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BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

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Planned Parenthood makes national HEADLINES FOR SELLING ABORTED FETAL ORGANS

BR staff

Two videos were released in July of Planned Parenthood representatives discussing the harvesting and sale of aborted fetal parts to undercover investigators posing as employees of a tissue procurement company.

Deborah Nucatola, senior director of medical services for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said in the July 14 video “We’ve been very good at getting heart, lung, liver ... so I’m not gonna crush that part. I gonna basically crush below, I’m gonna crush above, and I’m gonna see if I can get it all intact.”

The July 21 video featured Mary Gatter, former president of the Planned Parenthood Medical Directors’ Council, as she proposed using “a less crunchy technique” of aborting babies to preserve “more whole specimens.”

The women were covertly filmed by a medical watchdog group, Center for Medical Progress (CMP). Each video, taken at lunch meetings, depicted the women dis-

cussing in detail the care taken to abort babies in such a way that ensures the harvesting of intact body parts, and haggling over sale prices.

Nucatola noted, “I’d say a lot of people want liver. And for that reason, most providers will do this case under ultrasound guidance, so they know where they’re putting their forceps.”

David Daleiden, senior investigator for CMP, told LifeSiteNews the latest video suggests Planned Parenthood violated federal laws that prohibit profiting from the sale of human remains and altering abortion techniques to obtain tissue.

After the videos were released, the blogosphere exploded as Christians responded in outrage and anguish.

Owen Strachan, associate professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., wrote in a blog post that Gatter’s statement about “a less crunchy technique” may be “the worst” thing he has ever heard.

“She says it without emotion,” Strachan wrote. “She

[See Selling page 16](#)

firstchoice delivers hope for unplanned pregnancies

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

Emotional shockwaves rolled over many Americans when an undercover video surfaced that revealed a Planned Parenthood executive discussing the organization’s practice of selling aborted fetal parts. Again many were stunned when a second video showed former president of the Planned Parenthood Medical Directors’ Council negotiating prices for baby organs.

“I wasn’t surprised,” said Amber Lehman, chief executive officer of First Choice Pregnancy Solutions, a faith-based organization in Wake Forest dedicated to supporting those affected by unplanned pregnancies.

“Whether they are donating or selling the fetal parts is really a non-issue to me,” she continued. “The problem is that there’s a human child being destroyed ...

“It should awaken our senses” that Planned Parenthood is harvesting hearts, livers and lungs “because those are the organs of a person.”

First Choice cares about people – babies and mothers alike. “We believe that every life is precious, including the mother,” said Lehman.

[See Hope page 11](#)

ERLC’s Moore to interview presidential candidates

Baptist Press

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio will be the first two participants in a series of civil forums for 2016 presidential candidates hosted by Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore.

Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), will interview Bush Aug. 4 during the Send North America Conference at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville. The event will

also feature a prerecorded video interview of Rubio, according to an ERLC press release. Moore wrote in a blog post that he invited Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton to participate but she declined. Bush and Rubio are both Republicans.

“These candidates are not coming as speakers on Christian theology or mission, but our mission as Christians includes both personal evangelism and also public justice,” Moore wrote in a July 22 blog post. “We seek to engage our

culture, and here have the opportunity to engage some of those who seek to lead our country regardless of where they fall on a religious or political spectrum.”

The inaugural civil forums will occur at a missions conference, Moore wrote, because “the gospel ought to shape our consciences to carry out our duties as citizens.” The Send North America Conference is cosponsored by the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board. Some 13,000 evangelicals are expected to attend.

“The leading candidates” from each party will be invited to future civil forums, according to the ERLC release. Candidates were eligible to receive invitations to the Aug. 4 forum if they were polling at 10 percent or higher at the time their invitations were issued in the Real Clear Politics national average, an aggregation of multiple polls.

“I want our constituency of gospel Christians to hear from everyone possible, of all parties and all ideologies,”

[See Candidates page 4](#)

The wrong side of God

Who said, “History is on our side, and we will bury you”? Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953-’64, made this hollow prediction in 1956. It was a threat against the United States and other free nations.

Did it happen as he predicted? No, it did not. Instead, in December 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 separate countries. Its collapse was hailed as a victory for freedom and a triumph of democracy over totalitarianism.

What happened to the communist leader’s boast, “history is on our side”? Well, it was a wishful claim with no substance. It was an empty threat. One might call it rhetorical shadowboxing.

How many times have you heard the more recent claim, “If you oppose homosexual marriage, you are on the wrong side of history”? It sounds to me like history is repeating itself. Here we go again.

I like the way Jonah Goldberg ex-

plained the phrase in his *New York Post* article titled, “The Pathetic ‘wrong side of history’ Plea.” His commentary, published March 21, 2014, said, “The right side of history is bunk. In domestic politics, people (mostly liberals) tend to say, ‘You’re on the wrong side of history’ about social issues that are breaking their way. It’s a handy phrase, loosely translated as, ‘You’re going to lose eventually, so why don’t you give up now?’”

In other words, it’s a mind game, a mental ploy that is heavily used in prisoner of war camps. The strategy plays with the emotions of those in captivity, hoping they feel defeated enough to surrender any final strings of hope they may be holding in their grip.

Michael Hanby, a Catholic professor and writer for *The Federalist*, phrased it another way. “It is not an argument but a ‘conversation stopper’ designed to put an end to argument by urging opponents of same-sex marriage to resign themselves to a fate which they are powerless to resist and exempting advocates of ‘mar-



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

Churches should not fear court action

Following the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States on June 26, I have been inundated with calls from pastors and church leaders regarding the impact of this decision upon churches. The scriptures record Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7, “*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*” (KJV). This verse is the basis for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) response to the action of the Court as I conduct seminars across the state to assist pastors and their congregations to respond appropriately. This is the first in a series of articles to assist churches in their response to the actions of the Court. In this article, I want to address the matter of “fear.”

I remind readers that God did not for one millisecond shudder or recoil at the Court’s decision to validate same-sex marriage across the nation. God is still sovereign, still on the throne and still in control. We can have confidence in our God, His truth and the expectations He has established through scripture for marriage.

Regardless of the validation of same-

sex marriage by the Court, the fact remains that God has not validated any marriage outside of that which He ordained in scripture. Marriage is and shall forever remain between one man and one woman; specifically between a man as created by God and a woman as created by God.

However, fear abounds among Christians, and there are groups that wish to exploit that fear. For example, a web-based fake news site promoted a false news story regarding the supposed arrest of a minister in Vermont due to his refusal to perform a same-sex wedding ceremony. The story took on a level of credibility it did not deserve as it was circulated and cited as an example of “the beginning of the end.”

Sadly, few people read the story before they posted, repeated and shared the story. If the story had been read, the lack of credibility would have been easily recognized. First, the story was posted by a website masquerading as a credible site; the URL for the site was a giveaway. Second, the story indicated that the minister in question was pastor of a for-

riage equality’ from the burden of having to think about, much less defend, their position with depth or rigor.”

You might have to take a breath after reading that sentence. Read it again. Hanby is correct. Those who oppose biblical values are being excused from reasonable thinking. They just spit out the “wrong side of history” phrase and chuckle merrily on their way without offering a substantive defense of their position.

I’ll be honest. I’m a bit bewildered by the ‘wrong side of history’ phrase. It can be officially classified as a cliché by now. On the other hand, maybe not. To call it a cliché actually seems to give it a measure of dignity that it does not deserve.

So, let’s dispense with pointless questions and raise some questions that have substance. Here’s one, “Are you on the wrong side of God?”

Four years ago President Barack Obama and others on the left openly claimed they opposed same-sex marriage because it was a violation of their Christian faith.

Apparently, they did not want to be on the wrong side of God. Today the same leaders say they have evolved. Now they support same-sex marriage.

Not one, on the other hand, has suggested that God has changed anything. God and His values were simply eliminated from the conversation.

The Bible says God met Moses on a mountain to give him 10 foundational laws. Exodus 32 records the story about the Hebrew people’s impatience and idolatry.

Moses had been gone for a long time. They thought he should not stay so long

on the mountain. Weary of waiting, they devised their own god – an idol of gold that looked like a calf. Aaron, Moses’ brother, participated in the crime against God. In verse 26 Moses raised a very important question to the people, “Who is on the Lord’s side?”

Moses and the Hebrew people were seriously at odds with each other. But he did not ask them, “Is God on your side?” Neither did Moses claim, “God is on my side.” The question was, “Are you on God’s side?”

There is only one way to know if we are on God’s side. Read what He says about Himself, about humanity, about sin, about salvation – let God speak for Himself.

If we are honest, we cannot read our preferences into what He says. We can’t design God around our desires. Let God speak for Himself. The Bible is His revelation of Himself to us. Let God introduce Himself and His standards. Then, we can ask, “Am I on the right side of God or the wrong side of God?”

The application of this question is not limited to the same-sex marriage issue. What about abortion? Without a doubt, the recent exposure of Planned Parenthood’s gross, unacceptable atrocities against human beings forces us to ask, “Who is on the Lord’s side?”

It’s time to ask questions of substance about all of the issues of the day. To do so will not silence the voices of rebellion. They may become more vicious. Intensified emotion is expected when one has no other defense. But our position is unchanged if we take our stand on God’s side. **BR**



BRIAN K. DAVIS
Guest Column

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See Fear page 4

The beauty of color in God's Kingdom

When I speak about creating a disciple-making culture in churches across our state, I often talk about the changing face of North Carolina.

While we have a mandate to go into all the world, we are also seeing the world come to us from places that we know have little or no gospel witness. In our research to find the greatest pockets of lostness in North Carolina, we continue to find people from other countries that the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) International Mission Board (IMB) classifies as unreached people groups. In His sovereignty, God has given us unprecedented opportunity to reach the world right now and right here in North Carolina. More than 300 different languages are being spoken in the homes of children who currently attend one of our N.C. public schools. Our churches must look like and reflect the diversity of our communities.

I give thanks to God and rejoice because I am observing an increase in the racial and ethnic diversity within the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), both in terms of messengers who attend the annual

meeting and individuals who are serving in places of convention leadership. We have 566 ethnic churches and missions in our membership of 4,300 churches. This includes 140 African-American churches, 12 African churches, 115 Hispanic churches and 80 Native American churches.

This list goes on with multiple Korean, Chinese, Filipino, Nepali, Chinese Mandarin, Vietnamese, Hmong, Montagnard, Burmese, Pakistani, Russian, Nigerian, Indian, Cambodian, Romanian, Bangladeshi and other multiethnic churches. While significant progress has been made, much work remains to be done.

As our state continues to become more ethnically diverse, it is important that our churches and convention leadership also reflect that diversity.

God's church on earth should look like the redeemed in heaven. I pray that the recent tragic murders of nine innocent people in a church in Charleston, S.C., will not be forgotten, but rather the Christ-like response of surviving members of that congregation will serve as a spark to ignite a new era in which we embrace racial

equality and drastically improve relationships among all races of people. The Church of Jesus Christ should lead the way in this movement because He has called us to love one another.

