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TALKS FAITH, FAMILY,
FOOD, POLITICS

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BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

NOVEMBER 3, 2018 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • VOLUME 184 NO. 22

SBC hotel rush draws response from Executive Committee

Biblical Recorder

Online hotel registration for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) 2019 annual meeting in Birmingham, Ala., opened Oct. 12 at 8 a.m. Four minutes later, all the rooms designated for the event at on-site hotels were full. The rooms disappeared so fast that it left some Southern Baptists scratching their heads.

Bill Townes, vice president for convention finance and convention manager for the SBC Executive Committee (EC), said in a guest blog post at *SBCVoices.com* that “catastrophic water damage” at the primary annual meeting hotel contributed to the shortage.

The Sheraton Birmingham's damage eliminated more than 400 rooms in the SBC's designated block.

The original launch for open registration was Oct. 1, but the date was pushed back to allow the EC time to find additional rooms at alternate hotels.

In total, 37 hotels are under contract with the SBC to provide rooms at negotiated rates through Experient, an event management company.

Townes explained how the EC reserves a block of rooms each year for the annual meeting at a primary hotel or hotels, which are usually connected to the venue where the event will take place.

Of those reservations, up to 60 percent may be designated for entity executives, trustees, speakers and other SBC staff, according to a policy approved by the EC board of trustees in 2011.

However, Townes said the EC limits earmarks to 50 percent of the convention hotel block, to make “as many rooms as possible available to general attendees.”

Online hotel registration operates on a “first come,

[See Hotel page 13](#)

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STUDENTS JOIN N.C. HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORTS

Wearing a Tyvek suit and protective goggles, East Carolina University (ECU) freshman Anna Bristle, 18, looks out over the pile of debris that she and 22 other ECU students hauled to the street from a flood-damaged home in Bridgeton, N.C. (NAMB photo by Laura Sikes)

By LAURA SIKES | NAMB

When an East Carolina University (ECU) cross-country team found they had an off weekend from running, they decided to go and help survivors of Hurricane Florence. They joined a college-wide effort to help Southern Baptist volunteers serve in the hard-hit New Bern, N.C., area.

On Oct. 6, 23 team members carpooled using their own ve-

hicles and made the 45-minute drive from their college campus in Greenville, N.C. They assisted with a tear-out of a home that had taken on more than two feet of floodwater after the Neuse River overflowed its banks. After orientation and some additional training from the college, the students followed a volunteer team that had begun the tear-out the day before.

[See Students page 10](#)

After storms, ‘Mama Mills’ leans on volunteers

By LAURA SIKES | NAMB



Linda Mills, known as “Mama Mills,” had a 42-year lunch ministry halted after she lost three freezers and two refrigerators full of food because of Hurricane Florence. (NAMB photo by Laura Sikes)

Linda Mills, 70, has served others in her community for 42 years by hosting Sunday lunches from her cozy home in Havelock, N.C. Her humble service has earned her the affectionate moniker “Mama Mills.”

It all started when her husband Harold, who passed away 15 years ago, said “Mama, I’m bringing a little, starvin’ Marine home,” Mills said.

From then on, her longtime ministry grew and became known as “The Lunch Bunch.” She faithfully provided a home-cooked meal and a “home away from home” welcoming many young soldiers and others “who needed some extra love,” she said. On Sundays, she cooked lunch for 20 to 40 guests usually. On one Easter, she fed 74. Most of her guests are young U.S.

[See Mama page 9](#)

Some questions asked in the Bible

The 2018 annual meeting of North Carolina Baptists carries the theme, “Who is my neighbor?” The question is one of many in the scriptures that captivate my attention.

It was raised in the context of introducing the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10.

An expert in the law initiated the discussion when he raised another question. His query appeared to be sincere, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus asked the man what he understood the scriptures taught on the subject.

The legal expert drew from an Old Testament text to answer Jesus. “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.*”

Then, a sense of defensiveness surfaced. Luke 10:29 reads, “*But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’*”

My mind travels back to the first book of the Bible where another important

question emerged early in the history of man.

Genesis 4:8-9 records, “*Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’*”



K. ALLAN BLUME
Editor

Seriously? Cain’s lame question was riddled with guilt as he looked for a way to shift the blame! God not only nailed Cain, He found him guilty of murder and sentenced him with a grievous curse.

To summarize the scene, in the first family the first two brothers who lived on this earth had differences that led to the murder of one. The murderer lied to God when asked the location of his brother and followed with a question designed to excuse himself of any responsibility for his brother. “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*”

Did God answer Cain’s question? Actually, He did. The rest of the Bible meticulously provides the answer over and over.

Yes! We do have a responsibility to others. That thread is woven through the Bible’s main message of salvation through faith in Jesus. That leads us to consider another question in the New Testament.

When Jesus’ ministry placed Him in the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*” (Matthew 16:13). The conversation eventually led to Simon Peter’s accurate response, “*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*”

Not only did Peter get it right, Jesus pronounced a profound blessing on him.

These important questions and many others in scripture point to key elements of our theology.

We bear a responsibility for our brothers and our neighbors. We have a calling to introduce them to the One who is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That calling cannot be delegated or ignored.

Please know that the *Biblical Recorder’s* staff is your partner in this calling. Our mission is to provide your church members with news and information that equip them to fulfill the Great Commission. I believe it provides encouragement and motivation to believers in a day when



PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW

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we are overwhelmed with discouraging challenges. The material we publish emphasizes the ministries of the local church, our Baptist associations, as well as our state and national Cooperative Program partners.

Thank you for allowing us to serve on your local church team. **BR**

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Wake Forest Baptist Church (WFBC) is sponsoring a Trees for Troops program. Because the average Christmas tree costs about 25 percent of a private first class’ weekly base pay, WFBC is enabling you to adopt a tree for a military family.

The 6’-7’ trees will be delivered after Thanksgiving, and cost \$55, delivery included. Go to wakeforestbaptistchurch.org

to download the order form under the Youth Ministry tab. You may drop off or mail the form and payment to the church office. As a special gift, you will receive a paper ornament with the family’s name who received your tree. You can hang this on your tree as a reminder of the sacrifice this family is making on our behalf as well as a reminder to pray for this family.



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BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

(ISSN 0279-8182)

News Journal of the Baptist State Convention
of North Carolina

Founded 1833 by Thomas Meredith

K. Allan Blume, Editor/President
editor@brnow.org

Seth Brown, Content Editor
(919) 459-5697; seth@brnow.org

Dianna L. Cagle, Production Editor
(919) 459-5698; dianna@brnow.org

Alison McKinney
Business and
Advertising Manager
(919) 459-5691
alison@brnow.org

Dee Dee Vogt
Editorial Aide

Liz Tablazon
Circulation Manager
(919) 459-5693
liz@brnow.org

Carly Conley
Graphic Designer

Volume 184 No. 22
(919) 847-2127
Fax (919) 467-6180
BRnow.org

Board of Directors: Nate Jones, chair; Tony Honeycutt, vice chair; Angela Brady, secretary; David Clary, treasurer; Kevin Atchley; Frankie Gordon; Lisa Harris; Gerald Hodges; Todd Houston; Cindy D. Jennings; Dan Meyer; Frank Norwood; Jim Pennington Jr.; Donna Robinson; Donnie Seagle; Meredith Snoddy; Marilyn Thurman; Aaron Wallace; Tammy Weeks; and Keith Whitfield

Subscriptions

- Individual subscriptions, \$15.99 (one year); \$27.99 (two years); \$39.99 (three years)
 - Bulk Plan, \$11.50
 - Club Plan, \$13.50
 - Family Plan, \$12.50
 - Single copies, .60 cents each
- Payable in advance. N.C. sales tax is included.
Digital rates: \$5.99 (one year); \$10.99 (two years); \$15.99 (three years).

Publication

Published biweekly on Saturdays by *Biblical Recorder* Inc., 205 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511, as authorized by the Baptist State Convention in annual session at Winston-Salem, November 21-23, 1939. Periodicals postage paid at Raleigh, NC 27676.

Postmaster

Send address changes to *Biblical Recorder* Inc., P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512-1185.

Baptist Children's Homes offer rest to weary children

One of the unique ministries in our state that I am proud of is the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH). This is a great example of specific ministries that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) depends on state conventions to operate with Cooperative Program (CP) funds because the SBC does not operate children's homes. The amount that BCH receives from CP is only a small portion of funds required to operate this ministry.

For more than 130 years, the Baptist Children's Homes has served families and communities across our state and beyond through 21 different locations in North Carolina and an orphanage in Guatemala.

Please consider praying and supporting the BCH annual offering later this month. Thanks to your prayers and gifts, the BCH is able to provide children who have endured untold difficulties and hardships with a place of peace and hope. Additionally, the Baptist Children's Homes is a place where the gospel is shared. Last year alone, more than 32,500 lives were touched through the ministry of BCH, and over

200 decisions for Christ were recorded.

Through the BCH, you and your church can play a part in reaching the next generation for Christ. Of those individuals who come to BCH, 80 percent are unchurched. What a wonderful opportunity the Lord has provided to house parents and others who love and care for these boys and girls to introduce them to Jesus.

"Come to Me, I Will Give You Rest," is the theme for this year's BCH annual offering, based on Matthew 11:28. Randy Stewart, pastor of the Mills Home Baptist Church, located at the center of the BCH's Mills Home campus in Thomasville, says that's exactly what happens through this ministry.

"Jesus says, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,'" Stewart says. "This verse speaks to the heart of what we give to the girls and boys who come to us at Baptist Children's Homes."

During his 26 years as the Mills Home pastor, Stewart has preached, counseled and befriended many children through the years. He's seen many trust Christ as Savior.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer



"These pews – where so many children have sat over the years – they have stories to tell," Stewart says. "They are stories of children who have come to us out of chaos."

Stewart shares some of those stories and his heart for BCH in a series of videos that are available to promote this year's offering. The videos and other information, materials and resources about the offering is available online at bchoffering.org.

The goal for this year's offering is \$1.5 million, and Nov. 11-18 has been designated as a week of prayer for the offering and the ministries and families it supports and serves. Daily prayer prompts are also available online.

Thank you N.C. Baptists for your partnership, prayers and support of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. **BR**

Week of prayer – Nov. 11-18

Sunday – Pray for all North Carolina children and families.

Monday – Pray for the thousands of lives BCH serves each year through its 21 NC locations.

Tuesday – Pray for the cottage parents, care givers, chiefs, case managers and staff who give of themselves around the clock to care for boys and girls.

Wednesday – Pray for the boys and girls at Good Shepherd

Children's Home, BCH's orphanage in Xela, Guatemala.

Thursday – Pray for those who live at BCH's nine statewide homes for developmentally disabled adults.

Friday – Pray for children and families in your community.

Saturday – Pray for BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell as he leads the ministry.

Sunday – Pray that the children and families BCH ministers to will come to know Jesus as their Savior.



Laodicea: the need for fresh water

Seventh in a series

Located 600 miles from Jerusalem and 300 miles from Athens, Laodicea was a wealthy commercial center. It was known for its medical care and banking industries. They were resilient, secure and self-confident. They had all they needed, except clean water. The city received its water from Hierapolis or Colossae. The water was so bad that many visitors to the city would become sick from the water's poor quality.

The hearers would have a clear picture what Jesus was speaking about when they were told in Revelation 3:15-16:

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

This harsh word of correction was given because of the self-sufficient, overconfident and even ignorant culture in the church of Laodicea.

The culture of the city had influenced the church instead of the church influencing the culture in the city. They were rich and it led them to self-sufficiency. They were dependent upon their ability

instead of Christ's ability.

