed down from generation to generation. Pass it on by sharing Christ with others.

In the same way, the Heavenly Father wants us home and in His presence. Does your soul yearn for the courts of the Lord? Does your heart and flesh cry out for the living God? (Psalm 84:2) Is it your passion to worship the Lord?

Verses five through seven point out that as we focus on God, even as we go through hard times, His strength will be ours. Praising God strengthens us and pleases Him.

The Psalmist seeks God's favor through prayer. Prayer is powerful and effective. We should take it seriously. Just as I never took my earthly father's words for granted after that night, we should also not take for granted that we can go before our heavenly Father's throne at any time and for any reason (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Thankfully our Father in heaven is not searching frantically for us. He knows where we are, and He is waiting patiently for us to arrive home.

He longs for us to be with Him. I can think of nothing better than being in His presence.

June 25

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

July 2

Our Response

Focal Passage: Psalm 138:1-8

When was the last time you were overwhelmed with gratitude to the Lord? At the end of May, at our final Moms in Prayer group meeting for the year, we celebrated all the answers to prayer that we had seen this year.

We thanked God for safety at our schools, salvations that occurred at one of our local high schools and our children's individual victories.

All the while each mom still had her own struggle going on in her family. But, we would all admit that God encouraged our hearts through our prayers of thanksgiving.

Psalm 138 is the perfect example of this. In verses one through three, we read David's words of promise to thank God and to bow down to Him.

Putting yourself in proper position below the mighty God is a good thing. Realizing that every perfect gift is from Him (James 1:17), and acknowledging that fact, allows you to praise Him for His

His Presence

Focal Passage: Psalm 84:1-12

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

TIMOTHY ELBERT MCCLURE, 69, of Cornelia, Ga., died May 27.

A native of Gaston County, N.C., McClure was a member of Baldwin Baptist Church, Baldwin, Ga.

During his ministry, he pastored Southside Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C., and Temple Baptist Church, Gastonia; and later worked for the Georgia Baptist Mission Board.

He is survived by his daughter, Tammie Tanner of Gastonia; son, David McClure of Mount Holly, N.C.; brother, Mike McClure of Bessemer City, N.C.; and four grandchildren.

Memorials to: New Life Baptist Church, 527 N. Buckoak St., Stanley, NC 28164.

LESLIE SETTLES MILLARD, 47, died May 7 after a fight with cancer.

An Indiana native, she was a member of Pikeville First Baptist Church where her husband, Jimmy, has served as pastor since 2007.

She is survived by her husband of 29 years, Jimmy Millard; two sons, Matt Millard of Kenly and Kris Mil-

lard of Clayton; her daughter-in-law, Jayme Spencer of England; two brothers, Kyle Settles of California and Bobby Settles of Indiana; two sisters, Gail Terry of Indiana and Karen Cox of Goldsboro; and three grandchildren.

Staff change

CLINT MCKNIGHT has been called as pastor of Horseshoe First Baptist Church. He is a Fruitland Baptist Bible College student.

Ordination

CLINT MCKNIGHT was ordained April 30 at Cobb Memorial Baptist Church, Rockingham. Assisting in the service were C.J. Bordeaux, director of missions at Pee Dee Baptist Association, Steven Blanton, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Hendersonville; Donnie Helms, pastor of North Wadesboro Baptist Church; Cliff McKnight, member of Moores Creek Baptist Church, Currie; and Chuck McKnight, pastor of Cobb Memorial Baptist Church, Rockingham.

Send your staff changes and other church news to dianna@BRnow.org.

Southern Baptist Convention news

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting started after we printed this edition of the *Biblical Recorder*. Please visit BRnow.org to get the latest news from the Pastor's Conference and SBC. Click on "Resources" and "SBC 2017" to find all the articles leading up to the meeting. Links will be posted on this page with the latest news as well as social media links. Follow #SBC17.



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denomination

PART-TIME CONSULTANT – LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina is seeking a part-time consultant for leadership development. Work location: Raleigh, NC (exceptions considered). Please send resume and cover letter to: Judy Pettigrew, 135 Woodlawn Circle, Clyde, NC 28721, or judyjohn@bellsouth.net. Application deadline: July 15. For job description: www.wmunc.org/now-hiring.

Pastor

Buckhorn Baptist Church located in rural Como, North Carolina, is a multigenerational congregation seeking a **pastor** with a minimum of five years pastoral experience and graduate of a seminary, divinity school or Bible college. We're searching for a pastor who is passionate about working with all areas/ages of the congregation along with our local community to grow our church. Buckhorn Baptist Church is Bible-based worship, believing the Bible was true yesterday, true today and true always. Congregation focuses on reaching local community, home and missions. Resume deadline June 30, 2017. Include statement of faith, personal testimony and audio or visual of recent sermon. Mail to: Buckhorn Baptist Church Pastor Search Team, c/o Pam Carr, 448 Buckhorn Church Road, Como, NC 27818.