One of the things that made our recent SBC meeting in Columbus, Ohio, especially moving was the beautiful display of unity that took place during the special prayer service on Tuesday evening as Southern Baptists of different racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds served as leaders during this service.

It was a thrilling experience and a beautiful sight as our diverse group of Baptists attending this service embraced one another, prayed together, shared testimonies together and worshipped our God together in a spirit of oneness in Christ.

As we continue to push back darkness and impact lostness through disciple-making, I pray that God will raise up even more pastors and laity who will join hands and hearts in unity to reach the nations for the Kingdom of God wherever these people are found.

"After this I looked, and there before me was as great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb..."
— Revelation 7:9 **BR**



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

Biblical prayers for critical days

Today, America is being called a post-Christian nation. Paganism is rampant, and the church finds itself in a culture very similar to the one found in the first century. The cultural parallels may be similar, but the spiritual condition of the American church is very different from that of the early church in Acts. The early church in Acts was spiritually alive and vibrant, while the American church is in decline, apathetic, sin-stained and complacent.

How do believers and churches pray biblically in response to this increasingly hostile and pagan culture in light of the spiritual crisis facing the American church? Some prayer points are important and necessary for the church today. We must pray for God's comfort for those affected by evil, persecution, injustice and tragedy. We must also pray for believers to stand upon the truth of scripture in a pagan world.

Even so, the Lord is also calling His people toward prayer that focuses more on Him and the bigger picture of His Kingdom perspective and purposes. The crucial question that needs to be asked is, "What is God's perspective on all that is taking place and how can we join Him through strategic biblical prayer?"

In John 17:1 Jesus prayed, "Father, the hour has come." He understood the Father's time, and He knew the Father's desire to redeem a lost humanity through the Christ. His prayer was timely and strategic. It flowed out of His relation-

ship and desire to fulfill His Father's purposes, despite the personal and painful circumstances, even dangers that were before Him. That's the kind of praying that brought transformation through Jesus to a pagan and lost world. That's the kind of Kingdom-oriented prayers that are needed today.

Below are five biblical prayer points that every believer, family and church needs to be praying toward in the "Father's hour" today.

1. We must pray toward God's mercy in the midst of His judgment.

God is chastening and judging His people in America. The indicators are all too evident. They include: Spiritual apathy; less wisdom; accelerating moral and spiritual decline;

rampant evil; and the normalization of sinful lifestyles. These phenomena point to one fact – God is chastening and pursuing His people, saying, "Return to Me and be My people." Our prayer needs to be like the prayer of Habakkuk 3:2 as he cried out to the Lord during a season of desperation and judgment, "O Lord . . . in wrath remember mercy."

2. We must pray toward a humble, broken and repentant heart.

Our hope for change and restoration is not found in political, social or even economic processes. Our hope is found in the Lord. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways." A humble, broken



CHRIS SCHOFIELD
Guest Column



and repentant heart starts with me, my family and my church, not someone else.

3. We must pray toward a faithful and bold sowing of God's Word.

In Ezekiel 37:4, Ezekiel was commanded to proclaim the "Word of the Lord" to the dead, dry, scattered bones. In Acts 4:29-31, believers prayed for "boldness" to proclaim Christ in the midst of opposition to the gospel. If the church is going to return to the Lord in revival and see the moral and spiritual decline in America turn around, God's Word must be faithfully and boldly delivered in both word and deed.

4. We must pray toward an outpouring of God's Spirit upon His people through revival.

The influence of the church in America is waning because of the lack of the manifest presence of God in and through His people. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says that God's way to revival includes a desperate seeking of "His face." This means that God desires that His people long for the His presence and favor, becoming desperate for Him. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent and return,

that your sins may be blotted out, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Revival always produces hot-hearted believers who are empowered as witnesses.

5. We must pray toward a rapid running of the gospel through spiritual awakening.

Paul prayed in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may run swiftly, and be glorified." Paul understood that a pagan culture is only transformed one heart at a time through the life-changing power of the resurrected Christ. When God moves through spiritual awakening, multitudes of people experience forgiveness and new life through Jesus. That's when the church in America will see this culture change for the good, both morally and spiritually.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – In October, you can join other believers across North Carolina for 30 days of prayer toward revival and spiritual awakening. A devotional guide with prayer points along with a daily prayer point text will be available for access at praync.org in September.) **BR**

‘God Before Government’ goes viral

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

Rit Varriale thought raising the Christian flag above the American flag at Elizabeth Baptist Church on July 5 would get the attention of people in Shelby and the surrounding North Carolina mountains. He did not expect the explosive attention that catapulted the event and the discussion of religious freedom into the national limelight.

The *Biblical Recorder* first published the story about the church’s flag raising service in the July 4 edition. Pastor Rit Varriale led the church to install their first-ever flagpole and hoist the Christian flag above the American flag.

Three Charlotte area television stations

ran stories prior to the event. One invited Varriale and another pastor to appear in a live interview format. Baptist Press picked up the story on July 6, as did many newspapers across the country. Before the flag raising was 24 hours old, the story hit the viral meter on the Internet. Varriale was interviewed by Elisabeth Hasselbeck live on the “Fox and Friends” television show July 7.

For more than a day the story ranked number one on Facebook. A spokesman for Baptist Press said it was the most frequently read story on the Baptist Press website for more than two weeks.

“It’s been surprising to see how fast the conversation took off,” Varriale said. He believes this speaks to the importance of religious rights.

“It says that a lot of people want to talk about this very issue. It’s an issue that we as ministers have to be prepared to address for years to come as we fight for our religious rights.”

Public response has been very favorable, according to Varriale. Approximately 75 percent of those who offered their comments by emails, Facebook and phone messages were favorable. Most of those who opposed the action thought the church was unpatriotic.

“We continue to put forward our patriotism and our love for our country,” he said. “To me it’s a sad indictment when we’ve come to the place as a nation where you say that if you put God first, then

family, then country, that somehow your patriotism comes into question.”

Questioning patriotism in this way “shows how much of an advance secularism has made,” Varriale added. “We are very proud to be Americans. We’re proud of our nation and our history, but we’re also concerned about where we are [as a nation]. We really believe the solution to turning this nation back around is the church.”

He asks churches to remember that they serve God first, and churches must live that commitment beyond the walls of the church facilities.

That will be the beginning of changing
See Viral page 10

Fear Continued from page 2

profit church; an entity that simply does not exist.

Finally, a number of fake news sites on the web circulated false reports and these sites often use the same names in their stories over and over again. The story in question identified the minister as Paul Horner, one of the names so often used by these fake news outlets in their false stories.

It is imperative that pastors and church members exercise discernment regarding stories of this nature. The church needs – and the gospel deserves – Christian statesmen that will discern truth from lies. It is also important for pastors to understand that prior to the Court’s verdict, the government of this nation could not force a minister to baptize, extend the Lord’s Supper, bury or marry anyone. The June 26 action of the Court has not changed this protection enjoyed by pastors across our land.

Some Christians are afraid that the redefinition of marriage will result in the eventual closure of churches across the land. I do foresee many churches closing in the future, but this will not come as a result of the validation of same-sex marriage. The closures will be due to the failure of churches to make disciples.

I am of the opinion that another recession or depression is in the foreseeable future. For the economy to rebound from the next recession, municipalities that are starving for revenue will consider every untapped source of tax dollars. The result will be that municipalities will turn to non-profits, including churches, and revoke the exemption on property tax. Contributions to churches will remain tax deductible, for a while, but churches will be called upon to pay tax on their properties.

The reality is that so many churches operate on such slim budgets that the addition of property tax will result in their inability to stay financially solvent. Why is the addition of property tax going to be so burdensome? Simply stated: church members are not practicing Biblical stewardship; which is part of the disciple-making process. The statistics are alarming.

Few give financially to the church and even fewer actually tithe. It will be to our shame that churches will not be able to pay their property tax. Jesus said the gates of Hell would not prevail against His church, but it appears that His people will allow property tax to do so.

The church should not fear the recent action of the Court nor the potential actions of municipalities in days to come. Rather, the church, led by the Holy Spirit, should boldly engage in disciple making. Most importantly, the church must intentionally disciple each and every member on her rolls and equip these members to engage each person in their community with the gospel. We must develop a culture of disciple-making in our churches. Far too many will slip into a culture of survival if disciple-making does not become the priority. The church must, as the early church did, see disciple-making as its reason for existence.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power. In the next article I want to explore that power God has given us, which is recognized – in part – even by our government. There is no challenge presently before the church that God has not given His people to the power to withstand.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Brian K. Davis is associate executive director-treasurer at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.) **BR**

Candidates Continued from page 1

Moore wrote. “I’m glad that Gov. Bush and Sen. Rubio have agreed to kick off this ongoing conversation.”

The forums fall in the historic Baptist tradition of being “deeply engaged in talking to candidates and leaders about matters such as religious liberty and the limits on the state over conscience,” Moore wrote.

Candidates should not be permitted

to “woo evangelicals” with surface-level “God-talk,” he added.

“If a candidate can give a ‘testimony’ of ‘faith,’ and quote from a couple of hymns, sometimes he or she expects that to be enough to win over evangelicals,” Moore wrote. “The stakes are too high for identity politics.”

Dates and candidates have not been announced for future civil forums. **BR**

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WHY I STILL BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

[SYNERGISTIC]

by Dr. Leo A. Endel
Executive Director
Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention

My wife Sarah was visiting a church where a missionary speaker said the most surprising thing. "Thank you for sending your mission team last winter. I believe we accomplished some good things, but after you left, my wife and I thought to ourselves, 'What could we have done with the \$52,500 that it cost to bring you here?'"

That's a very good question. There can be a fine line between short-term missionary vacations and missionary work. Studies show that trips do increase one's missions understanding and commitment, but even short-term missions agencies agree that trips can be inefficient and ineffective without the follow-up of a field missionary or church.

The Cooperative Program provides the foundation of Southern Baptist Great Commission giving throughout North America and the world. It provides the funding points through which local churches can leverage their weekly missions giving through personal involvement. For example, a church in Alabama can give through the Cooperative Program to help support 5,000 church planters in North America and then go invest themselves in a Vacation Bible School or a block party alongside a supported planter in Minnesota. Likewise, a church in Mississippi could be supporting a missionary couple in South America and then go down to help them do evangelism on a mission trip.

Strategic missions giving through the Cooperative Program combined with mission trips leverages our missions investment and gives maximum impact. Giving and going make powerful partners.



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM
How North Carolina Baptists Support Missions

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Executive Committee gives approval to 2016 budget

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

The Executive Committee (EC) of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) gave its approval to a proposed 2016 budget that will increase giving to missions through the Cooperative Program (CP) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) by three percent.

