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IMB taps Paul Chitwood as presidential candidate

By JULIE MCGOWAN | IMB

The International Mission Board (IMB) trustees' presidential search committee announced Nov. 6 that the committee will recommend Paul Chitwood, 48, to be elected as the 173-year-old entity's 13th president.

The vote to elect Chitwood is scheduled for the Nov. 15 plenary session during their IMB board meeting in Richmond.

A former chairman of IMB's board of trustees, Chitwood currently serves as executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the state's largest religious organization with 750,000 members in 2,400 churches and 70 associations. He has served in the role since 2011.

For 18 years, Chitwood served as the pastor of local Kentucky churches of varying sizes: First Baptist Church, Mt. Washington (2003-11), where he is a member; First Baptist Church of Somerset (1999-2003); First Baptist Church of Owenton (1995-99); and South Fork Baptist Church in Owenton (1993-95).

As a pastor, his churches averaged giving 18.5 percent

[See IMB page 13](#)



Paul Chitwood serves as executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. (KBC photo)



BR staff

Sermons and reports at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) 2018 annual meeting sounded a common note throughout the Nov. 5-6 event. The meeting's theme – "Who is my neighbor?" – drew attention to changing demographics across the state, with special emphasis on the opportunities for churches to share the gospel with foreign-born residents.

Lee Pigg, BSC president and pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church in Monroe, took on the issue of discrimination directly.

"Discrimination gets in the way of the gospel," he said in the convention's presidential address. "The way we view other people must become the way God views people ... We are all created in the image of almighty God."

Chuck Register, executive leader for BSC church planting and missions partnerships, noted in his annual report the current population of foreign-born people in North America exceeds the combined populations of Ala-

bama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Register said North Carolina Baptists find themselves in a "redemptive moment."

"We beg you to see your foreign-born neighbors as God sees them," he said, "as people who seek God, who reach out for Him, who desperately need your faithful, Great-Commission witness and your church's faithful, loving ministry."

"Ultimately," Register repeated, "immigration is a gospel issue."

Milton Hollifield, BSC executive director-treasurer, said, "As Christ followers, we must be willing to love and be a neighbor to all people in the world regardless of any labels, including ethnicity or nationality, cultural, moral and religious differences."

Referring to Luke 10:25-37, the passage that inspired the annual meeting's theme, Hollifield said, "... you cannot separate your relationship with God from your relationship with your neighbor."

Read more about how N.C. Baptist leaders encouraged messengers to love their neighbors in this issue. [BR](#)

OFFICERS page 4



Messengers OK \$31M budget, increase SBC allocation

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

N.C. Baptists approved a Cooperative Program (CP) budget for 2019 totaling \$31 million that also increases the percentage allocated to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missions and ministries for the 13th consecutive year.

The budget was adopted Nov. 6 during a business session at the 2018 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) annual meeting held at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C.

While the \$31 million budget total for 2019 remains

unchanged from 2018, the BSC will forward 41.5 percent (\$12.87 million) of CP receipts to the SBC, an increase of 0.5 percent (\$110,000) from this year.

The budget proposal presented to messengers on behalf of the BSC's Board of Directors had called for a 0.35 percent increase to the state convention's SBC allocation.

To accommodate the rise in SBC allocation, three of the convention's institutions and agencies – the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, the N.C. Baptist Foundation and N.C. Baptist Hospital – in addition to

[See Budget page 3](#)

Why I'm thankful to be a North Carolina Baptist

I cannot tell you what an honor it is to be elected as president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina! I look forward to getting to know more and more of you over the next year.

This past convention was one of the most inspiring I have ever attended, beginning with the Pastors' Conference led by Matt Capps. The preachers in this conference modeled for all of us what great expository preaching should be like. They touched my heart and gave my soul deep insights into God's Word.

Lee Pigg was such a blessing in the way he presided over the convention. I loved his smile and was melted by his tears. His sermon for us was nothing less than a home run!

I left this convention even more excited about the privilege of supporting missions through the Cooperative Program.

We saw first hand how God is using this important giving strategy. We were reminded of the good work supported by

the Cooperative Program in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The video from the International Mission Board (IMB) was one of the highlights of the convention. Baptists have brave and committed missionaries all over the world reaching the nations!

Danny Akin's message at the Pastor's Conference and his seminary report to the convention showed us that our SBC dollars are being used by God in a great way to shape the next generation of leaders through our seminaries. I am glad that we not only have a partnership with the SBC, but also a commitment to growing the percentage of what we forward to the SBC continues.

I am also grateful for the privilege of supporting the important mission work being done through our state convention. Our IMB sends missionaries across the world to reach the nations for Christ.

But the nations have come to North Carolina as well. Our state convention is leading great efforts to reach those born

in other countries who now call North Carolina home.

Our North American Mission Board is doing an effective job in planting churches in those areas outside the South that so desperately need Jesus. That means the job of planting churches in North Carolina is now in the hands of North Carolina Baptists. The success rate of N.C. church plants is much higher than the national average.

The theme of this annual meeting "Who is my Neighbor?" reminds us that Jesus gave us both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

We are to both share the gospel and love our neighbors. North Carolina Baptists are strongly committed to loving their neighbors.

We saw the Great Commandment in action when over 100 of those cared for by the Baptist Children's Homes of N.C. gave their report. Their testimonies brought tears to our eyes.

We are loving our neighbors once again through sending out N.C. Baptists with their yellow shirts to minister in disaster relief through Baptists on Mission. Being faithful to the Great Com-

mandment opens doors for us to fulfill the Great Commission.

As inspiring as this convention was for all who attended, every N.C. Baptist can be reminded constantly of what they are supporting through their giving by reading the *Biblical Recorder*. Every two weeks I can read about how God is working through our national convention, our state convention and our local churches. I encourage each of us to regularly read the *BRnow.org* web site and strongly recommend that at least all of our church leaders should be given the printed newspaper as a way to stay on mission with what God has called us to do as Southern Baptists.

Because I believe in the Great Commission, because I believe in the Great Commandment, I am committed to the Cooperative Program. Each of us, no matter the size of our churches, can impact the world through a church by church commitment to giving through the Cooperative Program.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Steve Scoggins is president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and pastor of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C.) **BR**



STEVE SCOGGINS
Guest Column

Thankful for God's character in life's circumstances

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year. There are many reasons why I love this holiday, and those reasons certainly include the wonderful food and fellowship with family and friends around the table together. While we rejoice in the many blessings that God has bestowed upon us, scripture informs us that these blessings flow from the character and nature of God Himself.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

In my personal times of devotion with the Lord, I love to read through the chapters in the Book of Psalms before I study other passages of scripture and devotional readings. Throughout this wonderful book, there are numerous reminders for us as followers

of Christ to be thankful. In fact, Psalm 92 opens with the words, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord." Psalm 100 instructs us to "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise."