They were accomplished, and it led them to overconfidence. When an earthquake struck in A.D. 60, the city rebuilt itself without any outside assistance. They ultimately were ignorant toward the spiritual realities of life.

This would have been a stinging rebuke to the church. They had stopped growing spiritually. They had become like worthless water that should be spit out!

But the situation was not hopeless. Jesus still made Himself available to them. He confronted their self-sufficiency, overconfidence, and ignorance by reminding them of the better offer.

What was the better offer? Himself. He offered:

• (v. 18) **Gold refined by fire** – Jesus is speaking of genuine gold rather than fool's gold. Genuine gold is revealed in the fire! The genuine gold is the righteous character of Christ that He has made available to us through repentance and faith.

• (v. 18) **Garments of His righteousness** – Fine clothing was a symbol of honor in the ancient world. Jesus is telling the church that they are walking around impressed with themselves, but



JOHN MARK HARRISON
Guest Column



the clothing He offers will qualify them spiritually for all eternity because He will clothe them in His righteousness.

• (v. 18) **Spiritual restoration** – This medical community was known for an eye salve called "Phrygian Powder." Jesus was offering them spiritual restoration so that they could see their true condition before God.

• (v. 19) **Love** – Jesus is offering them His love if they will repent. The church is undeserving of Christ's love, but He is willing to offer His love when they repent and return. Just like Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira and Sardis, Laodicea is called to repent!

• (v. 20-22) **Fellowship** – Jesus desires the fellowship with the church in Laodicea.

He desires to know them intimately, but is relegated outside the door until it is opened. He's waiting to see if they respond to His offer. He will reward their acceptance with His presence.

As we prepare our hearts for this Pastors' Conference, let's evaluate our hearts to see if

we, like Laodicea, are in need of some fresh water, free from self-sufficiency, overconfidence or even ignorance. May God be patient with us as we discover again the Living Water of His riches, righteousness, restoration, love and fellowship.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – This article is part of a series on the theme of the 2018 North Carolina Pastors' Conference, "7 Churches of Revelation." This year's event will occur Nov. 4-5 in conjunction with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's annual meeting. Visit ncpastorsconference.org for more information. John Mark Harrison is lead pastor of Apex Baptist Church. Each column in the series is written by a different N.C. leader and refers to one of the seven churches in Revelation.) **BR**

SWBTS trustees unified amid difficult discussions

Baptist Press reports

In a meeting characterized by unity despite differences of opinion, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SWBTS) trustees voted to uphold the trustee executive committee's decision in May to terminate former president Paige Patterson.

Trustees revisited Patterson's termination at their Oct. 15-17 meeting based on a motion, referred to the seminary by the Southern Baptist Convention in June, "that the whole board of trustees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary consider revisiting their original decision concerning Dr. Paige Patterson."

The board also heard a report from its presidential search committee and affirmed an administration decision to discipline a faculty member – though the faculty member was not named during the board's one public session.

Candi Finch, former SWBTS assistant professor of

theology in women's studies, confirmed on social media Oct. 17 that she was the faculty member terminated by trustees. A supporter of Patterson, who was terminated May 30, Finch held the Dorothy Kelley Patterson Chair of Women's Studies, named for Patterson's wife.

"I was deeply worried about this meeting," said trustee Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmersville, Texas, adding he "forbade" his wife and children from attending. "I should have brought them not only because it wasn't bad, but because it was good." Trustees convened for committee meetings and informal "working sessions" that were closed to the public before holding one public, 45-minute "general session" Oct. 17, in which they voted without discussion on the matters considered in private sessions.

'A 10-percent difference'

New Mexico trustee Jonathan Richard moved that

the full board ratify "the executive committee actions since the last full board meeting." The executive committee's actions included terminating Patterson May 30 after the full board had moved him to president emeritus status a week earlier.

The 34 trustees present at the general session adopted Richard's motion on a voice vote with what Baptist Press (BP) estimated as no more than four negative votes. Following the general session, Barber and South Carolina trustee Wayne Dickard discussed the vote with BP and the Southern Baptist *TEXAN* news journal in an interview approved by the board.

Barber, a trustee executive committee member, voted for ratifying the committee's actions. Dickard, not an executive committee member, voted against it.

Dickard said he was "sad" at Patterson's departure, and Barber fought back tears as he discussed it.

See SWBTS page 16

Pressler sexual abuse claims dismissed

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

A Texas court has dismissed several defendants and multiple counts in a lawsuit alleging sexual abuse by retired Texas state district judge Paul Pressler.

The lawsuit filed by plaintiff Gerald Duane Rollins in October 2017 alleged sexual misconduct by Pressler and also sought to hold several other defendants responsible, including the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Harris County District Judge R.K. Sandill's Oct. 15 order granting summary judgment dismissed, among other matters, all claims against the SBC because the statute of limitations has expired on those claims.

Pressler helped engineer a strategy to turn the SBC back to its theologically conservative roots in the late 20th century. He also served Southern Baptists in various other volunteer capacities.

SBC attorney James Guenther told Baptist Press, "The convention had multiple defenses in this case. The most basic defense was the fact that the convention committed no wrong and was not involved or connected in any way with the harms that Mr. Rollins alleged."

Additionally, the convention did not have control over or any duty to control Mr. Pressler or any of the other defendants. So, none of the facts necessary to assert any valid claim against the convention was present. It was simply not responsible if another defendant in this case engaged in any wrongdoing.

"While vigorously asserting all of its defenses, the convention took the route deemed most practical, economic and indisputable: the plaintiff's suit against the convention was filed too late, not by weeks or months, but by years – the statute of limitations had long run on the charges," Guenther said in written com-

ments. "Because the statute of limitations defense was apparent from the plaintiff's own pleadings, the court did not need to consider the SBC's other defenses to Rollins' claims."

Sandill's order applies to Rollins' allegations that Pressler abused him and also to related claims, including conspiracy and negligence, against Pressler, the SBC, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, former Southwestern President Paige Patterson, Houston's First Baptist Church, Second Baptist Church in Houston, Pressler's wife Nancy and Pressler's former law partner Jared Woodfill.

The ruling did not dismiss Rollins' slander and libel claim against the Presslers, Patterson, Southwestern, Houston's First and Woodfill related to a statement Woodfill made in 2017.

Neither did Sandill dismiss breach of contract claims related to the settlement of a separate lawsuit Rollins filed against Pressler in 2004 alleging assault by Pressler. All defendants have denied all of the claims against them.

Sandill announced his intention to grant summary judgment on the sexual abuse claims Aug. 17 at a court hearing. But Sandill's campaign for the Texas Supreme Court and a series of motions by Rollins – including multiple attempts to have Sandill removed from the case – delayed the issuing of a signed order. The Oct. 15 order also denied Rollins' request for reconsideration.

Rollins has the right to appeal the order.

Rollins' 2017 lawsuit alleges he first met Pressler when he was enrolled in a young adult Bible study that Pressler, now 88, led at Houston's First. Rollins later worked at Pressler's law firm. He claimed the abuse started in the late 1970s, when Rollins was 14, and continued through 2004.



A lawsuit's claims of sexual abuse by Paul Pressler, pictured here in 2004, has been dismissed by a Texas judge. (BP file photo)

The SBC, along with other defendants, Rollins claimed, had a "duty to exercise reasonable care so as to control" Pressler, who served as a member of the SBC Executive Committee from 1984-91.

In a Feb. 1 motion, the SBC asked Sandill to grant a judgment in the convention's favor on statute of limitations grounds.

The SBC stated Rollins claimed "he was abused from 1978 to 2004, fourteen years ago. [His] petitions were filed in 2017 and 2018 ... The longest statute of limitations is five years, making [Rollins'] petition at least eight years too late for the last of the claimed molestations

(2004), let alone those allegedly occurring in the '70s, '80s, and '90s."

Rollins claimed in an Aug. 10 court filing the statute of limitations has not expired in this case because Pressler's alleged misconduct "became apparent" to Rollins "no sooner than November 2015 in a prison exchange between him and a prison psychologist" while Rollins served time for a DUI conviction.

Ultimately, Sandill agreed the statute of limitations had expired.

Pressler was a justice on the Court of Appeals of Texas, 14th District, and a member of the Texas state legislature. **BR**

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Former N.C. leader Roy J. Smith dies

Biblical Recorder

Roy J. Smith, former executive director-treasurer (EDT) of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), died Oct. 18. He was in declining health for more than two months according to his widow, Charlotte Smith.

Smith, a Macon County, N.C., native, died at Brookridge Baptist Retirement Community in Winston-Salem. He was a graduate of Wake Forest College (now university), and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He completed additional graduate studies at North Carolina State University and Emory University.

He holds two honorary doctorates of divinity from Wake Forest University and Campbell University.

Smith pastored Union Hope Baptist Church in Zebulon and Jersey Baptist Church in Lexington before being hired at the BSC, where he served from 1962 to 1997.

He held positions as associate in missions, secretary, town and country missions and seminary extension, and associate general secretary-treasurer.

When EDT Cecil Ray resigned his post in 1983, Smith was named interim EDT and elected EDT a year later.

Smith led the North Carolina con-

vention for 13 years until his retirement in 1997.

He was recognized as North Carolina State and Southeastern regional rural pastor of the year in 1962 and as Tarheel of the Week in 1984.



ROY J. SMITH

Smith served on the Board of Trustees at Wake Forest University as well as played an integral role in the foundation of Wake Forest University Divinity School and Campbell Divinity School.

He served as a member of the coordinating council for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) of N.C. and was the National CBF

representative to the Baptist World Alliance.

He is survived by his wife of 14 years, Charlotte Cook Smith; three children, Ginger Graves, Roy Smith Jr., and Tracy Smith; Charlotte's two children, Steve Cook and Ann Parker; eleven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; brother, Johnny Smith; and two sisters, Lib Pierce and Peggy Clevenger.

Memorials to: Wake Forest University Divinity School (P.O. Box 7227, Winston-Salem, NC 27109), the Capital Campaign at First Baptist Church (501 West Fifth St., Winston-Salem, NC 27101), or Brookridge Retirement Home (1199 Hayes Forest Dr., Winston-Salem, NC 27106). **BR**

SEBTS marks record enrollment increase, expands programs

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

The announcement of a record enrollment increase dominated much of the conversation during the bi-annual Board of Trustees (BOT) and Southeastern Society (SES) meetings at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, N.C. With the approval of the master of arts (MA) in student ministry, SEBTS is poised to continue fulfilling its call to equip students to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission.

The MA in student leadership will be offered in partnership with Student Leadership University (SLU) in Orlando, Fla. The 49-hour degree has a 37-hour core focusing on theological, biblical and ministry studies. Students will train with recognized leaders in the field, have the opportunity to network with SLU, and receive world-class theological and biblical training.

"Capturing the hearts and minds of students with the gospel and teaching them to live their lives following Jesus is a crucial part of the church's mission," said Keith Whitfield, vice-president for academic administration at SEBTS. "We are excited about how this new degree will prepare leaders to equip a generation of students to give their lives for the cause of Christ in their communities and around the world. We are honored that SLU would bring their expertise and vast influence to partner with us."

Other items approved by the trustees include:

- Doctor of ministry degree to include courses specializations in church revitalization and Great Commission mobilization.

- Granting Bruce Little the title of "Emeritus Professor." Little, who retired from SEBTS last year was formerly the senior professor of philosophy, director of the Center for Faith and Culture, a founder of the Schaeffer Society and director of the Francis A. Schaeffer Collection.

New trustee members Ed Litton, John Onwuchekwa, Shawn Dobbins, Zack Little and Nate Millican were welcomed to the board. Additionally, new faculty members Julia Bickley, Ben Hollo-

way and Scott Pace were introduced to board members.