The \$29.5 million budget approved by the EC on Thursday, July 9, reflects an overall increase of a half-million dollars from the current 2015 budget and proposes to increase the percentage of funds given to the SBC for missions from 37 to 40 percent. The proposed budget will be presented to the full BSC Board of Directors at its September meeting. Messengers from N.C. Baptist churches will vote to give final approval to the 2016 CP budget at the BSC annual meeting Nov. 2-3 in Greensboro.

"We did this (budget) under the framework of maximizing the potential we have to impact lostness," said Tony Honeycutt, chairman of the Budget Committee, who presented the budget proposal to the EC.

The proposed budget also includes increased allocations to the BSC institutions and agencies, as well a designation to the Evangelism and Discipleship Group to fund new projects related to church strengthening and revitalization. It includes a two percent cost-of-living increase for BSC staff.

The budget maintains life and disability protection benefits for N.C. Baptist pastors and church staff, but eliminates an annual matching contribution given to pastors and church staff members who participate in the GuideStone retirement plan. The contribution equates to about \$210 per person per year.

"We are asking churches to pick up this minimal amount of expense for their

pastors and for their staff," Honeycutt said.

The budget also keeps the allocation and goal for the 2016 North Carolina Missions Offering unchanged at \$2.1 million. The three percent increase in funds sent to the SBC means about \$1.1 million more would go toward supporting missions and ministries through the CP. The proposed increase continues a trend of sending a higher percentage of the annual budget to the SBC each year. The BSC has increased its allocation to the CP by one-half percent every year for the past 10 years.

Regarding the current 2015 budget, Beverly Volz, director of accounting services, reported that CP funds received by the BSC through June 30 equal approximately \$13.8 million, which is 2.58 percent higher than the same time period last year. In other business, the EC voted to transfer money from a BSC fund previously earmarked for church loans to the North Carolina Baptist Foundation (NCBF) to support the N.C. Baptist Scholarship Program.

The funds will support merit and need-based scholarships for students from N.C. Baptist churches attending one of the five colleges and universities affiliated with the BSC, as long as those schools remain in friendly cooperation with the convention. At its May meeting, the Board of Directors voted to transfer oversight of the annual scholarship program from the convention to NCBF.

The EC also approved a new missions mobilization consultant position with North Carolina Baptist Men. The consultant will work with churches and associations to involve more individuals in various local, state, national and international mission projects and partnerships. The position will be funded through the North Carolina Missions Offering and reserve funds. **BR**



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NASCAR not driving force behind Mission City Church

By MIKE CRESWELL | BSC Communications

You don't have to like NASCAR to be part of Mission City Church.

But for now, it helps.

That's because the new church meets in the famous Joe Gibbs Racing shop in Huntersville, just north of Charlotte.

Enter the front door and you're in a multimillion-dollar showroom of race cars that are faithful copies of the actual Toyotas that the four Gibbs teams have driven to NASCAR victories across the country. Lobby display windows are packed with trophies, awards and souvenirs.

The modern building is part executive offices and part garage. There's even a window giving a look down at the outer garage area. But pastor Kyle Dillard says the real race cars are tweaked in a very secure garage behind closed doors, safe from prying eyes. He points down to a checklist where every bit of each highly sponsored car – down to the last nut and bolt – is tracked for repair or improvement.

Church services are held in a well-equipped auditorium that seats 90 people, though the fledgling congregation will need a few more months to fill it. The church started meeting just a year ago in the Dillard home. Several months later they were ready for an outside meeting place.

They tested the move by asking that God not let it rain on Sunday nights at 6 p.m. when they met. "It rained a lot last summer, but it never rained on a Sunday night," Dillard said.

How did such a unique meeting place come about? It became possible only because Dillard got to know some of the Joe Gibbs Racing staff. "You can't live in this town and not know NASCAR people," Dillard said.

Finding suitable (and affordable) meeting places is one of the biggest challenges newly planted churches face across North Carolina.

Even with financial and other help from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) church planting team, new churches often must meet in schools or other public buildings. And that can require setting up a trailer full of seats, pulpits and sound systems each week.

"We are so glad we're not having to do that every Sunday," Dillard said. "Having this place to meet is such a blessing."

The convention's church planting team

worked in partnership with churches, associations and networks of churches to help them start 103 new churches during 2014.

That works out to a new church started about every three days on average. N.C. Baptists support this ministry as they give through the Cooperative Program and the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO).

Helping start new churches is one of the many ways the Baptist State Convention is helping reach North Carolina's estimated 5.8 million lost people for Christ.

The convention also has many resources to enable churches to become disciple-makers.

Dillard is one of about 150 church planters getting support from the church planting ministry. He says he has developed great respect for Richard Lee, the convention's urban church planting consultant, who is working some 20 new church plants in the Charlotte area and comes by for regular meetings.

A music graduate of Appalachian State University, Dillard was a traveling Christian concert musician for years before he became a worship leader at Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago's suburbs, a mega-sized congregation that is one of the nation's largest. Listen to Mission City Church's praise band and you'll hear that depth of experience reflected in the quality of their sound.



Kyle Dillard, pastor of Mission City Church, poses in the multimillion-dollar lobby of Joe Gibbs Racing, which is filled with replicas of the expensive race cars that win NASCAR races across the country. (BSC photo by Mike Creswell)

You'll also hear Dillard playing some serious trumpet.

He later served with Lake Forest Church in Huntersville and once commuted to Boston each week for seven months to lead worship on Sundays for a church there.

As Dillard and his wife prayed over church job offers from across the county, he puzzled over why nothing felt right.

"We prayed for God to show us some direction. He did, and here we are," Dillard says, summing up on how they got into church planting in the Char-

lotte area, not far from his home town of Belmont.

NASCAR may be just a passing phase for Mission City Church, though. Dillard is feeling led toward the north Charlotte area, where a soon-to-open I-485 beltline is apt to spur rapid development like the loop did on the city's south side a few years ago.

Maybe when the church eventually leaves the Joe Gibbs building, some of that famous NASCAR speed will go with them to hasten their church's growth, come rain or shine. **B3**

Five reasons to support NCMO

BSC Communications

Each year, the North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) is a special offering that supports the ministries of N.C. Baptist Men, church planting, mission camps, associational projects and mobilization ministry projects.

NCMO is received during a special church emphasis each September, but contributions may be made at any time throughout the year. NCMO is an opportunity to impact lostness through various ministries that God uses to draw more people to Himself. The goal for this year's offering is \$2.1 million.

Following are five reasons you should consider making a financial gift to NCMO.

1. Loving

Supporting NCMO accomplishes Kingdom work by being obedient to Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves. This year's theme is "So They Know" and is taken from John 13:34-35, which says, "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*"

N.C. Baptist Men, also known as Baptists on Mission, involves thousands of people in 17 different ministries such as disaster relief, agricultural missions and dental and health screenings. Demonstrating compassion for others by meeting their physical needs build bridges to meeting their spiritual needs, as well.

2. Serving

NCMO supports two mission camps in North Carolina located in Robeson and Cleveland counties. These camps host men, women and student

volunteers throughout the year. Your support of NCMO allows these volunteers to participate in service projects that range from patching a leaky roof to renovating a needy family's home. Projects such as these serve as platforms for sharing the gospel.

3. Going

Each year, gifts to NCMO help mobilize thousands of volunteers for mission projects in North Carolina, the United States and around the world. For many, it's their first opportunity to serve on a mission trip, and for others, God uses this opportunity to call them into a lifetime of service. Volunteers serve in a variety of ways all over the world in places like Armenia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, India, Romania and elsewhere.

4. Planting

One of the best ways to reach lost people is by establishing new churches, and gifts to NCMO go directly to church planting efforts in North Carolina. Since 2007, gifts to NCMO have helped start 927 churches across the state, averaging more than 100 new church plants annually. In 2014 alone, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina worked with 103 new churches, 39 of which spoke languages other than English. Collectively, these new churches reported more than 3,500 professions of faith and averaged more than 5,300 in weekly attendance.

5. Discipling

Every aspect of NCMO and the ministries it supports is for the overarching goal of making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, all of the money given to NCMO goes directly to funding ministry work locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Will you give so that others may know Jesus and become His disciple?

To learn more or make a contribution to NCMO, visit ncmissonsoffering.org. **B3**

Jeannie Elliff, 69, dies of cancer

By TESS RIVERS | IMB/Baptist Press

Jeannie Elliff, wife of former International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff, died July 20 at her home in Oklahoma City following a long struggle with cancer. She was 69.

“The entire IMB family and I praise God for Jeannie Elliff,” said IMB President David Platt. “To use Paul’s words from 2 Corinthians 6:10, we are filled with sorrowful rejoicing at the news of her passing. We grieve with Tom, the Elliff family, and countless friends who have known and loved this woman of prayer and model of faith.”

Elliff, who had fought two previous bouts with cancer, was diagnosed a third time in summer 2014, a few months after her husband asked IMB trustees to begin the search for his successor.

“For many years, she has served and cared for IMB personnel around the world in selfless and unseen ways, and we will miss her deeply,” Platt said. “Yet we grieve with hope, for the joy of Christ in Jeannie Elliff could not be overcome by cancer, and it has not been overcome by death. We rejoice that she is with our Lord, and we look forward to the day when we will join her around the throne of our King with every nation, tribe and tongue to give Him the ultimate glory that He is due.”

Frank S. Page, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee president, said, “Dayle and I dearly loved Jeannie Elliff.”



JEANNIE ELLIFF

“While we met her many years ago, she became particularly special to us when I was elected president of the SBC in 2006. Very new to the national Southern Baptist Convention level, she became a precious encourager to us.”

The ultimate glory of God among the nations was the basis on which Elliff staked her life and ministry. In 2014 she was awarded the Willie Turner Dawson award at the Ministers’ Wives Luncheon during the Southern Baptist Convention’s annual meeting.

The award is given to women who have made a distinct denominational contribution that extends beyond the local church.

“I accept this on behalf of the 2,578 IMB women who serve in hard places around the world,” she said at the time.

From personal experience, Elliff understood how to pray specifically and passionately for the needs of those ministering in hard places.

She served as a missionary in Zimbabwe in the early 1980s and sent two children and their families overseas as missionaries. At one time, 11 of her 25 grandchildren lived overseas.

Elliff’s passion for prayer was fueled in part by the difficult circumstances she faced in her own life, including a 1982 automobile accident in Zimbabwe that nearly took the life of her daughter Beth and brought the family back to the United States.

Elliff is survived by Tom, her husband of 49 years; one sister; three daughters; one son; 25 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. **BR**

Parkwood Baptist honors M.O. Owens

M.O. Owens Jr. preached his last sermon as the pastor of the traditional service at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia on Sunday, July 26. He is pastor emeritus and founding pastor of the church.

In September Owens will be 102 years old. He preached a closing celebration sermon at the 11 a.m. traditional service, a ministry he has pastored for seven years at the church. The service will be discontinued with Owens’ departure. Parkwood’s senior pastor, Jeff Long, spoke of Owens’ strong commitment to the integrity of scripture and widespread influence across the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). He said Owens is “a very humble man” who did not seek recognition.