Admittedly, sometimes in the midst of life's circumstances it can be hard to express gratitude and thanksgiving at certain times. We even see this in the Psalms.

King David wrote many of the Psalms, and in his writings we see that he experienced and understood the highs and lows that life's circumstances can bring. Throughout the Psalms, we find David offering great words of songs and praise in one instance, and we later see him expressing sorrow and grief over things like abandonment, loneliness and loss.

Yet in the midst of all of the different types of circumstances that David faced, his writings in the Psalms often conclude with encouraging reminders about God. Over and over again, David reminds us of God's love,



mercy, grace, righteousness, power, might, faithfulness and more.

These and other attributes of God can help encourage and sustain us during life's difficult times.

This Thanksgiving season may be one in which you are overflowing with gratitude. Or it may be one in which you are overwhelmed with pain and sorrow. No matter what we are facing in life, we can be encouraged and take comfort in what the Bible says about the character and nature of the God we serve.

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever" – Psalm 107:1 (NKJV). **BR**

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Speaker offers roadside assistance to ministers' wives

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Laughter and fellowship make up each year's meeting of the North Carolina Ministers' Wives. "You're God's girls, and you're influencing so many women," said Shannon Warden, assistant teaching professor in the Wake Forest University Department of Counseling and director of women's ministries at Triad Baptist Church in Kernersville.

This year's meeting – Encouraged to Encourage – was held Nov. 5 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro prior to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting Nov. 5-6. Warden offered "roadside assistance" to the women in attendance. She advised self-care. "You have a lot of pressure on you," she said. "If we can bring lightness and laughter to something, it pushes the darkness back."



Gray Frady was elected president of the North Carolina Ministers' Wives Nov. 5 during the group's annual meeting.

Find something that relieves pressure or offers an escape, like a pedicure, reading a book or working in the garden, said Warden, who previously worked with well-known author Gary Chapman at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

Together they published a book called *Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Became Parents*. They provided a free copy to all the ministers' wives in attendance.

"Y'all have got a lot of goodness to give," Warden said, stressing that she "can't get [that goodness] out except for God."

Refueling is key to health. "You have to refuel all the time," she said.

"If we don't take care of ourselves, we end up paying for it in one way or another."

She urged them to reach out to trusted people in their lives, as well as consulting a medical doctor. There might need to be changes to diet or schedule to help refuel.

Don't delay in asking for someone to help, she said. Warden taught from Luke 24:13-35.

Through this set of verses, Warden said women can learn that Jesus walks with us; He's talking with us. When we doubt, "He doesn't turn his back or separate from us." When we forget, "He patiently reminds us."

Warden also told women to walk with another person. "Don't turn your back or distance yourself," she said. "Patiently remind the person, invite them to recall past provision."

"Roadside assistance" offers encouragement and does not act as the "gas truck," Warden said. That position belongs to God.

"You can't pour the gas you don't have to pour."

The wives collected \$204.73 to go towards scholarship for the summer ministers' wives retreat at Caraway



Shannon Warden wore her roadside assistance vest and put out some cones to share with the North Carolina Baptist Ministers' Wives about how to be roadside assistance for others. (BR photos by Dianna L. Cagle)

Conference Center near Asheboro.

The women in attendance approved several officers during the meeting: Gray Frady, president; Katie Eades, president elect; Cheryl Reeves, vice president; Harriet Lovett, treasurer; Megan Knight, secretary; Tammy Hendrix, publicity chair; Betty Smith, 2019 retreat chair; Ellen Baber and Candy McAnelly, retreat co-chairs; Barber, Central #1; Barbara Murdock, Central #2; Kelly Self, Eastern; Susan Troutman, Western #1; and Judy King, Western #2. **BR**

Budget Continued from page 1

some state convention ministries, received funding decreases.

During the budget presentation and discussion, Clay Warf, a messenger from Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., and executive director of the N.C. Baptist Foundation, made a motion to amend the proposed budget by calling for a \$45,000 reduction in the foundation's allocation and redirecting those funds to the state convention's allocation to the SBC. Warf's motion passed by a wide margin.

The reallocation of those funds brought the state convention's 2019 SBC allocation to 41.5 percent.

Ted Kostich, pastor and messenger from Cornerstone Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., made a subsequent motion to increase the overall budget by \$45,000 and restore that amount to N.C. Baptist Foundation's allocation. Kostich's motion did not pass.

Warf's amendment restored the SBC funding allocation to the percentage that had originally been proposed by the BSC's Budget Committee and endorsed by the BSC's Executive Committee earlier this year. The original budget proposal also called for cuts to all state convention

ministry areas as well as all institutions and agencies of the convention, which include the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, the *Biblical Recorder*, the N.C. Baptist Foundation and N.C. Baptist Hospital.

During the meeting of the BSC's full Board of Directors in September, board members voted to amend the original budget proposal by restoring some of the funding cuts to specific institutions and agencies through a reduction of \$45,000 (0.15 percent) in the allocation to the SBC.

The 2019 budget adopted by messengers restored the SBC percentage allocation to the Budget Committee's original proposal of 41.5 percent while also maintaining the increased allocations to the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, the *Biblical Recorder* and Fruitland Baptist Bible College that the board approved in September.

Ashley Clayton, vice president for Cooperative Program and stewardship for the SBC Executive Committee (EC), said in a presentation that N.C. Baptists have given \$1.5 billion through the CP since the EC began keeping records.

A testimony of generosity

Even though messengers adopted a budget that remained flat from last year and called for cuts in many ministry areas, Jeff Isenhour, pastor of Arran Lake Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C., and chairman of the Budget Committee, praised N.C. Baptists for their generosity.

Isenhour reported that Cooperative Program support from N.C. Baptist churches totaled a record \$11.89 million for the SBC's fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

That amount eclipsed last year's record giving total by 1.6 percent, Isenhour said.

Additionally, N.C. Baptist churches ranked first among all state conventions in giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions last year.

Giving from N.C. Baptists totaled more than \$13.6 million for the Lottie Moon offering and more than \$6.2 million for the Annie Armstrong offering.

Isenhour also noted that of the \$48.77 million received from N.C. Baptist churches in combined Cooperative

Program and special offering receipts last year, 65.7 percent – more than \$32 million – went directly to support SBC causes, which is the largest percentage in the BSC's history.