SEBTS President Danny Akin gave an update on exciting developments happening within the school. Akin highlighted the growth of the N.C. Field Minister Program, in its second year, providing over 50 current, long-term inmates a bachelor of arts in pastoral ministry. Akin also noted that SEBTS enrollment has risen to more than 4,200 students, which Akin called the, "single-largest leap in one particular year that we've ever had."

In chapel, Akin preached on Isaiah 52:13-53:12, titling his sermon, "The Passion of the Christ/The Suffering Servant of the Lord." Akin laid out five ways this passage portrays the significant stages of the Suffering Servant's career: Jesus' exaltation, His rejection, His passion, His submission and His salvation. "The penal substitution of Jesus Christ is not a theory. The exalted King died in the place of His rebel subjects," Akin said.

During a dinner for SES and BOT members, three students shared how the generosity of donors has helped them pursue Great Commission training at SEBTS.

Following the testimonies, Akin highlighted the vision and mission of the school saying, "Our goal is to build a school that loves and serves others like we have been loved and served by Jesus, with no distinction between race, gender or socio-economics. Global ... lostness is growing, I believe there has never been a greater urgency for a spiritual base to train Navy seals for the mission. ... We will only be able to accomplish what God wants us to do, all of us doing our part, all of us working together."

On Sunday evening, Steven Wade, associate professor of theology, preached through Titus 2:11-14. Wade gave ways in which Christians can live rightly in this present life with a full view of the gospel in mind. This full understanding of the gospel, Wade said, "defines everything about who we are and how we live."

On Tuesday morning, SES members attended two breakout sessions, in which faculty and student panelists discussed ways that SEBTS has prepared students to engage in the Great Commission and how professors have created a Great Commission atmosphere.

SES members give at least \$1,000 to SEBTS each year and partner with the school to help train students in living out the Great Commission wherever they go.

The next BOT and SES meetings will be held April 7-9, 2019.

Visit sebts.edu/ses. **BR**

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Moore: Cross frees Christians to love their families

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

The biblical understanding that Christians have been crucified with Christ liberates them to love their families genuinely, Russell Moore said Oct. 11 at the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's (ERLC) fifth annual national conference.

Moore, the ERLC's president, delivered the opening address to about 950 people gathered for "The Cross-shaped Family," the entity's 2018 conference at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. The three-day event concluded Oct. 13.

"What Jesus walked through without sin is exactly what every single one of us will walk through in some way or other, and a lot of that will have to do with our lives in terms of our families," Moore told the audience in a message based on the Matthew 3 and 4 accounts of Jesus' baptism and temptation by Satan.

"And unless we see that the Christian life is defined by the cross, then we are going to fall for the devil's offers because we are going to expect our families to bear a burden they cannot bear," Moore said.

"Instead though, if you ground your identity and your inheritance not in your family but in the cross, if you see yourself as crucified with Christ, if you – as Jesus tells us – find your lives only by losing them, then you are actually freed to love your family."

Moore – whose new book, *The Storm-tossed Family: How the Cross Reshapes the Home*, was released in September – said John's baptism of Jesus was "weird and odd and disorienting" for all those who witnessed it because it represented repentance.

In His baptism, Jesus is "identifying Himself with us," Moore said. "He is no sinner, but we are. And when Jesus says, 'Come follow Me,' He tells us over and over and over again, 'That means taking up your cross and walking forward.' Brothers and sisters, that includes our family lives."

Ingratitude, wrong expectations and fear can undercut Christians in their families, Moore told the audience.

"We can wreck our lives by not seeing the joy and blessing that God has given to us in our families," he said, "and we can wreck our lives by making family so ultimate that we spend our lives chasing after an idealized picture to the extent that we cannot love the family

right in front of us."

Some in the audience "are blocked from the joy of loving your families right now because of fear," Moore said.

A Christian does not resolve fear by believing "awful things" will not happen in the family, he said. "The fear is resolved by the fact that you already have been through [being judged in Christ's death], and now you have the freedom through the Spirit to love the family that you have."

Following rules is not the path to a successful family, Moore stated.

"The idea of family as being something that if we just follow the right steps we're going to be able to carry those things out – and we're going to have perfect tranquility in our marriages or in our child-rearing or in our extended families or in our church family – is a recipe for absolute disaster," he said. "Instead, what the Bible calls us to is spiritual warfare."

Every aspect of home life is difficult because "family is designed to take you outside of your illusions of control" to a place where a person has no control, Moore said. "But guess what? That is exactly what the cross does." **BR**

Eugene Peterson, creator of 'The Message,' dies at 85

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

Eugene Peterson, bestselling Christian author known for "The Message" paraphrase of scripture, died Oct. 22. He was 85.

Pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Md., for nearly 30 years, Peterson published more than 30 books on biblical spirituality, pastoral theology and Christian living, including his 2013 memoir *The Pastor and A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*.

Less than a week before Peterson's death, news broke he had been placed in hospice care amid struggles with dementia and congestive heart failure.

Upon his death, his family said in a statement, "Among his final words were, 'Let's go.'"

"And his joy: my, oh my; the man remained joyful right up to his blessed end, smiling frequently. In such moments it's best for all mortal flesh to keep silence. But if you have to say something say this: 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'"

"It feels fitting that his death came on a Monday, the day of the week he always honored as a Sabbath during his years as a pastor.

"After a lifetime of faithful service to the church – running the race with gusto – it is reassuring to know that Eugene has now entered into the fullness of the Kingdom of God and has been embraced

by eternal Sabbath," his family stated.

Among Southern Baptists to react to Peterson's death, Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, tweeted, "Grateful to God

for a long obedience in the same direction," referencing Peterson's well-known book. "Thank you Eugene Peterson."

When Peterson entered hospice care, author and speaker Beth Moore tweeted, "Don't you just sorta hope when Eugene Peterson finally sees the gorgeous, glorious face of the Savior he has so long loved and served, that Jesus is the type that might greet him

with something from The Message translation? Like, maybe John 21:12? 'Breakfast is ready.'"

Last year, Peterson told Religion News Service he didn't think death was "anything to be afraid of."

"I have no idea how it's going to work out," Peterson said of death. "But I'm not afraid, I'll tell you that.

"I've been with a lot of people who are dying. I think those conversations are some of the best I've ever had. These are people who have lived a good life and who have embraced their faith. They're not afraid."

At times, Peterson was the subject of theological controversy, as when he said in a 2017 interview he didn't believe homosexuality was sinful – a statement he later retracted. **BR**



EUGENE PETERSON

Atlanta accepts \$1.2M settlement with Kelvin Cochran

By ART TOALSTON | Baptist Press

The Atlanta city council has agreed to a \$1.2 million settlement with former fire chief Kelvin Cochran over his January 2015 termination for his views about marriage and sexuality.

The city council voted 11-3 after an executive session Oct. 15 during which city attorneys recommended a settlement and legal fees negotiated with the religious liberty organization Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), which has handled Cochran's court case, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC) reported.

Beyond the city council's decision, Cochran told Baptist Press on Oct. 17, God has been faithful through what he calls "the fiery trial." He has had numerous opportunities to give his testimony. He also completed a doctorate in interdisciplinary leadership in May through Creighton University in Omaha, Neb.

The Atlanta city council decision was celebrated by ADF but bemoaned by the former mayor who had fired Cochran, a highly decorated fire official and former U.S. Fire Administrator under President Barack Obama. Prompting the settlement was a federal judge's ruling last December declaring as unconstitutional city requirements that an employee must obtain pre-clearance for publishing a book such as Cochran's 162-page men's devotional that included a brief

section describing homosexual behavior as immoral.

Federal Judge Leigh Martin May granted summary judgment to Cochran that Atlanta's pre-clearance rules violated the Constitution's First Amendment by restraining speech in advance and inviting "unbridled discretion" by the city to approve or deny outside work. However, Cochran and ADF did not succeed on the other First Amendment claims in the case. May granted summary judgment to the city on Cochran's claims of freedom of speech retaliation, freedom of association retaliation and viewpoint discrimination. She also refused to agree that Atlanta had violated Cochran's free exercise of religion.

ADF senior counsel Kevin Theriot stated in a news release, "The government can't force its employees to get its permission before they engage in free speech. It also can't fire them for exercising that First Amendment freedom, causing them to lose both their freedom and their livelihoods."

AJC reported the city had "concluded that a federal court ruling ... left taxpayers exposed to an even larger payout if they didn't settle with Cochran."

Cochran was a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee in 2016, presenting a resolution affirming a commitment to biblical sexuality and urging the protection of religious free exercise. **BR**

Erick Erickson talks faith, family, food, politics

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Content Editor

Erick Erickson, a journalist and media personality known for his strident defense of conservative politics, says a period of suffering in his life led to deep reflections on faith, family and the lack of civility in current political discussions. Those meditations resulted in a book framed as a letter to his children that includes stories from his childhood, thoughts about how to endure suffering and his family's favorite recipes.

Erickson sat down for an interview with the *Biblical Recorder* at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's (ERLC) 2018 National Conference in Dallas, Texas, where he participated as a speaker and panelist. He is editor of *The Resurgent* and radio show host for WSB Radio in

Atlanta. He is also a Fox News contributor and doctoral student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

What follows is a lightly edited transcript.

Q: You published a book last year, titled “Before You Wake: Life Lessons from a Father to His Children.” Will you tell us a little about the book and why you decided to write it?

A: In 2016, I very nearly died. I had an influx of multiple blood clots in my lungs, to the point that while I was lying in intensive care, the doctor saw the scans and asked if they had taken the body to the morgue. That day my wife was diagnosed with a genetic form of lung cancer.



Erick Erickson addresses the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's National Conference in October.

Not long after, I told my wife, “You know, I don't think I'm going to make it.” She burst into tears and said that she had made a deal with God, and if He was going to take one of us, it would be her. I couldn't sleep that night, so I got up and wrote a letter to my kids.

I wound up putting the letter on my website and was later asked to turn it into a book. It is as much a confession as it is a biography and a way to leave my kids their favorite recipes.

Q: Many people say they don't care for politics and wish they watched less cable news. But it's your job to be engaged in constantly changing political conversations every day. How do you balance that with other parts of life, like being a husband and father?

A: Hobbies. You know, I used to be a 24/7 political animal. Nearly dying makes you appreciate living a little more.

I took up cooking more passionately than I had before. My wife bought me a camera and told me we were going to get fat if I kept cooking. So, now I take pictures of the food that I cook. I also bought a kayak, so I can go out in the middle of the lake where no cell phones can reach me. I like to sit and enjoy nature.

When I started writing about my family's health struggles, a number of people reached out and said, “I read about this and I want to reconnect. I had completely stopped paying attention to you or politics.” That was an encouragement for me to write about other stuff.

Q: Anyone who follows you on social media knows you like to cook. Is that something you've enjoyed your whole life, or a hobby you developed?

A: People think I'm joking when I say this, but when I was five years old, I was such a picky eater that my mom got fed up and told me to cook. She would help me, but I had to cook for myself – if nothing else, to appreciate the amount of work that she put into cooking.

I love it. It's a great distraction, and I have found over the years that fewer and fewer people are willing to cook or have the time to cook. So, by being willing to cook and invite people to eat, you can find new connections with people. Even people you disagree with politically, you can find common ground around a bowl of gumbo.

Q: At some point in the last few years, American politics seemed to transition from rough-and-tumble to an all-out brawl. How do you think Christians, especially those who work in politics or media, can speak into our culture in ways that bring hope and healing?

A: One of the big conversations in politics right now is that we don't have to be civil, and there are Republicans and Democrats saying it. Civility in politics is not a tactic or strategy, it's a sign of character.