The service celebrated Owens’ 80 plus years of faithfulness in ministry. He pastored churches in Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina. He has held numerous leadership positions in the BSC and SBC. The M.O. Owens Chair of New Testament Studies was established at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2013.

Milton Hollifield, executive director-treasurer of the BSC, said the convention honored Owens with the Lifetime Award in 2013. “M.O. Owens Jr. is one of my great heroes,” Hollifield said. “I am grateful for what he has meant to us as North Carolina Baptists and to the Southern Baptist Convention. Few people have had more influence in helping move the SBC, its seminaries and the BSC back to its conservative theological roots than Owens.” **BR**

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Students experience ‘More’ at summer Youth Weeks

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Thousands of students attending youth weeks at the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell this summer are learning that following Christ is so much more exciting than anything the world may promise.

“More,” taken from Ephesians 3:20, is the theme for the 2015 summer youth weeks at Fort Caswell, where approximately 7,000 middle and high school students will attend one of the seven weeklong camps held throughout the summer.

“God can do so much more in the lives of students, and He wants to do so much more in their lives than they even think about asking Him for,” said Merrie Johnson, consultant for youth evangelism and discipleship with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina who has conducted summer camps at Fort Caswell for 15 years. “During camp, we’re trying to help them understand that Jesus is better than any other thing that they want to seek after.”

So far this summer, Johnson has seen God move in the lives of students, as many have trusted Christ as their Lord and Savior, recommitted their lives to Him, or surrendered to God’s call to vocational ministry.

“You don’t realize what a week can do in a teenager’s life,” Johnson said. “This week at camp might be what sets them on a path that will lead them on a different trajectory for life.”

Each week at camp, students are challenged to grow in their faith through personal and small group Bible study, and powerful worship services that challenge students to go deeper in their walk with Christ through the proclamation of God’s Word. Campers are also given an opportunity to participate in global missions by packing meals and giving to an offering that goes toward sharing the gospel with children and families in Jacmel, Haiti, through a partnership

with Change This World, a ministry that helps meet physical and spiritual needs in the lives of individuals in developing countries.

During one of this summer’s youth week services, pastor and evangelist Mike Satterfield challenged students to boldly live out their faith in their day-to-day lives, while sharing the message of hope found in the gospel of Jesus Christ with their friends and family members.

“What are you doing with the rest of our life?” Satterfield said. “At the end of the day what will you show God as a result of your journey? Since we cannot count our days, we need to make every day count.”

Youth leaders from various churches said they’ve seen God at work in various ways in the lives of the students who attend the summer youth weeks.

“We all come back home with life-changing experiences,” said Michael Logan, who has attended camp as a chaperone with students from Oak Ridge Baptist Church in Sandy Ridge for several years. “We learn a lot, we grow a lot and we come back home and share that with others.”

Matt West, a youth pastor from Buffalo Baptist Church in Buffalo Junction, Va., said he appreciate the camp’s emphasis on discipleship.

“We want the kids to have fun, but we’re here to help



Students divide into prayer circles during worship at Fort Caswell. (BSC photo)

them see the Bible more clearly, to see who Christ is and how to follow him more,” West said. “The camp staff want the kids to have a great camp experience, but they are also interested in equipping them to follow through on the decisions they make while they are here.”

Johnson said her prayer is that God would continue to do more in the lives of students as they continue to seek

Hurricane Katrina left mark on Baptist re

By TOBIN PERRY | Baptist Press

“We’ve shared the gospel with so many people in this community, I don’t know if there is anyone else we can share with,” Randy Corn thought to himself six months after Hurricane Katrina when he arrived in Gulfport, Miss., one of the many Gulf Coast cities devastated by the historic hurricane 10 years ago.

Corn was involved in Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) construction projects through his church, Biltmore Baptist in Arden, N.C., which had served in the area multiple times and seen many give their lives to Christ through SBDR ministry.

Corn had prayed with the homeowner his team was serving on their first morning in Gulfport and, with his proclivity for evangelism, took a look around the neighborhood and spotted a group of young people talking at the end of a driveway.

After striking up a conversa-

tion with the group, who expressed gratitude to Southern Baptists for their relief efforts, Corn led one of the young men to faith in Christ – the first of eight people he would lead to faith in less than three hours.

Thanks in part to Corn’s experience as an SBDR volunteer following Katrina, he and his wife Ronda became North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries and have spent much of the past decade helping train SBDR teams in personal evangelism.

Corn, who served on his first SBDR team just days after Katrina’s onslaught, was one of nearly 21,000 volunteers from 41 Baptist state conventions to participate in Baptist relief efforts that began after the hurricane’s Gulf Coast landfall on Aug. 29, 2005, and continued through March 2006.

Another 26,000 volunteers would participate in Operation NOAH (New Orleans Area Homes) Rebuild from March 2006 to April 2009. The influx of new volunteers – by far the most who would ever participate in a single

SBDR response and rebuild effort – would transform future disaster relief efforts by Southern Baptists.

Fritz Wilson, executive director of disaster relief for NAMB, calls Hurricane Katrina one of a handful of transformational events in the history of SBDR – from its inception in 1967 during Hurricane Beulah to the Southern Baptist response after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Yet no response remotely compares to Hurricane Katrina.

“Everyone has their own list of what were the most influential events in SBDR,” Wilson said. “But everyone has Katrina as the watermark event in the history of the ministry.”

Within the first five years after the hurricane, the number of trained volunteers soared by 46 percent – from 51,300 to 95,000 volunteers – with more than 25,000 new volunteers trained in the first few months after the hurricane.

“The disaster relief teams of the SBC are second to none,” said former SBC President Fred Luter, pastor of

New Orleans’ Franklin Avenue Baptist Church for nearly three decades. “I don’t just say that for what I’ve heard or read about. I say that because of what I’ve seen firsthand.

“Being there in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, I saw missionaries and disaster relief volunteers come here from all over the country to help those of us in the city, whether it was to gut out our homes or our churches or to help us to paint or cut grass,” said Luter, president of the SBC from 2012-14. With reports by national media outlets, awareness of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief rose throughout all levels of government.

“It opened doors that normally we couldn’t even get close to knocking on,” said Jim Burton, director of volunteer mobilization at NAMB at the time.

“We got much, much better at telling our story through secular media. Then when the government got around to doing a report in 2006 to evaluate what had happened, they were all over

the Southern Baptist response with prayer had been accomplished.

Burton noted efforts became a organizations, even most observers or measure was volunteers had to vours,” Burton ac to God’s purpose al Christian volu mitment to exce SBDR volunte with a new pass – as well as for N Gulf Coast. And a gospel-sized in home.

Today, South 65,000 trained v chaplains – and feeding, chainsa mand, communi shower, laundry repair/rebuild at tion. SBDR is on



Him in the days after camp concludes.

“Remember that God still wants more of you,” Johnson told campers during one of the closing sessions at a recent youth week. “I pray it doesn’t stop for you, and it doesn’t have to. God goes with us wherever we go. We don’t leave Him here when we leave camp. He asks us to be His hands and His feet.” **BR**

Relief

Baptist Disaster Relief re-
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mobilizers of trained disaster relief
volunteers in the United States, along
with the American Red Cross and The
Salvation Army.

NAMB coordinates Southern
Baptist responses to major disasters
in partnership with 42 state Baptist
conventions, most of which have their
own state disaster relief ministries.

Those wishing to donate to SBDR
relief ministries can contact the Baptist
convention in their state or visit *donations.namb.net/dr-donations*. For phone
donations, call (866) 407-6262 or mail
checks to NAMB, P.O. Box 116543,
Atlanta, GA 30368-6543. Designate
checks for “Disaster Relief.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Tobin Perry writes
for the North American Mission Board.) **BR**

NEXT ISSUE: Baptists on Mission
(or North Carolina Baptist Men)
learned from the lessons taught
during Katrina. Also, hear from
some ministers in N.C. who sur-
vived the hurricane.

Tax-exemption: Where do churches stand?

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

In a *TIME* magazine article June 28, Mark Oppenheimer, religion columnist for *The New York Times*, wrote the words that many churches in America have feared for some time now: “It is time to abolish, or greatly diminish, their tax-exempt status.” Churches and other non-profits gained exemptions from the Internal Revenue Service early in the 20th century because they were considered a public good. Oppenheimer now argues for an alleged greater good.

Many tax-exempt institutions, like churches and private universities, hold large amounts of wealth while they sit on prime real-estate in poor cities, contributing little financially to the good of their local municipalities, according to Oppenheimer.

If they paid taxes, he argued, “government revenue would go up, and that money could be used to, say, house the homeless and feed the hungry. ... countries that truly care about poverty don’t rely on churches to run soup kitchens.”

Furthermore, that many conservative churches oppose same-sex marriage only exacerbates the problem for Oppenheimer. He compares the current situation, given the June 26 Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide, to the 1938 Bob Jones University case, where the school’s tax-exemptions were revoked for opposing racial equality – a “fundamental national public policy.”

Denny Burk, professor of biblical studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said in a blog post “moral approval” is the center of the issue. “The real intent of removing tax-exempt status,” said Burk, “is to cripple the institutions that continue their dissent from the sexual revolution.” He added, “A call for ending tax exemptions for religious institutions is a call to close them down – or at least to plunder them of their property.”

Churches provide ‘intangible benefits’

The *Biblical Recorder* published an article in 2012 written by Erik Stanley, senior legal counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF; previously, Alliance Defense Fund), where he explained why churches have remained and should continue to remain tax-exempt.

“Churches minister to the poor and needy in the community, provide numerous social services for the downtrodden among us and reach out to the ‘least of these’ in thousands of different ways,” Stanley said. “The social benefit theory justifies tax exemption for churches as a kind of bargain – churches provide needed services, so they are entitled to tax exemption.”

Stanley added, “Things like reduced crime rates resulting from transformed lives, suicides prevented when people surrender to Christ and people with destructive behavioral patterns that harm the community changing into hard-working and virtuous citizens who contribute to the well-being of the community.”

One study conducted by a University of Pennsylvania professor valued the intangible benefits of several Philadelphia church ministries in the millions of dollars per church.

Those economic effects directly benefit local, state and federal governments, since churches provide services for free that public institutions would normally pay a range of social workers, counselors and others to provide.

Church tax-exemption is ‘constitutional’

Stanley also offered a principled reason for church tax-exemption: “Our history is one of an unbroken practice of exempting churches from taxation. Churches were exempt from the very first time the tax code was passed at the federal level, and have remained exempt in every iteration of the tax code ever since. Every state in America also exempts churches from property taxes. When the U.S. Supreme Court decided a case regarding the property tax exemption of churches, called *Walz v. Tax Commission*, it stated that providing a tax exemption for churches was a less intrusive option under the Constitution than requiring churches to pay taxes.”

If the reasons listed above were to become unconvincing to American courts, and if tax exemption were taken away from churches, Art Rainer, vice president for institutional advancement at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, offers six suggestions.