"These numbers testify to the generosity of N.C. Baptist churches and our desire to reach our neighbors here and around the world," Isenhour said.

Additional budget measures

In a separate measure related to the 2019 budget, messengers voted that any undesignated CP receipts in excess of \$31 million will be allocated with one-third going to the SBC, one-third to church planting in North Carolina and one-third to be divided equally among the Baptist Children's Homes, the *Biblical Recorder* and Fruitland Baptist Bible College.

Messengers also adopted a goal of \$2.1 million for the 2019 North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO), which remains unchanged from the 2018 goal. NCMO supports disaster relief and the 18 different ministries of N.C. Baptists on Mission, church planting and a variety of mission projects among N.C. Baptist associations. **BR**

N.C. messengers elect new slate of convention officers

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

A total of 1,425 messengers from N.C. Baptist churches elected a new slate of officers during the 2018 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) annual meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 6 in Greensboro, N.C.

Steve Scoggins, pastor of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C., was elected convention president.

Micheal Pardue, pastor of First Baptist Icard in Connelly Springs, N.C., was elected first vice president.

Matthew Ledbetter, pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church in Sylva, N.C., was elected second vice president.

Scoggins and Ledbetter both ran unopposed.

Pardue was elected over Perry Brindley, associational mission strategist for the Buncombe Baptist Association, in the

only race that had multiple candidates.

Of the 697 ballots that were properly cast, Pardue received 418 votes (60 percent), and Brindley received 279 votes (40 percent). Ten ballots were improperly cast.

Scoggins was nominated by Michael Barrett, a messenger from Pleasant Garden Baptist Church in Pleasant Garden, N.C.

Pardue was nominated by Ed Yount, a messenger from Woodlawn Baptist Church in Conover, N.C.

Ledbetter was nominated by Jeff Isenhour, a messenger from Arran Lake Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C.

The 2019 BSC annual meeting is scheduled for Nov. 11-12 at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C., and will feature a commissioning service for church planters in the place of a convention sermon. **BR**



New Baptist State Convention of North Carolina officers, from left: Matthew Ledbetter, second vice president; Steve Scoggins, president; and Micheal Pardue, first vice president. (BSC photo by K Brown)

Breakout, luncheons draw annual meeting attendees

BSC Communications & BR staff

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's (BSC) annual meeting Nov. 5-6 featured more than 40 breakout sessions and a number of auxiliary events that covered a wide range of topics. Below are descriptions of a limited selection of breakouts and other events.

A Conversation with Russell Moore

Matt Capps, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Apex, hosted a breakout session with Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. The two leaders discussed how Christians can most faithfully live in the current American social and political environment.

Moore warned attendees about "the most dangerous heresy that ever came through American evangelicalism." He said it was the teaching that a person can embrace Jesus Christ as a savior, but not as Lord. Moore related that warning to the theme of the 2018 BSC annual meeting – "Who is my neighbor?" – explaining that a Christian's love for God, or faith in Christ, is inseparable from a Christian's love for neighbor, or obedience to Christ.

Moore also pointed out ways in which Americans are losing their sense of identity and community in religion, and instead finding it in other interests such as sports or politics. He called it "a kind of idolatry."

"If you belong to a political party that you never disagree with," Moore said, "then you either have an inerrant political party, which is more of a religion, or you are accommodating yourself to everything in that political party."

Young Pastors Network Luncheon

The Young Pastors Network hosted a lunch on Nov. 5 that included a panel discussion moderated by Ronnie Parrott, pastor of Christ Community Church in Huntersville.

The panelists were Moore; Clay Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church in Matthews; Brian Upshaw, team leader

for the BSC disciple-making team; and Amy Whitfield, director of marketing and communications at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS).

The conversation touched on how and why local churches partner with the state convention, in addition to broader topics such as women's involvement in the Southern Baptist Convention and how pastors should navigate the current U.S. political environment.

When asked why he decided to become involved in Baptist life at the state and national levels, Smith said he wanted to be part of the solution, not the problem.

"It is really easy to stand on the side and throw rocks," he said.

"It is really easy to get on your Twitter feed and prove just how incredible you are. The reality is, none of that matters. The only thing that matters are the people who have chosen to be in the room when decisions are made and are willing to put skin in the game."

"What I've found here in North Carolina is this is a very receptive, positive, healthy convention of churches. It's not perfect – no convention is – but at the same time it's a convention that values young leaders. They want you here. They want to hear your voice."

Contextual Awareness in Discipleship

Walter Strickland, SEBTS assistant professor of theology and associate vice president for diversity, led a breakout session on "Contextual Awareness in Discipleship."

Strickland noted how Christians should always be recognizable as Christians by their character, but they are significantly influenced by the cultures in which they live.

"Godliness is not captive to culture," he said, "but it is expressed through cultural realities."

See Breakout page 10



Ronnie Parrott, from left, pastor of Christ Community Church in Huntersville, moderates a panel with Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Clay Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church in Matthews; Brian Upshaw, team leader for the Baptist State Convention of N.C. disciple-making team; and Amy Whitfield, director of marketing and communications at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The panel was hosted during the Young Pastors Network lunch Nov. 5. (BR photo by Steve Cooke)

Key leaders focus on discrimination, Kingdom first

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Production Editor

Two key North Carolina leaders challenged messengers to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) annual meeting Nov. 6 to confront discrimination and pursue holiness.

“Discrimination was a problem in James’ day,” said Lee Pigg, pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church in Monroe and president of the BSC, who led messengers through James 2:1-13 on the importance of loving our neighbors. “We must face this fact: discrimination gets in the way of the gospel.

“It hurts people. It separates people. It must be viewed as sinful behavior. It leads to war. It leads to political turmoil. It leads to family disputes.”

During his presidential address Pigg encouraged leaders to address the issue from churches rather than letting Washington, D.C., weigh in on the issue.

“We discriminate based on height, weight, appearance, disability, social status, economic status ... yes, even religion,” he said. “The Bible says we are to never show partiality.”

Instead, Pigg urged messengers to view people the way God does.

“We are all created in the image of almighty God,” he said. “That’s the fact.”

Pigg said people make three presumptions.

“We presume ... that discrimination is not a sin, but it is,” he said. “Sometimes we blame it on where we grew up.”

People “presume that discrimination is not significant,” he said, and they justify their thoughts and actions by saying, “It’s not like we committed murder or adultery. It’s still breaking God’s law.”

The third presumption is that discrimination is not serious, but Pigg drew attention to James 2:13 where it says “judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.”