I think Christians in politics need to be willing to be civil when other people aren't.

There's an idea percolating in secular culture that you can't win if you're nice. I don't think that's true, and I don't think Christians can surrender to that temptation. We're supposed to reflect something more eternal than short-term politics.

Erickson's keynote address – “The Suffering Family and the Goodness of God” – at the 2018 ERLC National Conference in October is available at [facebook.com/erlcsbc/videos/368183090390471/](https://www.facebook.com/erlcsbc/videos/368183090390471/). **BR**

HIS GLORY, MY REWARD

Recently, I was reminded of the letter the late International Mission Board missionary, Karen Watson, left in the event of her death on the mission field.

Watson, alongside North Carolinians Larry and Jean Elliot, and Texan David McDonnall, were killed when their vehicle was ambushed in a March 2004 attack in Iraq.

In her letter, which was read by her pastor at her funeral service in Bakersfield, Calif., Watson wrote, “I wasn't called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory was my reward, His glory is my reward.”

We live in a day and age where it is easy to want what is comfortable and easy. We desire recognition, notoriety, and reward – even in our Christian circles.

However, Watson's letter is a reminder the glory of God should always be our reward. Watson's words serve as a clear reminder that God's glory should be our reward, not earthly fame, recognition or success. But, do we see the proclamation and magnification of our magnificent Savior over all the earth as enough of a reward for us?

From a Roman prison, Paul wrote to the Philippians, “But

whatever things we gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:7-11).

As believers, the life we live on this earth is not about us. We were created to bring God, and Him alone, glory (Isaiah 43:7). Whether it is serving overseas to make the gospel of Christ Jesus known to those who have never heard, preaching to the masses, or teaching the Bible in complete anonymity, is the glory of God our reward?

Is our heart's cry, much like the apostle Paul and Karen Watson, the Father's glory?



ASHLEY ALLEN

embrace

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

Churches and associations with reported damage by Hurricane Florence

Hurricane Florence caused catastrophic damage to many parts of central and eastern North Carolina. Here, you can see a list of churches or association buildings that were damaged as a result of the storm (as reported to Baptists on Mission, also known as North Carolina Baptist Men. These are all facilities that have ties to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Each association is listed below* with descriptions about some of the damage done. This is not a complete list but gives an idea of the widespread devastation. To volunteer or donate, visit baptistsonmission.org.

*A church was listed in the N.C. Miscellaneous association, which means it has no affiliation with any of the organized associations within North Carolina.

Atlantic Baptist Association

The Atlantic Baptist Association in Havelock was the hardest hit during the hurricane. Part of the association building's roof was ripped off. The conference room and the office are not functional.

Atlantic Missionary Baptist Church – An early estimate for damage was \$108,000. Shingles were displaced and the roof leaked in several places. The balcony caved in and the rest of the upper level also received water damage. The church walls, which are plaster, are damaged. Windows were broken, and the gutters overflowed into the church.

First Baptist Church, Davis – The church building received 4-5 inches of flooding. Members tore out the flooring. The HVAC system flooded and will need to be replaced.

First Baptist Church, Morehead City – An early estimate was \$25,000 in damages not covered by insurance deductible. Roofs on multiple buildings received varying degrees of damage.

Huggins Memorial Baptist Church, Harkers Island – Both the church building and parsonage were damaged. Pews, organ and other contents inside were damaged due to roof leakage.

Marshallberg Baptist Church – Some water got inside the church. The Sunday School and choir rooms have damage. HVAC units were damaged.

Oriental First Baptist Church – The floor was damaged.

Parkview Baptist Church, Morehead City – The steeple fell, and the ceiling and stage in the sanctuary were damaged, as was the library and fellowship hall.

Pollockville Baptist Church – The church's basement flooded. All sound equipment was lost, and the parsonage was damaged.

Smyrna Missionary Baptist Church – Knee-high water flooded the children's area of the church.

Sea Level Missionary Baptist Church – Minimal damage was reported.

Trenton Missionary Baptist Church – The church had 3-4 feet of water in the family life center and fellowship hall. The church sanctuary's crawl space flooded up to the floor of the sanctuary. The steeple was twisted and has to be replaced. The roof will also have to be replaced. The pastor's home was flooded as well.

Bladen Baptist Association

Abbottsburg Baptist Church, Bladenboro – A foot of water ran through the whole building.

Peace Baptist Church, Bladenboro – The church, which also flooded during Hurricane Matthew two years ago, had major flooding.

Burnt Swamp Baptist Association

Harpers Ferry Baptist Church, Maxton – Six inches of water entered the buildings. Duct vents were ruined.

Morning Star Community Church, Lumberton – Damage reported without specifics.

New Point Baptist Church, Lumberton – The entire church building flooded.

West End Baptist Church, Lumberton – Flood waters rose to the church doors but did not get inside.

Cape Fear Network of Baptist Churches

Atkinson Baptist Church – Church basement flooded causing extensive damage.

Crossroads Baptist Church, Wilmington – The church had a lot of water damage and is considering relocating. The church leases its facility. Water damaged mostly ceilings.

First Baptist Church, Wilmington – The church has sustained damage but has maintained a NCBM feeding and/or recovery unit since the storm hit.

Greenfield Baptist Church, Wilmington – A tornado blew off part of the roof and led to significant water damage.

New Hope Baptist Church, Leland – A limb went through the church's ceiling, and there was water damage.

Sunset Park Baptist Church, Wilmington – There were some lost shingles and water damage.

Temple Baptist Church, Wilmington – There are a few leaks in the sanctuary and minor damage to the steeple.

The Gathering, Surf City – The youth building had to be gutted. Services were disrupted for a short time.

Columbus Baptist Association

Chadbourn Baptist Church – Slate tiles were cracked.

Cheerful Hope Baptist Church, Delco – The steeple was damaged and water came into the church.

Fair Bluff Baptist Church – Flooding was similar to the devastation of Hurricane Matthew.

Gapway Baptist Church, Tabor City – The pastor's home flooded.

Riegelwood Baptist Church – Roof leakage was reported.

West Whiteville Baptist Church – The ceiling fell in.

White Marsh Baptist Church, Whiteville – Flooding underneath church, so ductwork will have to be replaced.

Dock Baptist Association

Magnolia Missionary Baptist Church, Whiteville – The church reported four feet of water in sanctuary, five in fellowship hall.

Eastern Baptist Association

Center Baptist Church, Garland – Described as total loss.

Island Creek Baptist Church, Rose Hill – Roof damage and some interior and steeple damage reported.

Iglesia Cristiana Emanuel, Wallace – New roof and ceiling needed.

Piney Grove Baptist Church, Faison – Roof and pew damage.

Saron Iglesia Bautista, Chinquapin – Flooded out.

Sharon Baptist Church, Chinquapin – Fellowship hall and church flooded 2-3 feet. Pastor's house flooded up to windows.

Johnston Baptist Association

Trees fell on association building, and service pole to building needed to be repaired.

Neuse Baptist Association

Pineview Baptist Church, Goldsboro – Water infiltrated the sanctuary.

New River Baptist Association

Brookwood Baptist Church, Jacksonville – Mold was present. The steeple was damaged.

First Baptist Church, Swansboro – Early estimate is around \$1 million in damage.

Korean Baptist Church, Jacksonville – Half a foot of water came into the facility.

Living Hope Community Church, Jacksonville – The steeple shifted and caused water damage in the sanctuary. HVAC units need to be replaced.

New South River Baptist Association

Arran Lake Baptist Church, Fayetteville – A portion of sanctuary ceiling fell. The ceiling in the education building stairwell needs replacement, and sound equipment was struck by lightning.

Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church, Roseboro – Half of fellowship hall roof is gone.

First Baptist Church, Roseboro – There is water damage in AC ducts, leaks around lights, carpet needs removing and replacing. There was water damage around windows.

Grace Baptist Church, Fayetteville – There's a hole in the roof over sanctuary, and the sound board, baby grand piano and youth room were completely lost. There were extensive water leaks and wet carpet throughout.

Mt. Elam Baptist Church, Roseboro – Water damage was reported.

Shaw Heights Baptist Church, Fayetteville – Holes were found in roof over sanctuary, kitchen and fellowship hall with water damage.

Sperring Memorial Baptist Church, Fayetteville – Roof over sanctuary and choir loft was damaged with some falling pieces. Water came through roof in foyer and choir room.

Spring Lake Baptist Church – The steeple shifted, and water flooded above the sound board. The ceiling fell into the sanctuary, and the bathroom behind the sanctuary leaked, causing the ceiling to collapse, which leaked through to the basement, damaging ceiling tiles, causing them to fall.

North Carolina miscellaneous

***Myrtle Head Baptist Church, Ash** – The church reported flooding.

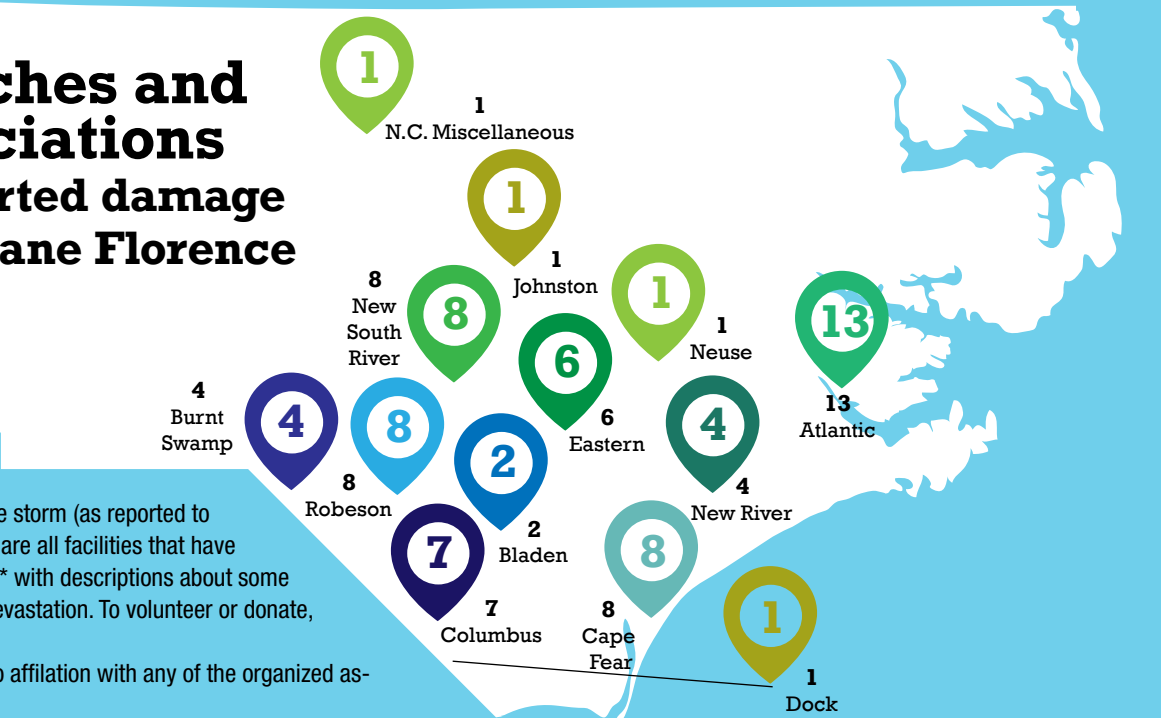
Robeson Baptist Association

Bethel Baptist Church, Lumberton – The roof was reportedly torn off with water damage inside, including pews and a wall.

North Lumberton Baptist Church – Tears in the roof from strong winds caused water damage in the church.

Vertical Church, Lumberton – The building was leased, and the church just moved to this facility. The biggest loss was sound and video equipment.