Corinth Baptist Church at 991 Corinth Church Road, Salemburg, NC, is actively seeking a **Bivocational Pastor**. All resumes should be sent to David Naylor, 4712 Honeycutt Road, Salemburg, NC 28385, or email to naylor168@gmail.com. We will receive resumes until June 26, 2017.

Seeking **Lead Pastor**. Barnwell FBC is a SBC church seeking a full-time lead pastor for an active and missional church with a broad range of ministries. Experience with staff development, contemporary and traditional services, seminary degree and five years of pastoral experience preferred. Please send resume and cover letter to Pastor Selection Committee, 221 Virginia Ave., Barnwell, SC 29812, or email to PSC@fbcbarwell.org. Deadline to apply August 31, 2017; www.fbcbarwell.org.

Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Cowpens, SC, is seeking a **full-time Southern Baptist Pastor**. Send resume to Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 250 Mt. Olive Road, Cowpens, SC 29330, or mtolive@bellsouth.net.

Church Staff

Southport Baptist Church in Southport, NC, is seeking an **Assistant Pastor for Youth and Music**. For more information please see www.southportbaptist.org. Please send resumes to Wayne Leonard at wleonard@mindspring.com.

Hopewell Baptist Church, Monroe, NC, seeks **full-time Associate Pastor of Worship** to lead the worship ministries of a large conservative church and supervise several staff members. Send resumes to Kim@whatasavior.com.

First Baptist Church of Highlands, NC, is seeking a **full-time Music Worship Leader**. Salary is dependent on experience and education. Job responsibilities include planning, organizing and conducting a comprehensive music program and assisting in planning all regular worship services and special services as requested. Resumes, including references, may be sent to FBC Highlands, POB 625, Highlands, NC 28741, or emailed to info@fbchighlands.org; 828-526-4153.

Zoar Baptist Church of Shelby, NC, is seeking **PT Worship Leader/Minister of Music**. Blended worship; avg attendance 100-125. Choir, organ/piano, congregational worship tracks. For full job description/details, contact Alex Carroll. Send resume to Zoar Baptist Church, Attn. Alex Carroll, 1740 S. Lafayette Street, Shelby, NC 28152, or arcarroll92@gmail.com.

Mountain View Baptist Church of Hamptonville, NC, is seeking a **full-time Director of Worship Ministries**. Responsibilities include leading blended worship, directing a comprehensive church music program including choirs, vocal groups, praise band and instrumental ensembles and coordinating church media. E-mail resume to mvbc@yadtel.net.

New Hope Baptist Church, Wilson, NC, is seeking a **full-time Associate Pastor of Family Ministries and Music**. This will oversee a comprehensive ministry to families that include children and youth and also be responsible for worship and music ministries. Bible college or seminary degree preferred. Other qualifications will be considered. This position requires someone who is an equipper and enjoys seeing others grow spiritually and in leadership abilities. Send resumes to nhmbc@myglnc.com attention search committee or mail to New Hope Baptist Church, 5142 NC Highway 58 N., Wilson, NC 27896. Job description may be viewed at www.nhmbc.net.

Miscellaneous

NCBAM needs servant volunteers who like to mow, trim, rake and bless others. Help aging adults enjoy quality life in their own backyards. Call North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry: 877-506-2226.

Church Bus for Sale. 2003 Champion, Freightliner; 34 passenger bus with rear storage; 5.9 Cummins diesel engine, Allison automatic transmission; clean and in good condition, 154,570 mi.; \$39,000. Call 252-753-3370 and leave message.

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THE PRICE of freedom

We celebrate the historic signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, by 56 courageous men. They were men of great means who enjoyed prestige and luxury in their personal lives. They knew that if they were successful in their defiance against England, they would lead a nation through hardship in the pursuit of freedom. If they failed, they would be branded as traitors and die by public hanging. They considered the prospect of liberty more valuable than the prosperity and security they held in their hands.

"And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

-Declaration of Independence

"God grants liberty only to those who love it, and we are always ready to guard and defend it."

-Daniel Webster, U.S. Senator

"Statesmen ... may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. ... The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure virtue."

-President John Adams

"And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever."

-President Thomas Jefferson

"The liberty enjoyed by the people of these states of worshiping Almighty God agreeably to their conscience, is not only among the choicest of their blessings, but also of their rights."

-President George Washington

"It was religion that gave birth to the English colonies in America. One must never forget that. ... I think I can see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who landed on those shores, as that of the whole human race in the first man. ... Despotism may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot. ... When a people's religion is destroyed, ... then not only will they let their freedom be taken from them, but often they actually hand it over themselves."

-Alexis de Tocqueville, historian

"Government has no more to do with the religious opinions of men, than it has with the principles of mathematics. Let every man speak freely without fear, maintain the principles that he believes, worship according to his own faith, either one God, three Gods, no God, or twenty Gods; and let government protect him in so doing."

-John Leland, Baptist minister

"Our natural, unalienable rights are now considered to be a dispensation of government, and freedom has never been so fragile, so close to slipping from our grasp as it is at this moment. ... You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we'll sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness."

-President Ronald Reagan