1. Give – “Tax deductibility has been a side benefit for those who give to their local church, but it has never been the reason why we give. At least, it shouldn’t be. We give because God has told us that this is how we properly steward what He has given to us.”

2. Celebrate budget cuts – “... should the loss of tax exemption become a reality, budget cuts will help maintain the existence of a church. It is a sacrificial, mis-sional move.”

3. Volunteer – “The most important resource for churches has never been money. It’s their people. A potential reduction in resources should motivate you to give your time and your energy to your local church.”

4. Help unleash bi-vocational pastors into the workforce – “... the new financial reality will force [churches] to hire fewer full-time pastors. It will usher in a whole new era for bi-vocational pastors. Assist these bi-vocational pastors with finding jobs.”

5. Stay involved politically – “Do not use this as an excuse to shy away from the opportunity to speak into the political system. ... it is a mistake to completely abandon the opportunity this governmental structure gives us.”

6. Pray – “... when you pray, ask that God will use this moment in history to bring Him glory. Because God’s agenda was never going to be determined by whether or not U.S. churches were or were not tax-exempt anyway.”

N.C. tax exemption bill before Senate

A bill, HB 229, is currently before the North Carolina Senate Committee on Finance that would modify tax-exempt status for religious property, *BR* previously reported. Beulah Baptist Church in Bennett received a \$7,000 bill in 2014 from the Randolph County Tax Department for property taxes on a building that was under construction.

The tax department decided, based on their reading of the current religious property exemption law in North Carolina, the church owed taxes on the building because they did not yet have an occupancy permit; therefore, the property was not used “wholly and exclusively for religious purposes.”

HB 229 would modify the current law to provide tax exemption for religious property “if it is under construction and intended to be wholly and exclusively used by its owner for religious purposes upon completion.”

The bill passed in the House by a 114-0 vote. **BR**

Fire destroys Bethlehem Baptist worship building

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

A severe thunderstorm moved through the western North Carolina town of Taylorsville July 18, sending a bolt of lightning to the steeple of Bethlehem Baptist Church. Witnesses say the steeple ignited immediately.

Fire officials reported the 3:09 p.m. lightning strike appeared to traverse a primary beam across the length of the sanctuary causing the building to quickly burn out of control.

The church's pastor, Wayne Caviness, said, "The sanctuary is completely destroyed. There is severe damage in the remainder of the facility." The attached classroom building received smoke and water damage.

The sanctuary was built in 1950 according to Caviness. Within two hours the destructive flames were put out, but crews expected smoldering to continue for approximately 24 hours. Due to the intense heat more than 150 firefighters were called to the scene from every department in Alexander County with support crews from Hickory. The day after the devastating loss church members and friends gathered for worship in nearby Bethlehem Elementary School's gymnasium. Someone counted more than 375 in attendance, which Caviness said is "at least 100 more than we usually have." They prayed and celebrated the fact that there was no loss of life and no one was hurt in the fire.

A group met on the church property mid-afternoon Sunday. "We had prayer, sang some songs, expressed our faith in God and our resolve to go forward," Caviness said. "Most definitely, we are planning to rebuild." The deacons met Sunday night to discuss the church's next steps.

"We are definitely pulling together. We are not sure what the plan is. There is no water or electricity on the church property. We're trying to see what can be done to restore [utility service]," Caviness added.

The building was fully insured. A complete inventory of the contents will be performed, which is expected to be a painstaking process.

Larry Phillips and his wife, Kathy, were two of four



(Left photo by Andrea Crouch and right photo by Lisa Caviness)

chaplaincy volunteers with North Carolina Baptist Men (NCBM) who attended the Sunday worship service the day after the fire.

"We were there to talk with the members and pray with them, and let them feel the support of the Baptist State Convention and Baptist Men," said Phillips, a former missionary through the International Mission Board, who now serves on the staff of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina as the Unifour Strategy Coordinator with the Strategic Focus Team.

The chaplaincy volunteers were very well received according to Phillips. "The church was very grateful and expressed their gratitude for the presence of the volunteers."

Phillips had arrived at the site of the burned out building Saturday afternoon as the firefighters were finishing their work. "I did get to talk with the pastor Saturday afternoon and asked him if the presence of chaplaincy volunteers would be helpful on Sunday."

The pastor was encouraged and invited the NCBM team to come, he said.

"So, I made contact with Bill Fogarty, who is the team leader for the chaplaincy volunteer program of North Carolina Baptist Men. Bill got approval from Gaylon Moss and put the team together," Phillips added. Moss is disaster relief coordinator for NCBM. Fogarty recently retired as pastor of First Baptist Church in Weddington.



In spite of the tragic fire, the church's leadership encouraged a group of teenagers and adults to keep a commitment to go to the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell. They departed on schedule the Monday after the fire to attend the popular Youth Weeks Summer Camp. (Related story, page 8.)

The church operated a child care center in the now destroyed facility.

It has temporarily relocated to Shiloh Lutheran Church, 1011 Shiloh Church Road in Hickory. However, an announcement on the church website says the day care center is forced to close for the 2015-2016 year due to the fire.

Sunday services have been relocated to the facilities of Bethlehem Elementary School indefinitely.

"This congregation has a long tradition of training future ministers and missionaries," said Brian Davis, associate executive director-treasurer for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, who was saved, baptized and disciple at Bethlehem. "I grew up hearing the testimonies of young people responding to God's call to ministry and did the same myself. A number of churches across our state are blessed by ministers that grew up in this fertile soil."

Like others, Davis noted that he was thankful the church is not just a building but the people. He added that he would continue to pray "God's blessings on the church family." **BR**

Viral

Continued from page 4

the direction of the nation, he said.

"When you look at the way the left portrays people who believe in God and country – it's almost as if you're backwards if you believe in God," Varriale said.

"That's the narrative the left has tried to create. We are for God and country, in that order. That's what it means to be a person who understands the historic values of America."

The popularity of the story "speaks to the fact that Christians are begging to have this conversation. I think they are also looking for us as leaders in the church to lead," he added.

Varriale does not want the flag to be the issue.

Flying the Christian flag above the American flag is only an illustration of the priorities that churches must demon-



Elisabeth Hasselbeck interviews Rit Varriale about his church's move to put the Christian flag above the American flag. (screen capture)

strate in the present anti-Christian, cultural environment, he said. The greater battle is with the courts in the United States.

"Our battle is not with the LGBT agenda," he said. "Our battle is not with Freedom from Religion or Americans

United for Separation of Church and State organizations. Our battle is with the courts.

"In the near future we have to start addressing how the church can lead in a peaceful resistance to

the courts – standing up peacefully to the coercion of the courts, because ultimately that is where our battle is. The Christian baker is not afraid to stand up against an LGBT couple – the Christian baker is afraid of the courts. Likewise a principal that would like to lead a prayer in school

does not have in the back of his mind the atheist family that will be upset about the prayer. What's really in his mind is the U.S. court system. And the list goes on and on."

Varriale said the Supreme Court marriage ruling is a classic example. "They forced the majority of Americans to accept [same-sex marriage]. This is not something the majority of Americans wanted."

The struggle to regain religious freedoms will be a "community-by-community process – getting communities to stand together," he concluded. "It's going to have to start with small towns and move out from there. Communities need to stand together."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Follow the movement at GodBeforeGovernment.org and Facebook.com/godbeforegovernment.) **BR**

Hope

Continued from page 1

Offering real choices

The goal of First Choice is to communicate accurate and truthful information to those affected by an unplanned pregnancy and to provide them with physical, emotional and spiritual support, according to its website. Staff members do not pressure pregnant women into doing anything they do not want to do, Lehman specified. “We provide a safe haven for her to be able to work through her pregnancy decision.”

A “decision tool” is used to help pregnant women determine – in their own handwriting – what they want, whether they’re faced with a decision to abort their pregnancy, decide which obstetrician to use, determine where to live or whether to stay in a relationship with a child’s father.

The clinic encounters some women intent on aborting. “We ask the question of each of them,” Lehman explained, “If your circumstances were different, what is your heart’s desire?” First Choice has only encountered one woman who wished to abort, no matter the circumstances; the rest wanted to carry their child to full term. First Choice says to these women, “If that’s your heart’s desire, that’s our heart’s desire too.”

Pregnancy centers like First Choice

“We ask the question ... ‘If your circumstances were different, what is your heart’s desire?’”
– Amber Lehman

are often characterized as manipulative and not concerned about the interests of mothers. The clinics can be perceived as anti-choice. Lehman contends the opposite it actually true.

“You hear woman after woman say her heart’s desire is to have her baby, but she doesn’t know how,” Lehman said. “She doesn’t see how she can do it. Her boyfriend isn’t supportive, or her mom is threatening to kick her out, but she’s saying, ‘I don’t want to abort.’”

“We’re accused of taking away choice but we actually give women the space and the resources to choose what they really want to choose instead of what they feel trapped to choose.”

Helping women overcome obstacles

Of the pregnant women that came to First Choice for help so far in 2015, approximately 50 percent of them were considering abortion but decided to



carry the pregnancy to full term. Another 36 percent – whose life circumstances suggested they were likely to abort – decided to carry the pregnancy to full term as well. The remaining 14 percent includes abortion-minded women and pregnant women that were not considering abortion, but came to First Choice for testing, ultrasound and support services.

When a pregnant woman visits First Choice, they meet with a nurse, receive a test and ultrasound to determine pregnancy. Nurses educate clients on procedure risks and fetal development, said Lehman. Clients are also assigned a care coordinator that oversees initial and ongoing visits. Staff members begin assessing her “heart’s desire,” risk factors and major obstacles to carrying the pregnancy to full term. These obstacles are often financial, relational, related to housing or the loss of a dream or goal, according to Lehman.

“Often times they are faced with utilities being cut off, rent not paid or close to being evicted,” said Lehman. So, First Choice begins providing various kinds of support to help the client overcome each of the obstacles, starting with what’s important to the client.

First Choice wrote a check recently for more than \$900 to keep a client from being evicted because she was nearing her due date and facing a housing crisis, according to Lehman.

First Choice also operates a daily mobile clinic that visits regions with high abortion rates. The two- or three-person unit is also available to women who seek medical services but cannot travel to the office clinic.

Lehman said the mobile clinic recently drove from Wake Forest to Durham at 6:30 a.m. to meet a woman – at her request – before her scheduled 9:30 a.m. abortion appointment. She cancelled the abortion, according to Lehman. “We deploy any hour that we need to.”

medical professionals, said Lehman. “We have to have high levels of training; we need the best of the best.”

They also depend on volunteers for many non-medical aspects of their work. “Our volunteers usually engage in ongoing mentoring called ‘Next Steps,’” Lehman said, which offers workshops on childbirth preparation, infant safety, parenting skills, money management, basic car care and meal planning.

Other consultation services include post-abortion care. First Choice also provides sexually transmitted disease and infection testing, by hosting Wake County Health and Human Services on site. The organization faces a daunting task in its community.