West Lumberton Baptist Church – Water damage/flooding. The church has joined a class action lawsuit against a company for preventing them from building a berm prior to the flooding because the church sustained extensive damage during Hurricane Matthew's flooding. **BR**



Mama Continued from page 1

Marines from nearby U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point, N.C.

But the widow's popular after-church meals came to a halt in September when her home took on floodwater caused by Hurricane Florence. Mills, a member of First Baptist Church Havelock, stood on higher ground on her neighbor's porch and watched the water rise in her yard and feared for the worst. Her neighborhood was flooded when Joe's Branch Creek overflowed from the Neuse River's storm surge.

Dressed in high boots the next morning, Mills surveyed the damage done overnight. While only the crawl space of her home was flooded, she found her barn out back, which housed three freezers and two refrigerators full of food for her ministry, had taken on nearly four feet of floodwater.

"When I saw those freezers turned upside down and food everywhere, I thought that maybe God was closing a door [to the ministry]," she said.

"All my provisions were taken away from me and I wondered, 'Lord, is it time for me to do something else?'"

But through help from Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBD) volunteers, who were mostly organized through Baptists on Mission (or North Carolina Baptist Men, NCBM), and other friends, she realized that maybe God was opening doors instead.

When NCBM volunteer Bill Gore of Bethel Baptist of Boone, N.C., showed up to treat mold underneath her home, he said he knew Mills was a special person. Gore and many other SBD volunteers were meeting job requests out of Temple Baptist Church in New Bern, one of several SBD command sites.

"Her loving demeanor towards a stranger stuck out," Gore said.

When Mama Mills started sharing her story of how the lunch bunch began and showed him all the photographs over the years of people who had come on Sundays, he encouraged Mills to continue her service.

Gore, a longtime NCBM volunteer, said he was impressed by her care for others.

"This just absolutely amazed me," he said.

Mills shared with him how God had always provided for her needs in the past. One time when she was planning to serve meatless spaghetti, two friends showed up with 30 pounds of chicken.

"Of course, we had fried chicken the next day," she noted.

Gore and volunteer Richard Browning of Rock Spring Baptist Church in Louisburg, N.C., visited and prayed with



Volunteers Bill Gore, left, and Richard Browning, right, visited Linda Mills and encouraged her to continue her longtime ministry of feeding and providing fellowship for neighbors, including U.S. Marines from a nearby U.S. Marine Corps air station in Cherry Point, N.C. (NAMB photos by Laura Sikes)

Mills and gave her a signed Bible before they left. They encouraged her to go on with the ministry.

"I'm praying the Lord just builds this better and bigger than it was before," Gore said.

One of the Marines who comes to the lunch bunch has already donated a used refrigerator to Mama Mills.

Mills says she is looking forward to preparing her first lunch since the storm on Sunday, Oct. 28. She plans on serving lasagna, salad, homemade yeast rolls – her specialty – and homemade cheese-cake and other desserts for close to 50 guests.

Many friends have also encouraged her to keep the ministry going, she said.

"Oh no, these guys need you to be a Mom away from home," they would tell her.

Mills says she is confident that God wants her to continue. "I know that prayer is going out for me and that this is what I'm supposed to do. He knows where my heart is. He knows what I love to do. It's all in His hands."

Mills hopes others will see her ministry and will realize that they can do the same thing in their community.

"Take in someone or a family and open their home to make it a home away from home," she said. "Look for someone that needs that extra love."

SBD volunteers have continued serving survivors of Hurricanes Florence and Michael. In North and South Carolina,

the response has moved to a focus on recovery work while Florida and Georgia continue to provide both meals and recovery work for survivors.

In response to Hurricane Florence, SBD has provided more than 1.1 million meals, distributed nearly 1,400 crisis buckets, completed more than 600 flood clean-up jobs and provided chainsaw work for 1,182 homeowners.

In Florida, thousands of people are still without power, and SBD teams have set up seven feeding sites and eight clean-up and recovery sites in Florida. In Georgia, SBD teams have set up three sites that include both feeding and recovery and two sites that are focused on recovery.

Southern Baptists have provided more than 300,000 meals to survivors of Hurricane Michael. They have provided more than 400 chainsaw and yard cleanup jobs as well as more than 100 temporary roofing jobs. So far, Southern Baptists have witnessed 174 professions of faith as they have ministered to people in the aftermath of these tragic storms.

For updates on North Carolina volunteer efforts, visit baptistsonmission.org. Or, visit namb.net/hurricane-relief.



Linda "Mama" Mills shows Richard Browning, left, and Bill Gore the photos of many of the guests who have been impacted by her lunch ministry through the years. Mills had packed up all of her photos and papers and other items preparing for the worst before the storm.



Linda "Mama" Mills shows volunteer Bill Gore how the floodwater rose nearly four feet in the building in the back of her home. Her freezers and refrigerators full of food for her ministry were lost, but her home was spared, sustaining only one foot of water in the crawl space. Gore fogged underneath her home to eliminate mold.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Laura Sikes is a freelance writer with the North American Mission Board. Reprinted from Baptist Press, baptistpress.com, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.) **BR**

Students

Continued from page 1

As the students drove to the home in the Bridgeton neighborhood, just across the Neuse River from New Bern, they saw piles of debris from flood-damaged homes lining the streets. Most of the homeowners had lost the entire contents of their homes.

“Our team didn’t realize how much damage was done,” said senior Grace Sullivan.

Homeowner Brian Cahoon said he and his wife Amy appreciated the volunteers’ hard work.

“There’s no way I could have done this work,” Brian said.

Within about seven hours, the students nearly cleared the Cahoon’s home. They tore out sheetrock and insulation, pulled up flooring and hauled out water-soaked furniture, adding to the pile of debris along the street.

“Those college girls were scary with their crowbars,” Amy joked. “They did excellent work.”

Amy said it was hard for her to see the home where she grew up so devastated. Her father had built the home with his friends in 1957, and this is the first time it has taken on floodwater.

“I feel like I’ve lost my parents all over again,” she said.

First-time disaster recovery volunteer Anna Bristle – 18, of Charlotte – said she was glad to help the two homeowners.

“It’s really sad to see that this is people’s reality,” Bristle said. “For us, the hurricane ended three weeks ago, but for them, it’s not over.”

Team leader Jimmy Lawrence of North Carolina Baptists On Mission (also known as N.C. Baptist Men, NCBM) said he and other disaster recovery volunteers are grateful for the students’ commitment to serving.

“ECU has stepped up. I think it’s wonderful that the college teams are coming,” Lawrence said.

Lawrence, who serves as New Bern’s site commander, said the work is ongoing. While more than 400 job requests have been met in the past three weeks, more requests are coming in. Mud-out and chainsaw teams are needed.

ECU has committed to sending day volunteer teams every Saturday in October and have signed up more than 500 volunteers, he said.

Along with the cross-country team, other athletic teams, including the men’s baseball, basketball and soccer teams, have served along with university staff.

Grace Sullivan, one of the cross-country team’s



Members of East Carolina University’s cross-country team tore up flooring in the kitchen and every other room of a flood damaged home along the banks of the Neuse River in Bridgeton, N.C. (NAMB photos by Laura Sikes)



Josh Spare, 19, of East Carolina University hauls debris to the street with his fellow team members who worked Oct. 6 on a tear-out of a flood damaged home in Bridgeton, N.C. The homeowners and their neighbors lost nearly the entire contents of their homes.

captains, and ECU Human Resources leader Danielle Morrin helped spearhead the students coming.

“I am so proud of [the students],” Morrin said.

Sullivan noted, “This is our community and they support us. So, we wanted to support them and to give back.”

In response to Hurricane Florence, NCBM and other volunteers have served more than 1.1 million meals, provided flood cleanup for more than 300 homes and helped clear more than 1,100 yards of storm debris.

On Oct. 11, ECU cancelled its classes due to Tropical Storm Michael, which ravaged the Florida Panhandle, Georgia and Alabama as one of the worst hurricanes to hit the U.S. Michael led to casualties as far north as Virginia.

So far, volunteers have served nearly 100,000 meals and helped clear more than 140 yards in response to Hurricane Michael.

Visit baptistsonmission.org to donate or volunteer. Contact state conventions about responding in other states or visit namb.net/hurricane-relief.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Laura Sikes is a freelance writer with the North American Mission Board. Reprinted from Baptist Press, baptistpress.com, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.) **BR**

Erwins unveil next plans, envision ‘Christian Pixar’

Baptist Press

Filmmaker Jon Erwin says his father often told him to “dream big, dream bold, dream the impossible.”

Erwin has followed that advice, and earlier this year many of those dreams came true with his hit faith-based movie “I Can Only Imagine,” which grossed \$83 million to become the No. 1 movie all time from Roadside Attractions. It even surpassed that studio’s most famous release, the Oscar-winning “Manchester by the Sea” (\$47 million).

Erwin now is ready to announce his next projects, which involve a new

production company and a series of films that are possible only because of the staggering success of I Can Only Imagine. The company even has the support of a Hollywood studio. Erwin calls it “unprecedented.”

“Hollywood responds to success,” Erwin told Baptist Press. “That is the currency in Hollywood.”

Erwin, his brother Andy and their production partner Kevin Downes have formed a new filmmaking company, Kingdom, which will bring multiple filmmakers together to create a “pipeline of event movies” that proclaim a biblical message and “serve the church,” Erwin told

Baptist Press. He likens it to a “Christian Pixar or a Christian Marvel” studio that is able to work on multiple films at one time, but all with the quality that moviegoers expect from an Erwin-branded movie.

Some movies will be directed by the Erwins, while others will employ other veteran or upcoming directors. Lionsgate will distribute them.

Erwin is scheduled to announce Kingdom’s first lineup of films at the National Religious Broadcasters meeting March 26 in Anaheim, Calif.

At least one of those will be directed by the Erwins. **BR**



Andy Erwin, from left, Kevin Downes, and Jon Erwin have formed a new faith-based filmmaking company, Kingdom, that will release multiple movies by different directors in what Jon Erwin calls a “leap forward” in faith moviemaking. (Erwin Brothers photo)

Survey sees mix of orthodox belief, shifting opinions

By CAROL PIPES | LifeWay Christian Resources

Six in 10 Americans say religious belief is a matter of personal opinion. For 7 in 10 Americans, such religious beliefs include one true God existing in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But an increasing majority of Americans deny Jesus has always existed and many say the Holy Spirit is a force rather than a personal being.

Those are among the findings of a new study of American views on Christian theology from Nashville-based LifeWay Research.

“When the majority of Americans believe religious belief is more personal opinion than objective truth, then we expect to see contradictory beliefs [as well as] beliefs that change over time,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

The survey of 3,000 Americans was sponsored by Orlando-based Ligonier Ministries. Titled the 2018 State of Theology Study, it is the third in a series of surveys examining Americans’ theological beliefs. Previous surveys were conducted in 2016 and 2014.