John Mark Harrison, former pastor of Apex Baptist Church, homed in on two verses – Hebrews 12:1-2 – during his convention sermon.

Harrison, who has led Apex Baptist for six years, recently announced he and his family will be moving to First Baptist Church Concord in Knoxville, Tenn. He questioned messengers, “What does my neighbor need from me?”

Christ followers need to engage, encourage and strengthen their neighbors. “Let’s decide today to be faithful to King Jesus, to be faithful with everything that we have, with every day that we have,” he said.

Harrison urged a Kingdom-first mentality.

“He’s encouraging us to run the race to which God has called us,” he said. “We are a part of a mighty movement.”

In today’s culture there is a temptation for self-focused religious experience, but Harrison said “a Kingdom-first mentality, it really says that I will not chase my desires for my life, that I’ll surrender my life to Christ ... because His life in and through me is what my soul is longing for.”

“Everything in our culture and society says build



John Mark Harrison, former pastor of Apex Baptist Church, gives the Baptist State Convention of N.C. annual meeting sermon Nov. 6. (BR photo by Dianna L. Cagle)

your kingdom here, build your kingdom now.”

Harrison urged messengers to “get to the end of ourselves and be completely dependent on God. It’s going to cost everything.”

Second, believers should pursue holiness. “We don’t talk a lot about living holy lives anymore. Our sin is crushing us. We’re running and running and running ... He has paid the price for you, and He will set you free. His sacrifice was sufficient.”

Third, believers need to run the race with endurance.

“Be a doctor that glorifies God,” Harrison said.

“Be a homemaker that glorifies God. Be an auto mechanic that glorifies God. Run your race. Stop looking ... beside you.

“You should be who God has wired and made you to be. This is how we are faithful. Do what you’ve been created to do; do what you’re wired to do. Don’t twist yourself up in knots trying to be someone else.”

Harrison offered a perfect example of faithfulness: Jesus.

“He’s the example of a Kingdom-first mentality,” he said. “In His enduring the cross, Jesus Christ was an example of faithfulness to every single one of us.

“Let’s focus on Jesus, North Carolina Baptists.

We live in a world where so many things divide us, but what if we resolved in our hearts and our lives to be Jesus people above everything else. He is simply enough.” **BR**



Lee Pigg shares with messengers during his presidential address. (BR photo by Steve Cooke)



David Bruce, center, executive assistant to Billy Graham, accepts a plaque with a resolution honoring the late evangelist. Milton A. Hollifield Jr., left, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) executive director-treasurer, and Jonathan Blaylock, right, pastor of West Canton Baptist Church in Canton, made the presentation during the BSC annual meeting. (BSC photo by K Brown)

N.C. Baptists adopt resolution honoring Billy Graham

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Two days before what would have been the late Billy Graham’s 100th birthday, N.C. Baptists adopted a resolution honoring the life, ministry and legacy of the renowned evangelist during the opening session of the 2018 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) annual meeting Nov. 5 in Greensboro, N.C.

Graham was a native North Carolinian who God raised up to preach the gospel around the world through numerous evangelistic crusades.

During his decades-long ministry, Graham preached to an estimated 215 million people in more than 185 countries and territories.

Born Nov. 7, 1918, in Charlotte, N.C., Graham died earlier this year on Feb. 21. He was 99.

The “Resolution in Appreciation for the Life of Billy Graham” recognized Graham “as a beloved Southern Baptist who traveled the world sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.”

It also called on individuals “to celebrate Billy Graham’s legacy by committing ourselves to sharing the gospel, living lives of personal holiness, and finding joy through an eternal peace with God accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

In recommending the resolution to messengers attending the annual meeting, Jonathan Blaylock, pastor of West Canton Baptist Church in Canton, N.C., and chairman of the BSC’s Committee on Resolutions and Memorials, said he felt the resolution “needed to be passed this year” as a way to recognize and honor Graham.

Messengers adopted the resolution in what appeared to be a unanimous vote.

Following the resolution’s adoption, BSC Executive Director Treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr. presented a plaque engraved with the full text of the resolution to David Bruce, who served as Graham’s longtime executive assistant.

Bruce said Graham was proud to be a North Carolina Baptist and that Graham attended several N.C. Baptist state convention meetings during his lifetime.

The full text of the resolution was previously published in the *Biblical Recorder* and is available online. **BR**

Messengers hear reports from convention ministries

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Representatives from several ministry groups of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) gave updates to messengers during reports throughout the 2018 BSC annual meeting held Nov. 5-6 at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C.

Following are highlights and summaries of those reports.

Church planting and missions partnerships

Describing the present day as a “redemptive moment in history,” Chuck Register, executive leader for Church Planting and Missions Partnerships, structured his report around the theme that “immigration is a gospel issue.”

“We must view our foreign-born neighbors through the lens of scripture,” Register said.

Register highlighted the growing population of international residents in North Carolina, the United States and North America, and shared updates on how N.C. Baptists are engaging them with the gospel through church planting, collegiate ministry and more.

Register said there are more than 1.5 million foreign-born residents in North Carolina, which include 162 unreached people groups that have been identified throughout the state.

Of those unreached people groups, 86 have been engaged with the gospel, Register said.

Since 2014, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has welcomed 494 new churches and 65 percent of those are non-Anglo congregations, Register said.

Those new churches have resulted in nearly 25,000 professions of faith during that same time period.

Additionally, the number of college campuses in North Carolina that have a reproducing gospel presence has grown from nine to 51 since 2014, Register said. North Carolina also ranks third in the



Chuck Register, executive leader for Church Planting and Missions Partnerships with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), shares with messengers of the annual meeting during the BSC Board of Director's report. (BR photos by Steve Cooke)

number of international students reached with the gospel.

Evangelism and discipleship

Lynn Sasser, executive leader for the Evangelism and Discipleship Group, shared how several BSC ministry teams are helping N.C. Baptists break down cultural barriers, love their neighbors and engage people with the gospel.

Sasser reported on a new initiative related to training in the area of cultural mastery, and he reported on how God is working in the lives of youth and students, as well as in the area of church health and revitalization.

Sasser said that since 2014, more than 1,800 students have made professions of faith in Christ during youth weeks that are held annually at Fort Caswell through the state convention's Youth Evangelism and Discipleship Ministry, also known as Be Do Tell. Additionally, more than 7,700 other youth rededicated their lives to Christ and more than 1,200



LYNN SASSER

others responded to a call to ministry during the same time period.

Sasser also said that since the convention launched its church health and revitalization ministry in December 2015, more than 2,100 leaders representing nearly 850 different churches and Baptist associations have been assisted in revital-

ization efforts.