“Well, we always need money,” said Lehman, when asked how others can help. “The abortion industry is a multi-billion dollar industry ... our competitor is a big competitor. Filling a baby bottle with some change is not enough. There has to be some sacrificial giving into all of the pregnancy centers.”

“We also need prayer,” Lehman said. “This is not an easy work. My staff members see children on an ultrasound machine screen, and they confirm the death of that child. That’s part of their job, and that’s hard to live with.”

Another difficult aspect of the ministry, according to Lehman, is counseling women who regret having an abortion.

The organization also receives slanderous attacks from those who oppose the ministry. Lehman said their staff had recently been reported to the Board of Nursing for investigation. The case was open and closed in the same day, she added, because First Choice medical staff members are certified medical professionals. “Nonetheless, we need discernment, wisdom and perseverance.”

One of the pressing issues, she continued, “is for the local church to rise up in support of these girls after they choose life.” The help a local church offers one pregnant woman can become known throughout her community.

“When her neighbor becomes pregnant, she says ‘You know what? My neighbor got help from these people – I think they’re called Christians – maybe they’ll help me too, and I don’t have to abort.’”

Lehman believes churches must “leave their apathy and silence. Talk about the issue. ... Take a woman into your home. Help her get on her feet. It is hard but it is worth it.”

Visit firschoicenc.org for more information. To see a list of pregnancy centers across North Carolina visit cpcfink.org/member-directory.php. For more resources go to brnow.org/life. **BR**

YOUTH MINISTRY TRAINING
- 2015 -

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 12, 2015 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Cowee Baptist Church Franklin, N.C.	September 22, 2015 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m. Tyson's Creek Baptist Church Bear Creek, N.C.
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REGISTER ONLINE
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BE DO TELL North Carolina Baptists

Baptist News Commission of North Carolina • Allen A. Holfield, Jr., Executive Director • Director
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The annual convention of the Baptist News Commission of North Carolina will be held in Cary, NC, from September 12-14, 2015. For more information, visit www.ncbaptists.org.

Taking the next steps

Most First Choice workers are paid

Sunday hunting allowed, except for a.m. worship times



freeimages.com

By M.H. CAVANAUGH | Christian Action League

The North Carolina Senate took the final step June 24 to approve legislation that repeals a 145-year-old ban on Sunday hunting with firearms. The Senate passed HB 640 – Outdoor Heritage Act by a 33-15 vote.

Mark Creech, executive director of the Christian Action League, said in a statement released to the press that the Christian Action League (CAL) opposed HB 640 from its inception, but he said the

bill that passed was still something of a partial victory for the League's efforts.

"Although the measure does allow Sunday hunting with a firearm," he said, "it respects our churches, more specifically the rural churches it most likely affects, by prohibiting Sunday hunting from the hours of 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m."

He added that, "[m]ost rural churches typically start at around 9:45 a.m.-10 a.m. and are finished by noon. [CAL] appreciates the sensitivity and respect shown by lawmakers in adding this provision. Moreover, without such a provision, I am concerned other Sunday laws already on the books that show deference to the churches could be jeopardized."

When the House first approved the bill in April, there were no restrictions on the time hunters could shoot their prey on Sunday. The Senate, however, tweaked the bill, prohibiting all Sunday hunting until after noon. That wasn't acceptable to the House and a Conference Committee from both chambers crafted the compromise allowing hunting in the morning until 9:30 a.m. and prohibiting not to resume until after 12:30 p.m.

The House approved the compromise overwhelmingly by a vote of 88-26.

Some lawmakers took umbrage with the law regardless of the compromise.

Rep. Michael Speciale, (R-Craven),

complained that since the bill provided an exemption to the more densely populated counties of Wake and Mecklenburg, it was patently unfair that other counties had no such option for at least two years to opt-out. Rep. Larry Pittman (R-Cabbarus), also a Presbyterian minister, said he rejected any hunting on Sunday and urged fellow House members to do the same. Rep. Garland Pierce (D-Scotland), also a Baptist minister, expressed concerns that there should be some cut-out of time on Sunday afternoons as well to accommodate funerals.

During debate on the Senate floor Wednesday, Sen. Ralph Hise (R-Mitchell), said that he had originally voted for the Senate version that called for no Sunday hunting until after noon, but he would be voting against concurrence with the Conference Committee's compromise.

Hise said the compromise had "placed something into the law that is absolutely unenforceable." He charged the three-hour hiatus precipitated difficult and unanswered questions. Are hunters, he asked, "required to be out of the woods by 9:30? Out of the tree stand? Do they have to put their gun down?" Since bow hunting on Sunday is already legal, Hise

See Hunting page 15

Court rules against religious groups in contraception case

By SETH BROWN | BR Content Editor

The Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled July 14 that religious employers must comply with federally mandated employee health coverage – which includes all FDA-approved contraceptive services – because the mandate does not present a substantial burden to religious exercise or violate First Amendment rights.

The mandate includes an accommodation scheme for religious non-profits and closely held organizations that object to the contraception coverage.

Objectors may submit a form to the Department of Health and Human Services, signing away the coverage to a third party.

Churches and their auxiliaries are exempt from the mandate, while publicly held corporations have no exemptions. The case before the circuit court addressed the standing of non-profit organizations.

In the 2014 Hobby Lobby case, the Supreme Court ruled that closely-held, for-profit entities with religious objections were exempt from providing healthcare coverage that included abortion-inducing contraception. The White House issued a revision July 10 requiring such businesses to follow the accommodation scheme provided to religious non-profits.

GuideStone Financial Resources, Oklahoma Baptist University, Truett-McConnell College, a Catholic organization for women called Little Sisters of the Poor and other appellants claim the mandate – accommodation included – violates their faith by making them complicit in providing abortion-inducing drugs through healthcare plans, according to press releases.

Harold Loftin, GuideStone's general legal counsel, said, "GuideStone has, from the filing of our case, objected to

the so-called 'accommodation' because it requires certain religious employers that GuideStone serves to take actions that the government intends to use to deliver abortion-inducing drugs and devices to our participants and their dependents. The evidence presented to the court showed that 'women' as young as age 10 will be notified of their eligibility to receive abortion-inducing drugs and devices for free by GuideStone's third-party administrator, if the religious employer complies with the government's demands."

GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said in a press release, "This is a disappointing decision, for both religious liberty and for the sanctity of life."

"This is a day for all of us to bombard the Throne of Grace with petitions for a favorable outcome on appeal, for strength of resolve, for the unborn in this country and for all of our leaders, so many of whom have turned their back on the founding principles of this country. ... Today was a setback. It is not the final outcome."

Mark Rienzi, senior counsel of the Becket Fund and lead attorney in the case, spoke on behalf of Little Sisters: "It is a national embarrassment that the world's most powerful government insists that, instead of providing contraceptives through its own existing exchanges and programs, it must crush the Little Sisters' faith and force them to participate. "Untold millions of people have managed to get contraceptives without involving nuns, and there is no reason the government cannot run its programs without hijacking the Little Sisters and their health plan."

GuideStone has filed an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court against the mandate. Officials said they are optimistic the high court will accept its appeal by the end of September, according to Baptist Press. **BR**

Is your church rushing to the 1980s?

Our churches need to be singing new songs in worship. Unfortunately, what I see in many churches is a rush to move from worship stuck in the 1950s to the 1980s.

These churches are seeking to transition their worship by starting with the praise and worship choruses from the 70s and 80s while they ignore the excellent, rich songs coming from our current decade.

To ignore the great music of this decade ignores how God is active in the church today. Also, in general, the music of this decade is much more rich in theology than the 70s and 80s.

The songs of the earlier period are often the ones that are referred to as "7-11" choruses – songs with 7 words that you sing 11 times. Some of those songs are very useful, and they certainly were pivotal in our worship transitions of the last century, but they

should not be selected as the primary source for adding new songs to your corporate worship services.

The vast majority of the new songs used in worship in churches across our nation (see *TopWorshipSongs.org*) do not come from the earlier era. Also, the songs of the 70s and 80s do not necessarily speak in styles that are comprehensible by the non-churched community.

The church must incorporate new music in worship – the Bible instructs us to do this. We must be careful in our choices of worship music, finding songs that speak biblical truth in ways that connect with our communities.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Kenny Lamm is a consultant for worship and music with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact him at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5638, or klamm@ncbaptist.org. Visit his blog at renewingworshipnc.org.)



KENNY LAMM

New workshops provide audio training for churches

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Every week thousands of musicians and singers in churches spend hour upon hour practicing for their worship service only to have that presentation hampered by audio issues.

A series of new training workshops being offered across North Carolina will provide vital training for audio technicians at churches to help them in making worship services the highest quality they can be to the glory of God. Beginning in mid-August, the worship ministry of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), in conjunction with local Baptist associations, will offer several audio seminars in locations across the state that will address the basic skills that an audio technician needs to be successful in the local church.

“As we’ve worked with churches on various aspects of worship and music ministry, we’ve discovered that there is a great need for this type of training,” said Kenny Lamm, BSC senior consultant for worship and music.

Mark Brady, worship pastor at Fellowship Baptist

Church in Moyock, will lead the workshops. Brady’s experiences as a longtime Army musician and a music minister give him the unique perspective of addressing topics from the viewpoint of both the audio tech and the music director. “A good audio tech with mediocre equipment can make a mediocre choir sound good,” Brady said. “On the other hand, a mediocre tech with good equipment can make a good choir sound mediocre.”

During the training, Brady will cover topics such as the basics of sound, understanding the role of the audio technician and understanding the functions of the mixer, equalizer, monitors, microphones and other equipment. The workshop will also include hands-on training, as well.

“The task that really allows them to gain confidence in their skills is this hands-on portion,” Lamm said.

During the hands-on training attendees will have the opportunity to use analog and digital mixers to create mixes utilizing multi-track audio files. Attendees will also receive feedback during the hands-on sessions.

The classes will be offered on a Friday night and Saturday schedule. Part one, the basics class, will be offered

on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. In addition, an advanced class will be offered on Saturday afternoons. To take the advanced class, participants must take the basic class or pass a prerequisite survey. Each class is limited to 20 people to allow for more personal and individualized instruction. Due to limited space, classes are offered for N.C. Baptist churches only.

Workshops are already scheduled for Bolivia (Aug. 14-15), Lincolnton (Sept. 11-12), Waynesville (Oct. 2-3) and Spring Hope Nov. 6-7) for the remainder of 2015. In 2016, sessions are already scheduled for Sanford (Feb. 5-6), Hamptonville (Feb. 19-20), Charlotte (March 4-5), Statesville (April 8-9) and Roxboro (April 22-23). Additional trainings are also being planned for the remainder of 2016.

The registration fee for the classes ranges from \$15-\$20 per person for the basic class, and \$25 per person for the advanced class. The fee for attending both the basic and advanced classes range from \$40-\$50. Early bird registration rates are available. More information, including a detailed schedule and registration information, is available online at www.worshipAUDIO.org. **B3**

AROUND THE STATE

Obituary

ROBERT E. ODOM, 78, of Lexington died July 14.