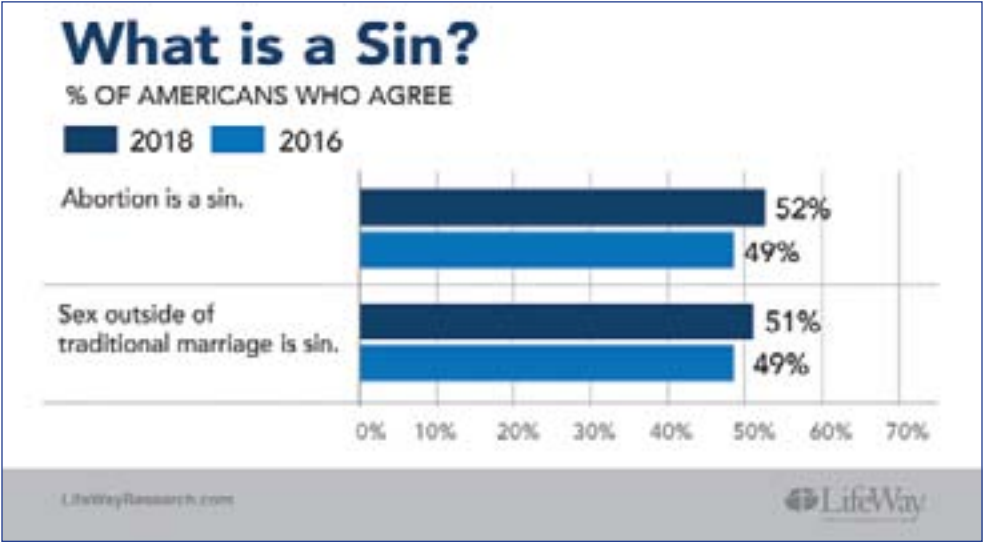
Survey questions focused on key doctrinal beliefs and included a number of areas where Americans often differ from historic and orthodox Christian views.

Among the findings:

Character of God

A majority of Americans (70 percent) believe there is one true God in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eighteen percent disagree while 12 percent are not sure. This has remained consistent since researchers began asking the question in 2014.

Sixty-nine percent of Americans say God is perfect and cannot make a mistake, which is higher than both the



2016 (65 percent) and 2014 (63 percent) surveys.

Two-thirds believe the biblical accounts of the physical (bodily) resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate. Twenty percent disagree; 14 percent are not sure.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans say Jesus Christ is the only person who never sinned; 29 percent disagree; and 15 percent are not sure.

A similar number say Jesus is a created being. Fifty-seven percent agree with the statement “Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.” Twenty-eight percent disagree and 15 percent are not sure. That’s a slight increase from 2016 when 52 percent agreed Jesus was created by God.

Nearly 6 in 10 (59 percent) say the Holy Spirit is a force rather than a personal being. Twenty-five percent disagree; 16 percent are not sure.

A quarter of Americans (26 percent) say God is unconcerned with their day-to-day decisions; 61 percent disagree; and 13 percent are not sure.

The Bible

Researchers found Americans are split on their views of the Bible. More Ameri-

cans believe the Bible is completely accurate but a growing number say the Bible is not literally true.

In 2018, half of Americans say the Bible is 100 percent accurate in all that it teaches, up from 47 percent in 2016 and 43 percent in 2014.

Fewer than half (47 percent) of Americans, meanwhile, agree the Bible contains helpful accounts of ancient myths, but isn’t literally true. Forty-three percent disagree. In 2016, 44 percent agreed the Bible isn’t literally true; in 2014, 41 percent said the same.

Researchers also found 36 percent of Americans say modern science disproves the Bible while 48 percent disagree.

“The last writing included in the Christian Bible was completed nearly 2,000 years ago,” McConnell said. “Yet Americans’ beliefs around this book are shifting more than most other theological beliefs.”

Sin & punishment

More than 6 in 10 Americans (62 percent) expect Jesus to return and judge all people. However, fewer expect people to be punished in a place called hell. While 54 percent of Americans agree hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever, 30 percent disagree. According to the study, a majority of Americans (66 percent) admit everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. Twenty-seven percent disagree and 7 percent aren’t sure.

Nearly a quarter (23 percent) of Americans say even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. Sixty-nine percent disagree and 8 percent aren’t sure. However, Americans are more likely to agree now than four years ago about the consequences of sin. In 2014, only 18 percent of Americans said even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation; in 2016, 19 percent agreed.

Americans with evangelical beliefs are the most likely to agree (49 percent) that the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation.

Salvation

A majority of Americans believe Jesus is the only way to eternal salvation. Six in 10 (62 percent) agree Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of sin from their lives. Thirty-eight percent disagree.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans say only those who trust in Jesus alone as Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation. Forty-three percent disagree. Those who identify with an evangelical (88 percent) or black Protestant (83 percent) denomination are more likely to agree than mainline Protestants (65 percent) and Catholics (58 percent).

And slightly more than half (53 percent) believe righteousness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ not because of one’s actions. A third disagree while 14 percent aren’t sure.

Morality & moral authority

The share of Americans who believe the Bible has authority to govern our actions grew to a slim majority in 2018. Fifty-three percent agree “the Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do.” This is higher than both the 2016 and 2014 surveys with 50 percent and 49 percent agreeing, respectively.

Six in 10 (62 percent) Americans say the Bible is the highest authority for what they believe.

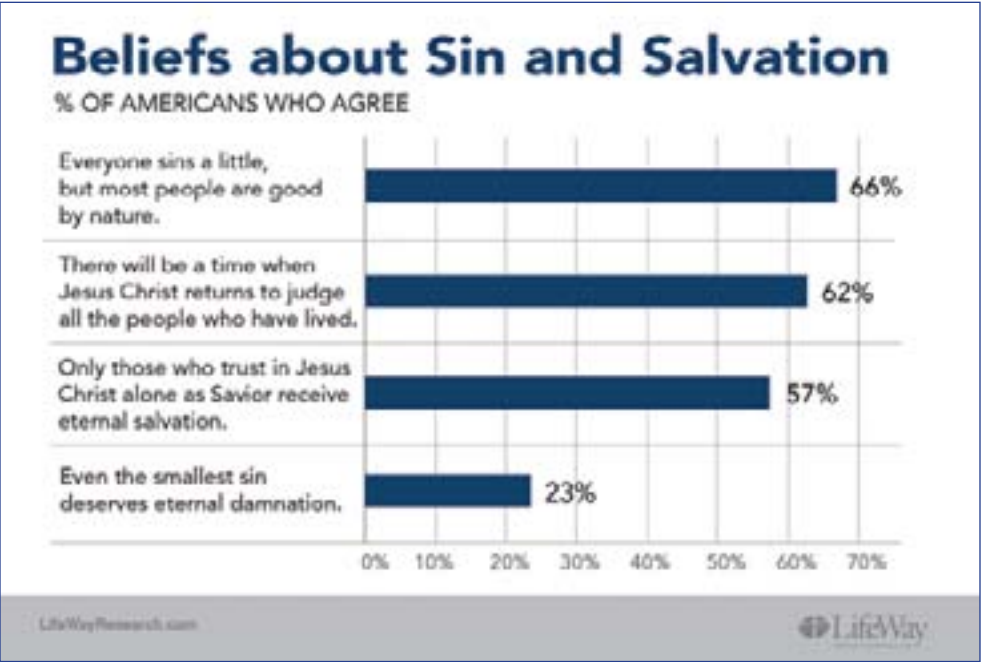
Thirty-eight percent disagree. Americans from an evangelical (92 percent) or black Protestant (90 percent) denomination are more likely to agree than mainline Protestants (74 percent) and Catholics (67 percent).

Americans are fairly split on whether sex outside traditional marriage is a sin. Half (51 percent) say they believe sex outside traditional marriage is a sin including 33 percent who strongly agree. Forty-one percent disagree including 27 percent who strongly disagree.

Slightly more than half (52 percent) of Americans say abortion is a sin. Thirty-eight percent disagree while 10 percent are not sure.

Americans’ views of homosexuality continue to shift from historically orthodox Christian views. Forty-four percent believe the Bible’s condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn’t apply today. Forty-one percent disagree and 15 percent are not sure. In 2016, 42 percent agreed, while 44 percent disagreed and 14 percent weren’t sure.

LifeWay Research asked Americans about gender identity. The study found 38 percent believe it is a matter of choice while 51 percent say it is not a choice and 11 percent are not sure.



Evangelicals & politics: Reasons for voting ‘complex’

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

Politics is important for most evangelicals, but not so important that they question the faith of those who vote differently from them, a new study shows.

A new survey from LifeWay Research sponsored by the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College explored the voting habits and political motivations of three groups of Americans: evangelicals by belief, self-identified evangelicals and those who are not evangelical by belief or self-identity. The survey was conducted May 9-16.

Evangelicals by belief – those who hold to four key theological statements developed by LifeWay Research and the National Association of Evangelicals – were most likely to say politics is at least somewhat important to them (87 percent), with 30 percent saying it is extremely important.

Self-identified evangelicals (85 percent) gave similar overall importance to politics. Non-evangelicals (78 percent) are less likely to see politics as at least somewhat important. But few self-identified (23 percent) and non-evangelicals (18 percent) say politics is extremely important.

“These numbers show evangelicals have a greater passion for politics than most, which could say something about the issues of our day. Some of the biggest political issues today involve evangelicals, which could explain why they are engaged at a higher level than others,” said Ed Stetzer, executive director of the Billy Graham Center.

“Evangelicals care for and tend to be involved in the communities in which they live,” Stetzer said. “We have come a long way from 50 years ago, when many evangelicals thought political involvement was worldly.”

Four in 10 African-American evangelicals by belief say politics is extremely important to them – more than any other ethnicity. Evangelicals by belief and self-identified evangelicals are more likely than non-evangelicals to belong to one of the two major political parties.

Among evangelicals by belief, 44 percent are Republicans, 32 percent Democrats and 14 percent independents. Self-identified evangelicals are slightly less Republican. Forty-one percent say they are part of the Republican party, 32 percent Democratic party and 15 percent independent.

Non-evangelicals are more diverse with 23 percent Republicans, 36 percent Democrats and 23 percent independents.

The 2016 presidential election

Evangelical by belief voters are the most likely to say they felt strong support for their candidate when they voted and are most likely to still feel strong support for that candidate today.

Thinking back to 2016, nine in 10 evangelicals agree they felt strong support for their preferred candidate, with 69 percent strongly agreeing.

Little has changed when evangelical by belief voters think about who they voted for in the last presidential election. Today, 88 percent agree they feel strong support for who they voted for in 2016, with 70 percent strongly agreeing.

“Given the nominated presidential candidates in 2016, most voters with evangelical beliefs were sure about their choice and few have changed their minds,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Self-identified evangelical voters and non-evangelical voters are less likely to say they felt strong support in 2016 and today. And among evangelicals who voted, most did so for Donald Trump. More than half of evangelicals by belief (58 percent) and self-identified evangelicals (53 percent) cast their ballot for the Republican nominee. Slightly more than a third of evangelicals by belief (36 percent) and self-identified evangelicals (38 percent) voted for Hillary Clinton.

A majority of non-evangelical voters (53 percent) voted for Clinton, while 36 percent voted for Trump.

African-American voters with evangelical beliefs overwhelmingly voted for Clinton (86 percent), while more than three-quarters of white voters with evangelical

beliefs voted for Trump (77 percent).

Around half of younger voters with evangelical beliefs cast their ballot for Clinton – 47 percent of those 18 to 49. A majority of voters 65 and over who have evangelical beliefs voted for Trump (72 percent).

Single-issue voters? Not necessarily

The survey found evangelicals by belief (62 percent) and self-identified evangelicals (59 percent) were most likely to say one of the reasons for their 2016 vote was choosing the candidate with the ability to improve the economy.

Close to half those numbers – 36 percent of evangelical by belief and 31 percent of self-identified evangelical voters – listed the candidate’s position on abortion as a factor in their vote. Similar numbers said a likely Supreme Court nominee played a role.

When asked the most important reason for voting the way they did, again evangelicals by belief (17 percent) and self-identified evangelicals (18 percent) chose an ability to improve the economy. That was followed by positions on health care and immigration.

Few evangelicals by belief (5 percent) and self-identified evangelicals (4 percent) said abortion was the most important issue in deciding their 2016 vote. And 7 percent of evangelicals by belief and 6 percent of self-identified evangelicals chose likely Supreme Court nominees as the most important reason.