“Our heart is to help you become a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and create a disciple-making culture in your church,” Sasser said.

Baptists on Mission

Richard Brunson, executive director for N.C. Baptist Men (NCBM), also known as Baptists on Mission, shared an update on NCBM's 18 different ministries, including the recent disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence.

Brunson said N.C. Baptist disaster relief volunteers served more than 1 million meals to hurricane victims in eastern North Carolina and have completed more than 3,000 recovery jobs including mud-outs, tear-outs and more.

Brunson said more than 2,000 jobs remain open and lots of volunteers are still needed to serve.

Visit baptistsonmission.org. BR



RICHARD BRUNSON

“Our heart is to help you become a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and create a disciple-making culture in your church.”

— Lynn Sasser

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Loving God means loving neighbors, Hollifield says

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Loving our neighbors means showing compassion and care to those around us who are in need, particularly those whose backgrounds are different than our own.

“As Christ followers, we must be willing to love and be a neighbor to all people in their world regardless of any labels, including ethnicity or nationality, cultural, moral and religious differences,” said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

“We must ask ourselves, ‘Do I love Jesus enough to obey Him by getting involved with individuals in need?’”

Hollifield’s remarks came during his report to messengers Nov. 5 at the conclusion of the first day of the BSC’s annual meeting at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C.

During his address, Hollifield offered an answer to the question posed by the event theme, “Who Is My Neighbor?”, which was derived from the parable of the good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37.

“The answer to that question, according to the lesson Jesus taught, is that anyone you know who is in need is your neighbor,” Hollifield said.

Hollifield cited several other scripture



Milton A. Hollifield Jr., Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) executive director-treasurer, addresses messengers of the annual meeting. He shared about the evangelism emphasis and an effort to evaluate the convention’s strategy for next year’s meeting. (BR photos by Steve Cooke)

passages from both the Old and New Testaments to demonstrate that Christians are called to love their neighbors.

“The truth of this passage in Luke 10 is you cannot separate your relationship with God from your relationship with your neighbor,” Hollifield said.

Hollifield noted that different people may have different needs, but everyone has spiritual needs.

“Jesus cared about people in need, and He took time to show He cared,” Hollifield said.

Evangelism emphasis

Hollifield also challenged N.C. Baptists to focus on reversing the declines in evangelism and baptisms that are taking place in Southern Baptist churches

across the country by encouraging them to have more “gospel conversations.”

Hollifield defined a gospel conversation as one in which a person tells someone about Christ and gives them an opportunity to accept His free gift of salvation.

“I challenge each of you to become more sensitive to people around you and find out if they know Christ as Savior,” Hollifield said,

Hollifield concluded his address by encouraging messengers to love their neighbors, help meet their needs, and lead them to establish a relationship with Christ and help them grow spiritually.

Strategy evaluation

Hollifield also announced that the state convention will begin a formal evaluation of its strategy of “impacting lostness through disciple-making” that was approved by the BSC’s Board of Directors and messengers in 2013 and implemented beginning in January 2014.

The results of the evaluation will be presented to messengers at next year’s BSC annual meeting, scheduled for Nov. 11-12, 2019, in Greensboro, N.C.



M.C. Ko, left, pastor of The Connect Church in Durham, registers as a messenger for the 2018 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting in Greensboro. Ko was among 520 pastors, 213 pastor spouses, 251 other church staff and 441 laity to register as messengers for a total of 1,425. A total of 257 visitors registered as well for attendance of 1,682 during the meeting.

Hollifield said the evaluation will involve two elements – a survey and personal interviews.

Individuals wishing to participate in the survey or interviews are encouraged to share their interest with the state convention through a special email address at strategyevaluation@ncbaptist.org. **BR**

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Pastors see economic turnaround in 2018 giving

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

The economic recovery appears to have reached the offering plate, according to a new study released Nov. 7.

Today, 8 in 10 Protestant pastors (79 percent) say the total offerings at their church this year are at or above last year's levels, including 42 percent who say this year is ahead of last year. Few pastors (15 percent) say giving is not keeping pace with last year. This latest survey from LifeWay Research was conducted Aug. 29 to Sept. 11.

Those positive giving numbers have followed the economic upturn, noted Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"The increases in offerings so many churches are experiencing coincide with what most economists refer to as 'full employment,' as well as increased wage growth in 2018," McConnell said.

"Inflation has allowed social security recipients – likely some of the most faithful donors in many churches – to receive cost of living increases above 2 percent for two years in a row."

Some pastors are more likely to say their offerings have increased than others. Those with churches of 100 or more attendees (49 percent) are more likely to say their 2018 offerings are ahead of 2017 compared to smaller churches (36 percent).

African American pastors (42 percent) are most likely to say their offerings are below last year.

Half of Pentecostals (54 percent) and Baptists (50 percent) say they are collecting more than 2017, while fewer Presbyterian/Reformed (34 percent), Lutheran (33 percent) and Methodist (31 percent) pastors say the same.

Those churches who are seeing an increase may not want to bank on its continuing, McConnell said. "This could be short-lived as wage growth adjusted for inflation has been about zero in recent months."

In the meantime, however, most pastors are meeting their budget so far this year.

Seventy-seven percent of pastors say their church's 2018 offerings have been at least what they budgeted, including 29 percent who say they've exceeded their budget. About 2 in 10 (19 percent) say giving is lower than budgeted.

Meeting budgets and bringing in additional money may grant some struggling churches additional time and opportunity to recover, McConnell said.