The Alexander County, N.C., native was a veteran of the United States Navy. Ordained at First Baptist Church, Welcome, in 1972, Odom received a certificate from Fruitland Bible Institute (now Fruitland Baptist Bible College) in preparation for his education at Luther Rice Seminary where he received a bachelor’s, master’s and doctor of ministry degrees.

He began his ministry as a joint pastor of Meherrin Baptist Church and Mount Nebo Baptist Church located in Lunenburg County, Va, and he also served at Story Creek Baptist Church, Ferrum, Va., and Fluvanna Baptist Church, Scottsville, Va.

In 1988, Odom returned to his home state as pastor for Three Forks Baptist Church, Boone, and Hamburg Baptist Church, Glenville, where he formally retired on Feb. 27, 2000. He served as interim pastor for South Macon Baptist Church, Franklin, and Smith Grove Baptist Church, Linwood.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Virginia Berrier Odom: two sons, Dale of Lexington and Troy of Cocoa, Fla.; two daughters, Crystal Odom Hepler of Troutville, Va., and June Odom Dixon of Kernersville; sister, Aileen Lyon of Lexington; brother, Tommy Odom of Port St. Lucie, Fla.; six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



ROBERT ODOM

DWAIN HORSLEY BOULDIN, 74, died July 17 at home in Matthews after a two-year battle with ALS.

A Franklin native, she graduated from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where she met Don Bouldin.

She taught Sunday School and Bible classes and was a writer and editor for adult curriculum for the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. She taught English, debate and religion at South Mecklenburg High School while raising three children and supporting her husband’s ministry.

She is survived by her husband of 55 years, Don, and three children, Betsy Maddox, Blake Bouldin and Brent Bouldin; three sisters, Kirsten Horsley, Billie Horsley, and Karen Horsley; 11 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Memorials to: Carmel Baptist Church, 1145 Pineville-Matthews Rd., Matthews, NC 28105.



DWAIN BOULDIN

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

NCBAM wants aging adults to get alarmed

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) partners with the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to reduce accidental death and injury rates for adults 65 and older. This provides an opportunity for churches and associations to receive free, 10-year lithium battery smoke alarms for the homes of aging adults. To receive free alarms, participants must attend an installation training and provide documentation for the alarms they install. Installation trainings begin at 6 p.m. Call (877) 506-2226 to register for the one nearest you.

- **Aug. 18** – Buncombe Baptist Association, Asheville
- **Sept. 8** – Rich Fork Baptist Church, Thomasville
- **Sept. 17** – Metrolina Baptist Association, Charlotte
- **Sept. 24** – Green River Baptist Association, Rutherfordton
- **Sept. 29** – Kennedy Home, Kinston

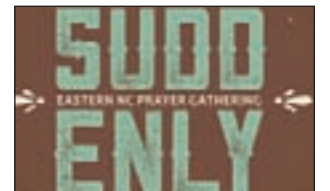
Raleigh association offers ministry training

The Raleigh Baptist Association training event will be held Aug. 22 at Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The day will include two leadership

labs and two breakout sessions, which offers multiple options for participants. The cost for the breakout sessions is free. A continental breakfast will be provided. Cost for one of the morning labs is \$15 for the book; the other is free. The afternoon lab costs \$15 including lunch and conference materials. Call (919) 231-3995 to register.

Eastern N.C. prayer gathering planned

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is hosting the Suddenly Prayer Gathering Sept. 11-12 at First Baptist Church in Richlands. Key speakers will be Richard Owen Roberts,



Steve Griffith and Chris Schofield. The Friday session will last from 6-8:45 p.m. and the Saturday session will be from 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. The conference is free, but a love offering will be collected. Email Betsy Roland at broland@ncbaptist.org or call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5513.

Conferences offer parents chance to work on faith-filled families in Raleigh, Wilmington

The Building Faith-Filled Families Conference is being offered in Raleigh Sept. 24 or Wilmington Sept. 25 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Register to learn how to equip and partner with parents in the spiritual development of their children and teenagers. This one-day conference led by Mark Smith is designed for pastors, church staff and lay leaders.

The cost is \$15 per person or \$20 per married couple.

Visit ncbaptist.org/index.php?id=1706 for more information or to register. The deadline to register is Sept. 16.

Submissions

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

Story ideas? Your church or association has events and ministry going on all the time. Share some of those photos and information with the *Biblical Recorder* too.

August 9

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

August 16

Return to God's Word

Focal passage: Nehemiah 8:1-8

Do you struggle with reading your Bible consistently? When you do get around to reading it, do you find your mind wandering, unable to focus on the words before you? Why do we often have such trouble being captivated by the very words of God?

In this passage, we see a very different response from the Israelites to God's Word.

Specifically, we find three components of how the Israelites responded to the Word of God that we can apply to our own encounters with God's Word.

The first component of a proper response is to be attentive to God's Word. Are we approaching God's Word with an attitude of expectation and a genuine desire to hear what God has to say? Too often we simply try to squeeze a pithy verse into an already busy schedule, as if this was a serious or worthy attempt at hearing from God. Instead, should we carve ample time and ready our hearts to hear what God is saying in the words of scripture?

It is not enough to hear God's Word,

however. As Jesus points out in John 14:15, those who truly love Him obey His commands. The Israelites responded to the reading of the Word in worship. Worship is an appropriate response after God has spoken, but we must be careful not to confuse lip service with worship. Worship does not end with our words, but carries over into our actions. To worship God is to obey what He commands in His Word.

One final takeaway from the Israelites' response is found in verses 7-8. Notice, they studied God's Word. It was necessary that some who were more skilled and well-versed explain God's Word to others.

We should not be lazy or complacent in our approach to the scriptures. We must study them diligently. Spiritual growth and intellectual engagement are not mutually exclusive. Let's approach the Bible with the weightiness, seriousness and rigor that is appropriate for the very Words of God. Don't neglect the Bible; God's Word is the fuel for a consistent godly life.



MANNY PRIETO
Lay Pastor, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh

Focal passage: Acts 4:31-37

Growing up as a teenager in the church, I frequently found myself in an uncomfortable position. I knew intellectually that my fellow church members were my brothers and sisters in Christ, and that we shared a special bond. Despite knowing this, however, there were numerous occasions when I couldn't help feeling as if I'd rather not have any kind of bond with a particular brother or sister.

Why did they have to be so weird? Why couldn't they be more like my cool friends?

Sadly, I was missing a hugely important implication of the gospel. There might not

be any way around the fact that a certain brother or sister was quirlier than I would prefer, but the wonder of the church is not that it is the most comfortable and homogenous social experience around. What is wondrous about it is that radically different people from all sorts of backgrounds now shared a

spiritual and eternal unity, not based on common interests or heritage, but based solely on the blood of Christ.

Acts 4:31-37 beautifully illustrates a central gospel truth: as we are restored to God, we are restored to each other in unity and purpose. Sin alienates us from God and fellow man, but the gospel remedies both. We cannot experience love and unity with Christ divorced from love and unity for our brothers and sisters.

The church in Acts shows us that this unity is rooted in a common focus: namely Christ and His mission in the world. This unity finds its expression as we share with and sacrifice for one another out of a common love from and for Christ.

Reflect on the attitudes and patterns of your life. Are you marked by a bond with other believers that is rooted in what Christ has done and aimed at advancing His Kingdom on the earth? Or is your "unity" just a thinly veiled form of showing favoritism for those who are like you culturally? Are you marked by sacrificial generosity toward your brothers and sisters or do you hold tightly to what is "yours"?

August 9

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

August 16

The Worthy Lamb

Focal Passage: Revelation 5:1-14

Perhaps you have been to an exciting ball game on the weekend.

Then, on Sunday, gathered for worship and were disappointed because the celebration seemed pale in comparison.

Why should this be? I'm not suggesting worship at church should look like Duke University's Cameron Indoor Stadium, but don't we have something worthy of greater celebration than a successful basketball program?

In this passage John describes worship as it will be for all of eternity. The scene is inspiring on the deepest level when you picture the Father on His throne, and the Lion-like Lamb who is the only One worthy to carry out God's final judgment and redemption. Heaven erupts in celebration of Jesus as the four majestic creatures and the elders surrounding the throne worship Him, joined by millions of angels and ultimately everything in creation.

Doesn't it seem that we have more to gain from the sacrifice of the Lamb than all the heavenly beings? We are the redeemed and have the greatest cause

for celebration. The more we understand redemption, the greater our worship will be.

Let your heart be filled with a sense of Jesus' worth with the following illustration of what He has done for you.

A boy once captured some birds and put them in a cage. A man saw the boy carrying the cage and asked what he was going to do with the birds.

"Oh," the boy replied, "I'm going to play with them for a while and then feed them to my cat." The man looked at the caged birds and took pity on them. He offered the boy a price that the he couldn't pass up.

After purchasing the cage of birds he immediately opened it and set them free.

That's what Jesus did for us. Satan had us caged and was going to feed us into the jaws of eternal death. But Jesus purchased us, cage and all, and set us free.

In heaven, He bears the marks of the price he paid, and is worthy the eternal outpouring of worship from everything in heaven, on earth and under the earth!



MICHAEL WILKES
Pastor, New Life Baptist Church, Henderson

Focal Passage: Revelation 9:1-12

From August to October we are typically on high alert for hurricanes – especially those who live closest to the coast. We track storms, and when a warning is issued that one may make landfall people respond. Grocery stores run out of batteries, bread, milk and water. Generators become difficult to find. Gas stations fill with cars. No one wants to be surprised and unprepared.

This passage is a warning about something coming that is much more terrifying than a hurricane. If you are not prepared for the coming judgment of God, there will be no escape. Revelation 6-9

is about the opening of the seven seals of the scroll that Jesus received from His Father in chapter 5. Each one describes a particular expression of judgment during the end times. The seventh seal is described in chapters 8-9. It contains seven trumpets blown by angels to announce specific judgment. These terrors mirror several of the plagues in Egypt during the

Redeeming the Judgment

Exodus, except they are global in scope.

All the expressions of God's judgment are powerful and terrible. For instance these locusts after the fifth trumpet with helmets and breastplates, faces like humans, teeth like lions and stingers like scorpions will inflict pain so bad that people would wish they could just die. However, there are two things worth noting.

First, those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit will not suffer this brutal punishment. Jesus paid our penalty and preserves us from the wrath of God. Second, God demonstrates his love by issuing the warning. The trumpet is not the first warning. Revelation (and many other prophecies in scripture) is intended to warn all people of the coming judgment.

Many scholars have helped us see that seals have been broken and, though we cannot know exact dates, the time is near. Let's be prepared for our redemption and sound the trumpet through our witness that the judgment we deserve is coming, but "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:10). Be prepared, not by running to the stores, but by trusting in the Savior.

Hunting

Continued from page 12

wanted to know if hunters were carrying a bow and a gun, could “they just switch which weapon they were using.”

The only people hunters are “hoping would go to church on Sunday morning,” said Hise, are “the game wardens.”