“In many ways, evangelical voters are a lot like everyone else when it comes to deciding their vote,” McConnell said. “The issues often tied to evangelicals – like abortion and the Supreme Court – are further down the average evangelical’s list of deciding factors, behind topics like the economy and health care.”

Political divides in the pews?

Most evangelicals by belief and self-identified evangelicals say the 2016 election brought to the surface some underlying divisions among Christians.

Six in 10 evangelicals by belief (59 percent) and 57 percent of self-identified evangelicals agree the election revealed political divides within the church that have existed for a long time.

Younger and ethnic minority self-identified evangelicals are more likely to say those political divides were exposed during the election. Sixty-three percent of those 18 to 34 agree, compared to 53 percent of those 50 and over. African-American (62 percent) and Hispanic evangelicals (64 percent) are more likely to agree than whites (54 percent).

Yet, most evangelicals by belief and self-identified evangelicals believe someone in the opposing party can be a devout Christian.

Among Republicans, 68 percent of evangelicals by belief and 71 percent of self-identified evangelicals say someone can be a committed Christian and a Democrat. Fewer than a quarter of each disagree – 25 percent of evangelicals by belief and 22 percent of self-identified evangelicals.

Among Democrats, 74 percent of evangelicals by belief and 77 percent of self-identified evangelicals say someone can be a committed Christian and a Republican. Fifteen percent of Democratic evangelicals by belief and 13 percent of self-identified evangelicals disagree.

When evangelicals encounter someone using biblical beliefs to justify political views that are opposite of their own, few question their political opponent’s faith. Twenty percent of evangelicals by belief and self-identified evangelicals say they doubt the validity of the other person’s faith.

Evangelicals by belief are most likely to say they are hopeful they can find common ground biblically (40 percent), while self-identified evangelicals are most likely to agree to disagree (38 percent) with the other person.

“Jesus is not coming back on a donkey or an elephant,” Stetzer said. “We have to acknowledge that people vote for different and complex reasons and that Christians can differ on politics and agree on the gospel.”

Other findings in the study include:

- 59 percent of evangelicals by belief, 61 percent of self-identified evangelicals and 56 percent of non-evangelicals say their political support should focus on praising or criticizing issues rather than supporting individual political leaders.
- 27 percent of evangelicals by belief, 30 percent of self-identified evangelicals and 34 percent of non-evangelicals say evangelical Christians are too closely aligned with President Trump.
- 43 percent of evangelicals by belief, 41 percent of self-identified evangelicals and 27 percent of non-evangelicals say when a leader is making important political decisions they support, they should also support the leader when they say or do things they disagree with.
- 57 percent of evangelicals by belief and 54 percent of self-identified evangelicals say the goals conservatives achieve under President Trump will last after his presidency.
- 67 percent of evangelicals by belief and 66 percent of self-identified evangelicals agree committed Christians can benefit from a political leader even if that leader’s personal life does not line up with Christian teaching.

In his new book, *Christians in the Age of Outrage*, Stetzer said he describes how Christians should “gear down the outrage and turn up the mission. We certainly can’t go to war with people with whom we disagree because you can’t be at war with a people and reach a people at the same time.” Visit LifeWayResearch.com. **BR**



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JOHN PIPER

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* Holman Bibles provided by Lifeway Christian Resources

Stop by the BR booth to register for these prizes.

Drawings will be held 4:30 pm on Tuesday, Nov. 6

Women's
GIVE-AWAY

2 CSB She Reads Truth Bibles

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This giveaway will take place at the Minister's Wives Conference, thanks to our partnership with Embrace Women's Ministries



Artist unveils Billy Graham creations

A bust by Chinese artist Yuan Xikun entitled “Billy Graham as Messenger” is unveiled during a ceremony at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association headquarters. To the left is the “Billy Graham as Sower” statue Xikun created as part of his last two pieces he plans to produce in his career. The donated statues are presented to Billy Graham Evangelistic Association as a gesture to honor Graham’s life, global influence and special connection to China, which was the birthplace of his late wife, Ruth, and the location for six of Graham’s crusades in the late 1980s and early ’90s. “Billy Graham stands among the great cultural and spiritual leaders of our time, not just for who he was, but for the unique message he conveyed to the world,” Yuan said. “My sculptures are meant not only to honor his influence as a preacher – they are a testament to the enduring legacy of his ministries that continue to transform lives on every continent.” Though the two never met, Yuan’s renowned Jintai Art Museum in Beijing was built in 1994 approximately eight miles from Chongwenmen Church, where Graham preached a sermon in 1988. During the sermon, Graham encouraged his Chinese audience to include a moral and spiritual renewal in China’s ambitious modernization program. Yuan has long served as a “Portrait Diplomat.” While living in Japan in the 1980s, Yuan gained a reputation for his skillful portrait sketches of the Japanese royal family. Since then, he has been invited to draw ink-and-wash portraits for 152 foreign dignitaries. (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association photo)

AROUND THE STATE

Staff change

ALLEN MURRAY was called to Centerville Baptist Church, Kelly as pastor. He previously served as pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church, Lake Toxaway for over three years. Allen and his wife Hope have been married six years, and have two lovely daughters, Sawyer and Emery.

Hotel

first click” policy, he said. There is also a five-room limit on individual registrants.

“When we opened housing this year,” Townes said, “we had 238 reservations within the first three minutes, and filled the entire available main co-convention hotel block before 8:04 a.m.”

In addition, more than 300 people were mistakenly put on a wait list for the Westin Hotel, said Townes. The online system, managed by Experient, should have directed registrants to another hotel.

Townes said Experient is alleviating the inconvenience by making a \$2,500 contribution to the Cooperative Pro-

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. Send to *dianna@BRnow.org* or *Biblical Recorder*, P.O. Box 1185, Cary, NC 27512. Call (919) 847-2127. Have a story idea? Email *editor@BRnow.org*.

gram and “working behind the scenes” to secure rooms for those registrants who were waitlisted.

He also said the Sheraton has been “extremely helpful” in helping to secure additional rooms at nearby hotels and will provide “shuttle assistance.”

He added that Birmingham is undergoing “significant” highway construction and hotels are spread across the city. Hotel shuttles will be available, he said, in addition to “park and ride” lots at local churches and ride share coupons for Uber and Lyft.

Visit sbcannualmeeting.net to register or
for more information. **BR**

November 11

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

November 18

Praying for Others

**Focal passage: Matthew 6:11b;
John 17:11-23**

“Sure, thank you for telling me. I will pray for you.” How many times have we said this – including myself – and not actually done it? Though we may not practice it perfectly, we know the ministry of intercession through prayer can be powerful in people’s lives.

Charles Spurgeon said, “No man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me.” Prayers of intercession can thus be a way to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

As we’ve been studying prayer in the life of a disciple, we have learned to pray to God – to pray with power, and to pray about ourselves. Now, as we move to intercession, our hearts begin to respond to God and knit our hearts closer to those we pray for.

A great example of intercessory prayer is in John 17. Jesus prays for you and me (v. 20), clarifying that this, coupled with the Lord’s Prayer, should be a communal practice for all believers. Jesus prayed

that His disciples would be “*kept in your name*” – an intercession of spiritual protection.

There are many obstacles to spiritual growth, so we must continually pray for protection (vv. 11-16). However, we must also pray for the spiritual growth of others (vv. 17-19).

Jesus prays for His disciples to be unified around the mission and to be sent into the harvest. I can verify personally, some of the best moments in ministry are watching God move others toward personal, spiritual growth. Lastly, we must pray for unity (vv. 20-23). This unity must be around the same mission and the same zeal for the glory of God!

Let’s keep praying! It is an honor to continually bring before Jesus people that we come in contact with, inside or outside of the church. Based on John 17, intercession becomes prayer to God for others’ physical and spiritual needs, for protection, and for God’s glory to show in their lives specifically.



TYLER FRANK
*Young Adult Pastor,
Biltmore Church, Arden*

**Focal passage: Matthew 6:12-13;
Psalm 51:1-7, 10-12**

In this passage, Jesus continues to model prayer and moves to forgiveness. After renewing our hearts for God’s glory (v. 11) and the good of others, we then have the spiritual ability to forgive.

It has been said that forgiveness is an easy word to grasp, but a hard word to practice. Isn’t this true? However, like the ungrateful servant (Matthew 18:21-35), we must continually remind ourselves of God’s grace in spite of our sin.

A good example of this is in the life of David.

After committing sin, he writes Psalm 51 and pours out his heart to God.

The first thing he does is confess his sin and ask for forgiveness (vv. 1-7). There, we see his awareness of sin and he agrees with God about his mistakes (v. 4).

His sin has separated him from God

and he longs to be brought back. By confession and asking for forgiveness, David longs to be welcomed into an intimate relationship with God. The second thing David does is seek restoration and renewal for his soul (vv. 10-12). He desires God’s presence in his life! This is what will keep David on the right path with God.

Like David, Jesus’ prayer to be protected from sin and temptation are the overflow of a life that desires to please God.

In both of these examples (The Lord’s Prayer and David), it becomes evident that they don’t just want God for His benefits, but simply want His manifest presence in their lives. They want God, not just His stuff. This must also be our hearts!

When we ask for forgiveness or an escape from temptation or sin, we must do so with correct motivation. A right relationship with our Creator must be our source of satisfaction.

When we repent and ask for forgiveness, we acknowledge God’s plan and seek His presence in our daily lives.

November 11

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

November 18

With Control

Focal Passage: James 3:1-12

Have you ever gotten a paper cut? Or a tiny splinter of wood in your finger? Even the smallest speck of dust in your eye can cause a great amount of irritation and pain. Isn’t it peculiar how the smallest of causes can have the biggest effects? We wouldn’t think that something as small as our tongues could have detrimental effects, but God says otherwise.

James teaches us that mature believers in Christ are those who have learned to tame their tongue.

Like a small fire that can burn a whole forest, James says, so our tongues have the power to destroy. For those of us God calls to be teachers, taming the tongue comes with a warning that is even more stern.

Those who teach God’s Word will be held accountable for what they teach and are expected to teach truth.

While not all of us will be teachers, learning to control our speech is evidence of the Spirit’s transforming work in our hearts. We know our words can have an impact on those around us

– whether positive or negative. Believers are to be careful in both our choice of words and their delivery because of the harm they could cause to others. James also highlights the contradiction of using our mouths for both praises and curses. The idea of praising God yet tearing down someone made in His image should be ridiculous to us. That would be like drawing fresh water from the ocean – impossible!

Evidence of growing in Christlikeness is to be able to control our speech. We are to be those who are gracious in our words toward others and sound in our teaching, using our tongues as instruments of praise. Taming our tongue looks like refraining from gossip and from foul language. It also looks like gracious speech toward others that encourages and builds up. The author of the text makes it clear that controlling what we say is no easy task. However, we have a God who is willing to help us. Ask Him for help today!



ANTENESHIA SANDERS
*Member,
The Summit Church,
Raleigh-Durham*

Focal Passage: James 4:6-17

Sometimes asking for help is one of the hardest things we have to do. Admitting that we can’t handle something on our own is not easy. Admitting that we are not always strong on our own or not always capable can be a blow to our pride. This is the place, however, where submission to God begins.

Being able to confess our weakness and turn to God is humility. Humility opens the door for God to help us overcome the devil and resist temptation.

Satan is real, and he has a real agenda – to destroy us. Submission is the only way to victory.

God’s power is the only way we can resist the devil. Believers in Christ are called to live in this posture of humility. And as we seek to live lives of submission, we must show grace to others doing the same.