Economy perception

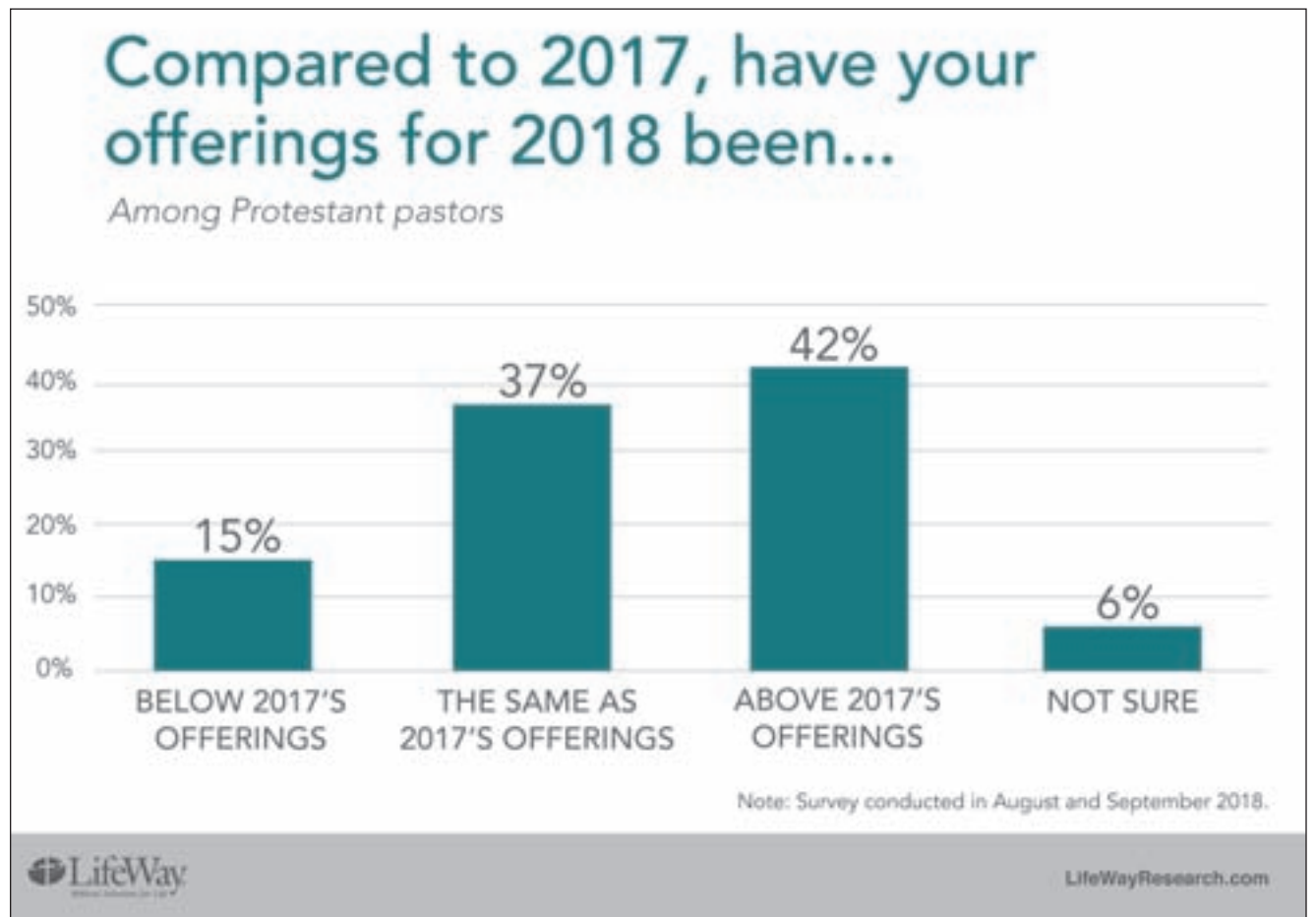
The increase in giving has buoyed pastors' perceptions of the economy. For the first time since LifeWay Research began asking pastors economic questions in 2009, more pastors say the economy is having a positive rather than a negative impact on their church.

Today, 45 percent of pastors see the economy as benefiting their church, while 35 percent say it is having no impact.

In 2010 in the midst of the Great Recession, 80 percent of pastors said the economy was negatively affecting their church. That number has been falling steadily since then.

Last year, 35 percent said the economy had a negative impact. This year, that number fell by more than half to 14 percent.

The shift in pastors' attitudes about the economic



impact on their congregation is long overdue, McConnell said.

"Most trackable forces in the economy have been positive for several years. Pastors' perceptions are finally catching up to the economic reality," he said.

However, some pastors are more likely than others to see the benefits for their congregation.

Half of pastors of churches with more than 100 in attendance say the economy is positively impacting their congregation, compared to 40 percent of pastors of churches with fewer than 100 attendees.

African American pastors are nearly three times as likely as white pastors to say the economy is impacting their church negatively (36 percent vs. 13 percent).

More than half of Pentecostals (64 percent) and Baptists (54 percent) say they see the economy impacting their church positively, while around a third of Lutherans (38 percent), Presbyterian/Reformed (35 percent)

and Methodists (31 percent) agree.

And pastors do not foresee the recent tax reform changing things for their church. Half (49 percent) say they do not expect it to impact their congregation. A quarter (26 percent) believe it will have a positive influence, while 12 percent say they expect it to have a negative impact.

"The full impact of the tax reform on church giving will not be known until 2018 is complete," McConnell said, "but pastors are optimistic it will not hurt their church's finances."

Methodology

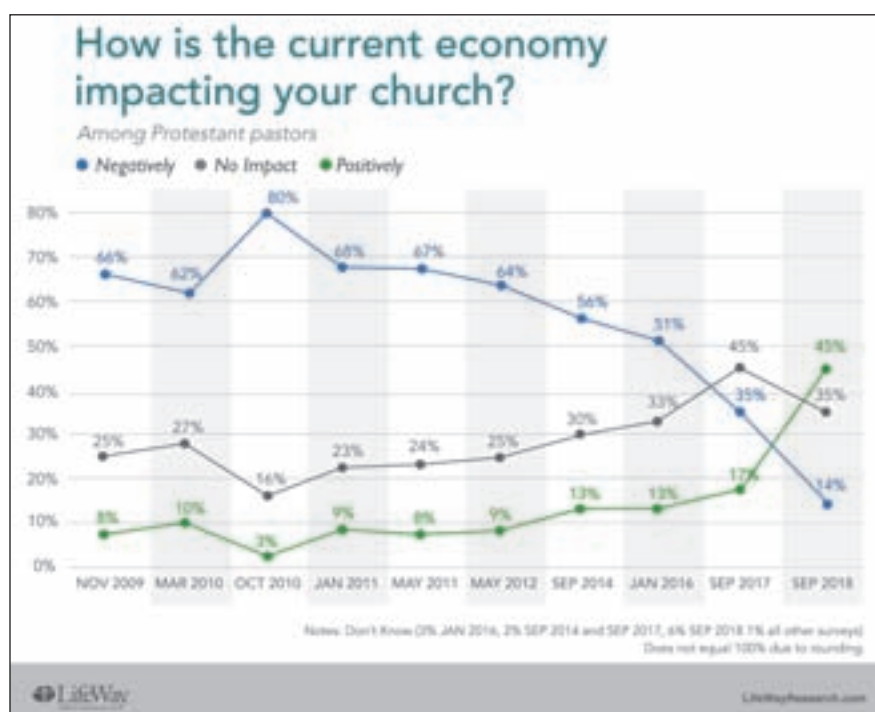
The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted Aug. 29 to Sept. 11.