Sen. Andrew Brock rightly argued the three-hour window wouldn’t protect churches during sunrise services on Easter Sunday.

“We should be most respectful during

that time, and this bill tramples all over that,” he said. Other provisions in HB 640 would prohibit the hunting of migratory birds on Sunday, using a firearm to take deer that are run or chased by dogs and hunting within 500 yards of a place of worship or any accessory structure thereof, or within 500 yards of a residence not owned by the landowner.

The National Rifle Association disparaged the compromise measure that passed and vowed in future sessions of

the North Carolina General Assembly to remove any time prohibitions on Sunday hunting.

Creech further noted in his statement: “Sunday is for rest – rest not just for man but also animals. Man and nature run on a seven-day clock. One day is essential for rewinding. Sunday is for worship – a time to be still and listen for the voice God – a time to break away from our focus on the temporal and give ourselves to those things eternal – a time

to concentrate on character building – a time to make certain we are adequately concerned for God’s business and not just our own.

“This legislation by no means outlaws the Lord’s Day or destroys it, but it does add an additional distraction by law that simply allows it to go by default. Human experience has shown us the importance of the Lord’s Day.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – This story first appeared at christianactionleague.org.) **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denominational

Brushy Mountain Baptist Association in Wilkesboro, NC, will be accepting resumes for **Director of Missions** through August 31. Please send resume and cover letter to: DOM Search Committee, Brushy Mountain Baptist Association, 1519 River Street, Wilkesboro, NC 28697, or email to BMBA@brushymountain.com. Information about the Association may be found at www.brushymountain.com.

Pastor

New Horizons Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **Pastor** who is biblically grounded, mission minded and who can provide visionary leadership. A Shepherd who will actively lead us in ministering the gospel of Christ. Our worship style is informal with blended music. We are strategically located in a growing community with great potential. Some experience and education would be helpful. Current worship attendance averages 45. Prayerfully consider our needs then send resume with cover letter to: Pastor Search Team, New Horizons Baptist Church, 11777 Hwy 601 South, Midland, NC 28107, or email to nhbcsearchteam@gmail.com.

Cumberland Baptist Church located in Fayetteville, NC, is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. We are a conservative congregation with approximately 125 in attendance weekly. Qualified applicants should be caring, loving, biblically grounded and led by the Holy Spirit. Applicants should also possess a masters of divinity with five years experience. Please send resume and personal testimony to Pastor Search Team, 4957 Cumberland Road, Fayetteville, NC 28306, or send via email to pastorsearch@cumberlandbaptist.com.

Lakeside Baptist Church, North Myrtle Beach, SC, is seeking a compassionate **full-time Pastor** who is led by the Holy Spirit to help grow our church and minister to the changing needs of our congregation and community. We are praying for a Pastor who is enthusiastic about helping us grow spiritually and numerically. A pastor who will provide spiritual leadership and who is faithful to biblical principles. Resumes should be sent to Pastor Search Committee, Lakeside Baptist Church, 615 11th Ave. N, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29597.

Senior Minister. Elizabethtown Baptist Church located in Elizabethtown, North Carolina, is seeking a Senior Minister. If interested please contact jkornegay@intrstar.net. Also visit us at www.elizabethtownbaptist.org.

Full-Time Pastor. Pine Level Missionary Baptist Church in Johnston County, NC, is praying that God will place a calling on a pastor’s heart to be our church family’s Shepherd. This leader will continue a long heritage of strong, faith based, Southern Baptist pastors serving our congregation and the Lord. Those called should preach the gospel, support a mission-oriented platform, and teach biblical truths through sermons and Bible study. Christian counseling and pastoral care should be a part of the pastor’s body of work. Seminary degree and references are required. Send resumes to: plbc01@bellsouth.net, or P.O. Box 340, Pine Level, NC 27568.

Bethel Baptist Church, a traditional rural Southern Baptist church is prayerfully seeking a man whom God has chosen to lead us as our **Senior Pastor**. We are looking for someone who loves the Lord, can lead both young and old, and who can make our church grow in attendance, financially and spiritually. Relevant experience and education preferred. Please send resume to Pastor Search Committee, Bethel Baptist Church, 1162 East Monbo Rd, Statesville, NC 28677.

Church Staff

Catawba Valley Baptist Church of Maiden, NC, is seeking a **Choir Director/Minister of Music**. This is a part-time paid position. A degree in music or extensive choir director experience is required. Mail resumes to 3390 Shepherd Rd., Maiden, NC 28650, or email it to catawbabaptist@bellsouth.net.

Part-Time Church Accompanist – Stallings Memorial Baptist Church, Salisbury. Perform and accompany on keyboards (digital keyboard, piano, and/or organ) in Sunday morning worship services and Wednesday evening choir rehearsals. Additional services/rehearsals required for special church seasons of the year. Salary is commensurate with experience. Contact 704-636-2056 to apply.

FIRST MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, CONCORD, NC, ISO A **YOUTH MINISTER OF MUSIC & ARTS**. Searching for paid-staff member. Should be a mature Christian to work with current Minister of Music & Youth/Young Adult Pastor to carry out the mission, vision and core values of FMBC. Primary focus will be to prepare youth from pre-school to high school for worship services. Candidate will plan, prepare and perform, and must have excellent communication and administrative skills. Must be self-motivated, dependable, reliable, honest and a team player. Approximately 12-15 hours a week. Compensation will be based on qualifications, education and experience. Interested individuals should email resume to Ms. LaSonia Hunter at youthmusicnarts@fmbc-concord.org. No phone calls, fax or postal mail.

Minister to Students. First Baptist Church of Charleston, SC, has an opening for a Christ-centered, disciple-making, outgoing person to lead ministry to students in church and school. Unique opportunity in downtown Charleston for evangelism and discipleship. Please send resume to studentminister@fbcharleston.org.

Full-time Children’s Minister Position available at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Taylorsville, NC. Please submit resume to: pastor@bethlehembaptistnc.org or 7500 NC Hwy. 127, Taylorsville, NC 28681.

First Baptist Church in Rockwell, NC, is currently seeking a **part-time worship leader** for our congregation. Candidate must be able to direct the choir and lead a blended worship style of hymns and contemporary songs for three Sunday services. Please send all resumes to fbckrockwell01@windstream.net.

First Baptist Church, Reidsville, NC, seeks **Worship Leader/Minister of Music**. Position may be part time or full time. Primary responsibilities are planning worship service, Adult Choir, Praise Team, Drama Team, Children’s Choirs. Applicants should submit letter of interest and resume to MCollins@BBandT.com or mail to First Baptist Church, 409 South Main Street, Reidsville, NC 27320, Attn. Mark Collins.

Seeking **full-time Music/Youth or Music/Children leader** for a congregation with a blended worship style and a growing group of young people. Double Springs Baptist Church, Shelby. Resumes to billfryar@carolina.rr.com.

Miscellaneous

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Selling

Continued from page 1

herself does not look like a monster. If you walked past her on the sidewalk, you wouldn't think she was involved in diabolical work. But she is. The banality of evil is real. Ordinary people do terrible things. They speak openly and without any shame of the bodies of little children. Their desire is not to protect and cherish these bodies, but to break as few bones and body parts as possible in order to get maximum bang for the buck.

"Behold depravity," continued Strachan, who also serves as president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

"Behold original sin, bubbling to the surface. Behold the heart of darkness, which we all have."

Planned Parenthood defended the action of donating such body parts, saying no monetary benefits are gained, other than the reimbursement of costs incurred in the delivery of the body parts.

"In health care, patients sometimes want to donate tissue to scientific research that can help lead to medical breakthroughs, such as treatments and cures for serious diseases. Women at Planned Parenthood who have abortions are no different," Eric Ferrero, Planned Parenthood's vice president of communications, said in a press release posted on the organization's website.

"At several of our health centers, we help patients who want to donate tissue for scientific research, and we do this just like every other high-quality health care provider does – with full, appropriate consent from patients and under the highest ethical and legal standards.

"There is no financial benefit for tissue donation for either the patient or for Planned Parenthood," he said.

"In some instances, actual costs, such as the cost to transport tissue to leading research centers, are reimbursed, which is standard across the medical field."

CMP rebutted Planned Parenthood's defense within hours saying claims of

gaining patient consent, not receiving monetary profit and following the law in its dispensation of aborted fetal tissue are all false.

"Planned Parenthood makes two key admissions in their statement today: aborted fetal parts are harvested at their clinics and money is exchanged in connection with this. They also tell several lies: (1) That proper consent is obtained from patients, (2) that Planned Parenthood does not make money off the body parts and 3) that everything is legal," CMP said in a press release posted at centerformedicalprogress.org.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, agreed with CMP that Planned Parenthood's practice is indefensible saying, "The horror of this story should be shocking to the consciences of all Americans. And Planned Parenthood's response to this video is as chilling as it is unconvincing," Moore said in a July 15 press release.

"Let's be clear about what is going on. It is not only that infants, in their mother's wombs, are deprived of their lives, but also that their corpses are desecrated for profit. This is not only murderous; it is murderous in the most ghoulish way imaginable.

"Is it not clear at this point that these are not health care providers but pirates and grave-robbers of those who have no graves?" Moore said.

"The Department of Justice and the United States Congress should undertake a thorough investigation of this."

He called on the church to recommit

itself to protecting the most vulnerable among us.

"The church of Jesus Christ should recommit ourselves to speaking out for human dignity. What we see in this instance is what has always been true of Planned Parenthood: Mammon worship in collision with the image of God, and the image is sacrificed on the altar of profiteering," Moore wrote. "This does not go unnoticed to God. He has said, 'Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice, and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey' (Isaiah 10:1-2)."

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner released a statement calling for an investigation into Planned Parenthood's practices. "I have asked our relevant committees to look into this matter. I am also calling on President Obama and Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell to denounce, and stop, these gruesome practices," Boehner said. "When an organization monetizes an unborn child – and with the cavalier attitude portrayed in this horrific video – we must all act." "If we have learned anything from the Kermit Gosnell horrors of years past,"

Moore wrote, "surely we have learned that vulnerable women and children should be protected from this sort of abusive profiteering."

At this time, two U.S. House committees continue to investigate Planned Parenthood along with seven states – Arizona, Missouri, Texas, Louisiana, Indiana, Ohio and Georgia.

The Obama administration has agreed to "review all the information," but said it will not agree at this time to defund America's largest abortion provider. The promise to investigate came after Senate Republicans sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch. House Democrats also sent a letter requesting an investigation of CMP.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Compiled by Emily Blake, BR editorial aide, from Baptist Press stories by David Roach and Diana Chandler.) **BR**

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COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OF NORTH CAROLINA

All resolutions should be submitted in writing for consideration by the committee no later than **September 11, 2015.**

Send by mail to Committee on Memorials/Resolutions

Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
PO Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512

Send by email to Norma Jean Johnson

Business Services, Executive Leaders Assistant
njohnson@ncbaptist.org

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