James warns us that judging another

With Submission

brother or sister is to put ourselves in the place of God. There is only one Judge ... and we are not Him!

Submission to God also means we remember how finite we are. In our mundane day-to-day activities, God is still the one who oversees the outcome of our lives.

Therefore, we seek God’s guidance and remember to thank him, lest we become arrogant. Learning to consider God’s sovereignty in every area of our lives is part of submission and humility.

We have a very real enemy who opposes our obedience and love for God. Knowing this, we act on the truth that we know from God’s Word. To not do so is willingly giving in to the devil’s schemes.

There is a day coming in which the Satan’s sway will be no more and our God will overturn every evil thing. While we await that day, however, we must continually come to God for help in overcoming the devil and his attempts to keep us from holiness.

By submitting to God, we rest in the eternal victory Christ secured for us by his life, death and resurrection!

Visit **BR**now.org

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

Survey

Continued from page 1

Worship

Nearly 6 in 10 Americans see valid alternatives to worshipping in a church with other believers.

And more than a third say worship services should be entertaining if churches want to be effective.

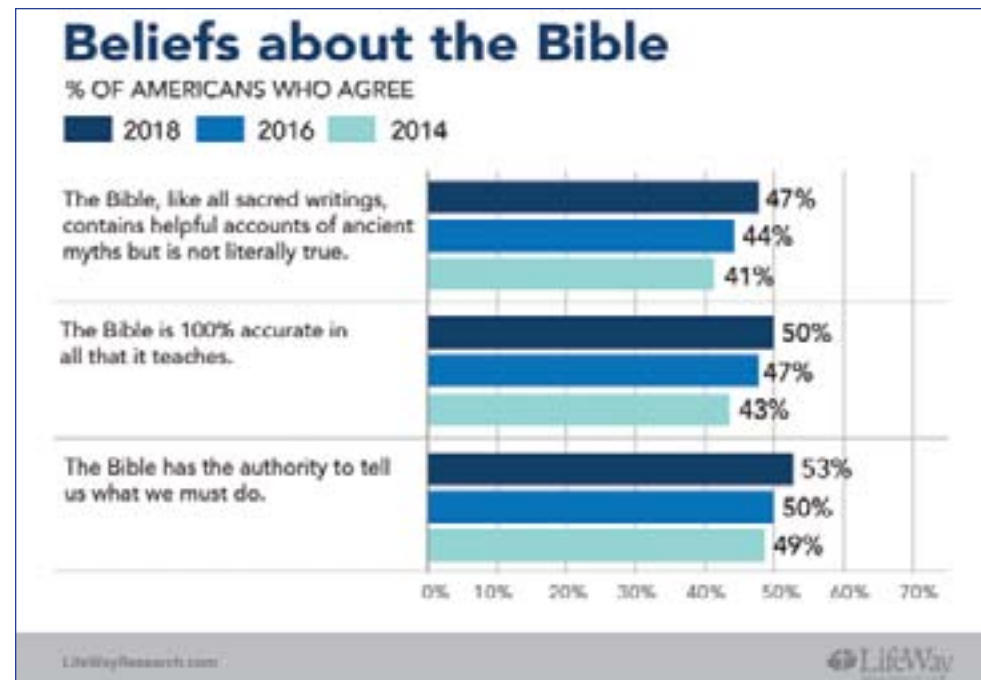
Fifty-eight percent of Americans believe worshipping alone or with one's family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church. Thirty percent disagree while 12 percent are not sure.

Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to disagree (54 percent) that worshipping alone or with family is a valid alternative to corporate worship.

Thirty-seven percent of Americans say churches must provide entertaining worship services if they want to be effective. Half (51 percent) disagree. Americans ages 18-34 are the most likely to agree (46 percent). Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to disagree than those without evangelical beliefs (61 percent versus 49 percent).

"Church attendance has long been a measure of religious activity and devotion," McConnell said.

"Today, less than half of religious service attendees see regularly gathering for



worship with other believers at church as essential."

For more information visit *LifeWayResearch.com* or *TheStateofTheology.com*.

Methodology

A demographically balanced online panel was used for interviewing 3,002 American adults. The surveys were completed April 24-May 4, 2018. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error from the online panel does not exceed +1.9 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. Slight

weights were used to balance gender, age, ethnicity, income, region and religion. Comparisons are made to studies conducted by LifeWay Research in 2016 and 2014 using the same methodology.

Those with evangelical beliefs were determined using the National Association of Evangelicals and LifeWay Research evangelical beliefs research definition.

LifeWay Research is an evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches. **BR**

Greear: 'Lie of the enemy' led to synagogue murders

Baptist Press

Anti-Semitism spouted Oct. 27 by the accused Pittsburgh synagogue murderer of 11 is "a despicable lie of the enemy which we unequivocally reject," Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President J.D. Greear tweeted.

Police have arrested 46-year-old Robert Bowers and described the shootings as a hate crime, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported. Bowers disturbed the Jewish Sabbath at the Tree of Life Synagogue and shouted, "All Jews must die," before opening fire around 10 a.m. Eastern time.

"We grieve with the city of Pittsburgh, the Jewish community, and especially the families of the victims," wrote Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C. "In a nation seemingly full of hatred, we remain committed to demonstrating and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, pursuing religious freedom for all peoples, and praying for a more civil and loving society." **BR**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Pastor

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

Pastor. Wakefield Central Baptist Church in Zebulon, NC, is seeking God's will in finding a Senior Pastor who has a heart for people, is evangelistic and missions-minded. Located in a growing area, we are a traditional, conservative Southern Baptist church that has adopted the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement. We currently have two Sunday morning worship services, both of which incorporate traditional and contemporary music. Our congregation would like our next pastor to have five to ten years' experience as a senior pastor, preferably with a master of divinity or higher degree from a seminary or divinity school. We have an average weekly worship attendance of 140 and average 125 in Sunday School. Please send résumés on or before November 26, 2018, to: Pastor Search Committee, 308 Proctor St., Zebulon, NC 27597.

Tar Heel Baptist Church in Tar Heel, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. The candidate must be called by God, licensed, ordained and equipped to teach and preach the word of God. The successful candidate must possess the spiritual and biblical qualities in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. THBC subscribes to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. Please send résumé to THBCsearch@gmail.com or mail to THBC, PO Box 98, Tar Heel, NC 28392.

Hillcrest Baptist of Kernersville, NC, is in search for a **full-time pastor**. We are a Southern Baptist church prayerfully seeking the man of God in which He has prepared for us. Expository preaching is important to Hillcrest and would need to be equally important in your ministry. For inquiries and requirements please email us at hbcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

Oakwoods Baptist Church, Wilkesboro, N.C., is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor**. We are a rural, conservative, evangelistic, mission-minded church. A résumé with a statement of Christian journey and personal testimony may be mailed to: Oakwoods Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 2385 Brushy Mtn. Road, Wilkesboro, NC 28697. Deadline to receive résumés is November 19, 2018.

Church Staff

New Hope Baptist Church Inc., Denver, NC, is seeking an **Associate Pastor**. A man of God, to help lead the church in growth and vision for the future. Experience and/or degree from accredited/seminary required. Send résumé to: New Hope Baptist Church Inc., 532 North Little Egypt Road, Denver, NC 28037, or srlynn@charter.net.

Marble Springs Baptist Church, a growing church in Marble, NC, is seeking a **Student Pastor**. Please email résumé to office@marblesprings.org. Résumés accepted until 11/23/18.

Millers Creek Baptist Church, a conservative SBC church near Wilkesboro, NC, is prayerfully seeking God's man for **Children's/Discipleship Pastor** (Preschool-Grade 6 and adult discipleship). It is a full-time position focused on leading kids and their families in evangelism, discipleship and missions. Various pastoral roles of visitation and outreach are also included in the job description. Experience and a college/seminary degree is preferred, but not required. Send cover letter and résumé to Millers Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 559, Millers Creek, NC 28651, or by email to shannon.critcher@millerscreekbaptist.org. Résumés will be received through Nov 30.

Miscellaneous

New Book. "A Song for Zipporah" by David Harris. A powerful Christian fiction about the life of Moses' Ethiopian wife before & after they met. A family-friendly book for everyone; amazon.com/dp/0692034498. Digital version at: www.goodbooklets.net.

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

SWBTS

Continued from page 4

“We’re all Christians, and we’re not angry with each other,” said Dickard, an evangelist and retired pastor. “We differ greatly. Bart and I voted in different directions on a number of different issues. That doesn’t make him my enemy.”

Dickard believes the “process” and the “result” of the executive committee’s dealings with Patterson were flawed, including the committee’s decision during a series of meetings in April and May to waive a requirement of SWBTS bylaws that 10 days’ notice be given for all executive committee meetings. He also believes the executive committee violated a requirement of Robert’s Rules of Order that a committee not “pass motions that conflict with the full board.”

Barber said waiver of notice requirements for meetings is “common practice” for boards and that Patterson skipped “numerous” meetings of the executive committee in April and May where “matters of great significance were discussed,” though he could have attended. Then Patterson declined a formal request that he attend an executive committee meeting, Barber said.

Ultimately the relationship between Patterson and the board became unworkable in Barber’s view.

However, Barber noted “people ought to listen” to Dickard’s concerns as they evaluate whether circumstances “were extenuating enough to justify” the executive committee’s departure from standard operating procedures.

One reason to move forward, Dickard said, is that Patterson “didn’t have the votes on the board to re-

main here. ... In May, I thought he had those votes, and the first vote that was taken [in the May 22-23 meeting], he did have them. But today he doesn’t have the votes on the board to still be president.”

Barber said it’s difficult to state one main reason Patterson departed because “we have a 40-member board” and “there are at least 40 answers to the question of why.”

Trustees who vote differently “may agree on 90 percent of what we talked about, but there’s a 10-percent difference that nudges me onto one side of the line and nudges him onto the other,” Barber said.

Trustee chairman Kevin Ueckert told BP, “We had things to discuss that were difficult and challenging. Everybody experienced a great deal of encouragement because of our common belief that God is leading us forward as a seminary around our core mission.”

Other business

Before the board heard a report from its presidential search committee, trustees voted without opposition to “ratify and affirm” Ueckert’s “appointment of the” committee and “pledge support and prayer.”

Trustees laid hands on the search committee and spent nearly 10 minutes praying for them.

Search committee chairman Danny Roberts reported the committee received “dozens of recommendations” during its initial period for receiving public input. The committee is working through those recommendations and will reopen the opportunity for public input if “we go through the process and we

sense God’s man” is not among the initial set of individuals recommended.

“We have made great progress,” Roberts said. “We feel very, very encouraged, and we are firmly convinced the Lord’s going to lead us directly to the man that He has already called. Please continue to pray for us.”

In other business, trustees accepted the recommendation of the Academic Administration Committee for that committee to meet with the administration between now and the spring board meeting to “review urgent proposed changes to the seminary’s curricula and present a recommendation to the executive committee for final adoption of those changes.”

Craig Blaising was promoted to distinguished research professor of theology and Jesse Hendley to Chair of Biblical Theology, effective immediately.

Beyond the general session and committee meetings, trustees also engaged the campus community through such activities as a “Tacos with Trustees” dinner featuring an “Open Mic Night” student talent show, and a faculty-trustee dinner.

Trustees also participated in several working lunches, where they received training and heard from the administration on changes implemented since the summer. Trustee Jonathan Leeman, editorial director for 9Marks, preached in chapel Oct. 16.

Interim Southwestern president Jeffrey Bingham described the trustee meeting as “three days of renewal, three days of refreshment, three days of amazing, God-given unity.” **BR**



7 CHURCHES OF REVELATION

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NOVEMBER 4-5, 2018

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