The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size. Each interview was conducted

with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted by region to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.

Comparisons are also made to telephone surveys conducted in Nov. 5-12, 2009; March 1-9, 2010; Oct. 7-14, 2010; Jan. 17-27, 2011; May 18-25, 2011; May 23-31, 2012; Sept. 11-18, 2014; Jan. 8-22, 2016; and Aug. 30-Sept. 18, 2017, using the same methodology.

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



Vote splits Congress; judicial outlook called hopeful

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

Voters returned control of the U.S. House of Representatives to the Democratic Party Nov. 6, but seemed to have strengthened the Republican Party's hold on the Senate and on its ability to confirm conservative Supreme Court justices and federal judges.

Meanwhile, at least two Southern Baptists won first-time seats in Congress, and two states approved pro-life measures among a host of ballot initiatives that were decided.

Republicans lost their majority in the House for the first time since the 2010 election during President Obama's first term. Democrats held a 225-197 advantage with 13 races still undecided at publication time.

In the Senate, meanwhile, the GOP looks like it will add to its advantage with three races still undetermined. With a current, 51-seat majority, Republicans appear likely to add two or three members to their 51-46 lead, CNN reported.

Democratic control of the House will place social conservatives at a distinct disadvantage on such issues as abortion and religious freedom, but GOP command of the Senate will provide President Donald Trump with the continuing opportunity to place on the Supreme Court justices who interpret the Constitution based on its original meaning. With a narrow majority, the Senate has confirmed Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the high court in the first two years of the Trump presidency.

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore said, "[T]hough the results of elections yesterday resulted in a divided Congress, our commitments as Christians remain unchanged.

"We look forward to working with every elected official sent to D.C. as we carry out our mission bearing witness to the gospel and its implications for the public square," said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, in written comments for Baptist Press (BP).

At the state level, Moore said he "was heartened to see" Alabama and West Virginia, the states that approved pro-life initiatives, "make clear that abortion has no place in their state constitutions."

He also said he was encouraged Louisiana overturned a 138-year-old, Jim Crow-era law and returned to "a unanimous jury system of equity and justice for all."



Mark Harris declares victory in North Carolina's Ninth District over Dan McCready. (*The Charlotte Observer* screen capture)

Despite the House takeover by a party committed to abortion rights, the Senate results constituted "a clear victory for the pro-life movement," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, in a written statement.

"In 2010, there was not a single pro-life woman in the U.S. Senate. Next year there will be at least four pro-life women" there.

Members of Southern Baptist churches won races for both the Senate and House. Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, a member of Second Baptist Church in Houston, defeated Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke by less than 3 percent of the vote to gain re-election.

In House races, at least two Southern Baptists, both Republicans, won election for the first time:

- **Mark Harris**, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., claimed victory over Democrat Dan McCready in North Carolina's Ninth District. Harris led by fewer than 2,000 votes.

- **Ross Spano**, a member of Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla., defeated Democrat Kirsten Carlson by 6 percent in Florida's 15th District.

Harris, a former president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, told BP the difference in the election was "the people got our message and understood that this was a directional election, and they wanted to choose the direction that was going to continue to move our country forward, to move our district forward.

"I think there's support for our president's agenda."

Harris resigned as pastor in 2017 to run for the House and faced campaign

attack ads that used excerpts from a 2013 sermon he preached on gender roles in marriage based on Ephesians 5.

"I also think that there was a certain amount of support that we were able to pick up because of the backlash of the way our opponent's campaign operated with their ads that took my sermons out of context and ... [they] were very disturbing to a lot of us," Harris said.

Regarding taking a seat in a House controlled by Democrats, Harris said his hope is "we will be able to find some issues and areas maybe that we can work together on.

"There's going to be a lot of freshmen in Congress this time in the House, Democrats and Republicans, ... and I think it's going to be important for us to begin to think and look at how we can form relationships and begin to find those areas that we can work together in and hopefully move an agenda forward.

"I don't want to prejudge anybody just because they have a 'D' by their name that we can't work together for religious freedom, that we can't work together for the sanctity of life and that we can't work together on pro-family issues," Harris said. "And so I think building the relationships is going to be very important."

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California said on election night, according to *The Washington Post*, "We will strive for bipartisanship, seeking common ground, as we are responsible to do. But when we cannot find that common ground, standing our ground."

Pelosi is expected to seek the majority leader's post she surrendered when Democrats lost the House in 2010.

In gubernatorial races, Republicans held a 25-23 advantage at publication time.

Among the Democrats elected to office in Colorado was the country's first openly gay governor, Democratic Rep. Jared Polis.

Voters in 37 states made decisions on 155 initiatives that included these issues:

- **Abortion:** Alabama and West Virginia approved amendments that make clear their state constitutions do not provide a right to abortion or require its public funding. The votes prepare those states for a future in which the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion is overturned, returning the regulation of the procedure to the states. Oregon, meanwhile, easily defeated a measure to ban state funding of abortion.

- **Marijuana:** Michigan voters endorsed legalization of recreational marijuana while North Dakota rejected such a measure. The medicinal use of marijuana won approval in Missouri and Utah, although two related proposals in Missouri went down to defeat.

- **Gambling:** Arkansas passed a proposal legalizing casino gambling in four counties, while Idaho rejected a proposition to legalize betting on historical horse racing. Florida approved an amendment banning wagering on dog races, as well as another to give voters the sole right to authorize casino gambling.

- **Ten Commandments:** Alabama voters passed a constitutional amendment permitting the display of the Ten Commandments on public property, including public schools. **BR**

Biblical Recorder skips last December issue

BR staff

The *Biblical Recorder* will not publish the Dec. 29 issue of the news journal in order to allow our staff as well as our print and mailing partners time with their families on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Two other issues dated Dec. 1 and Dec. 15 will be published on schedule. The next issue

will be published on schedule for Jan. 12, 2019.

Please visit the *Recorder's* website, *BRnow.org*, for updated news stories. If you have any news to share with the *Recorder*, please email editor@BRnow.org.

Thank you for depending on the *Biblical Recorder* as your source for news and information with a biblical worldview. **BR**

Breakouts

Continued from page 4

Strickland said evangelicals often perceive discipleship and Bible interpretation as practices that occur outside the influence of culture, but that misunderstanding can lead believers to unwittingly normalize the culture in which they live.

“There is no single culture that has a corner on faithfulness to Christ,” Strickland said.

He encouraged attendees to ask simple questions to determine if they unknowingly establish a specific culture as normative: Who occupies the most celebrated pulpits? What is the cultural background of people in denominational offices? Who publishes the books you read? Who are seminary professors?

“If they have a similar background,” Strickland explained, “that’s probably the culture you see as normal for the Christian faith.”

Heavenly Banquet

Attendees at this year’s Heavenly Banquet experienced a fresh take on the sold-out event. While recent years featured guest speakers, the Nov. 6 luncheon, which is organized by the BSC Church Strengthening Team and celebrates international diversity, allowed for a more interactive hour of fellowship.

A facilitator at every table welcomed attendees as they sat down and introduced them to others at the table. During the meal, facilitators presented three questions for groups to discuss regarding their different backgrounds, culture and how they invite others to share in it.

The banquet concluded with several participants throughout the hall voicing what they learned about those they met and the similarities they shared. All



Russell Moore, left, discusses a question during “A Conversation with Russell Moore” breakout session Nov. 5, prior to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting. Matt Capps, right, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Apex, hosted the breakout session. (BR photos by Steve Cooke)

attendees received a folder of resources on welcoming neighbors and practicing hospitality.

How can we be Great Commission neighbors?

A breakout session titled “How can we be Great Commission neighbors?” featured speakers Andrew Ivester, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Durham, N.C., and Melissa Childers, International Mission Board (IMB) emeritus missionary and lay leader from Durham, N.C.

Ivester and Childers encouraged attendees to live out what it means to be Great Commission neighbors through practical examples and application.

With experience in multihousing ministry, Ivester and Childers shared their experiences. They talked about how to engage neighbors as a church body and how to create urgency in the congrega-



Andrew Ivester, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Durham, leads a breakout session on neighbors with Melissa Childers, an International Mission Board emeritus missionary and lay leader from Durham.

tion to reach the community.

Childers noted that it is not enough to pray for our neighbors. We must pray with intentionality while also making plans to go to them. We must draw our neighbors to Christ with the end goal of being sent out together for Christ.

Ivester said people do not attend church for three reasons – they feel unwelcome, they feel like they do not belong and they feel like they do not have anything to offer. He said that people are looking for warm, friendly encounters and that what people need most are relationships. “It will cost you something relationally,” Ivester said. “Financially, it’s free to be good neighbors.”

He urged others to make the ministry as simple as possible so that it can be reproducible. Ivester and Childers encouraged others that the lost can be reached with perseverance, faithfulness and unity in the body of Christ.

Loving Our Unchurched Neighbors in Rural N.C.

Jonathan Blaylock, pastor of West Canton Baptist Church, reminded participants at a breakout session titled “Loving Our Unchurched Neighbors in Rural North Carolina” of three significant factors to being a good neighbor, particularly in rural areas: sacrifice, quality and relationship.

He pointed back to the annual meeting theme based on the story of the Good Samaritan and emphasized the quality of service and generosity to neighbors. Blaylock also referred to Matthew 22:39, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” and gave the example of spending as much money to meet someone else’s needs as you would your own.

If you’re having steak for dinner, he said, why give your neighbor a can of beans? Practical settings in which to serve neighbors in rural towns include fire and police departments, jails, local schools and the foster care system. **BR**

Mars Hill University inaugurates 22nd president

Mars Hill Communications



Tony Floyd, the newest president for Mars Hill University, addresses the audience at his Nov. 9 inauguration. (Mars Hill University photo)

A rainy day did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm as John Anthony “Tony” Floyd, J.D., was inaugurated as Mars Hill University’s 22nd president Nov. 9.

In his address to the assembled audience, Floyd laid out his vision for the institution’s future – a vision that puts its focus squarely on its students, whom Floyd calls “his Lions.”

“I dream that I will be part of a university that will not be complacent and will try to scale new heights,” Floyd said.

“I dream about an institution that won’t just check off boxes and hand students diplomas and send them on out. I dream of an institution that will live its mission; will do what it says it’s going to do.”

Floyd used the “dream” terminology because he says he doesn’t consider himself to be a visionary, but rather someone who dreams of what Mars Hill can do and become, under his leadership.

Floyd is only the sixth president of Mars Hill University since 1897. His immediate predecessor, Dan Lunsford, was present for the inauguration, as were the past three first ladies of the institution.

Tony Floyd earned his bachelor of science degree in business management from the University of South Carolina, and his juris doctor from Campbell University. Following a 23-year career in private law practice, he joined Coker College in 2012 as vice president of administration and legal counsel, and was named executive vice president in 2015.

While at Coker, he also served as coordinator of the political science major and coordinator of the pre-law specialization.

The American Council on Education (ACE) named Floyd an ACE Fellow for 2014-15. The ACE Fellows Program provides an immersive leadership training experience to senior leaders to help prepare them for the challenges facing higher education.

He began his tenure at Mars Hill June 1. **BR**

Building honors 105-year-old M.O. Owens

By K. ALLAN BLUME | BR Editor

Gaston Christian School (GCS) in Gastonia honored M.O. Owens Jr. in a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new 26,000-square-foot facility Nov. 8.

The Dr. M.O. Owens Worship and Fine Arts Center bears the name of a North Carolina Baptist preacher who recently celebrated his 105th birthday and is the founding visionary of the school. Owens, his three daughters and other family members were present for the event.

The center gives Gaston County's largest private school a 520-seat auditorium, art classrooms, band and choral classrooms, a dance studio, wood shop and costume classroom. GCS has 920 students enrolled.

The state-of-the-art fine arts building was part of the original plan, according to headmaster Marc Stout, but in 2012 the school board voted to move ahead with construction.

It was originally "much more vanilla" according to Stout, but the M.O. Owens name boosted donor support and allowed significant improvements.

"While this new addition to our campus will greatly benefit our growing student body, we are also very excited to make this available to our community for use as well," said Stout.

Many community organizations have already scheduled to use the facility.

The students and faculty of the elementary school, middle school and high school stood at attention near the front of the new facility as local leaders were introduced at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

A life-size bronze statue of Owens was unveiled on the building's front porch.

According to Stout, Owens' body was electronically scanned and the data was delivered to China where the statue was built.

Widely known among Southern Baptists as a leader in the Conservative Resurgence and a long-time pastor, Milum Oswell (M.O.) Owens Jr. was born in New Holland, S.C., in 1913.

After earning a degree from Furman University, he graduated with honors from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in 1939. He pastored churches in Myrtle Beach, S.C., Palmetto, Fla., Marion, N.C., and Lenoir, N.C., before accepting the call to East Baptist Church in Gastonia.

Owens led the church to established Parkwood Baptist in 1964 and was the first pastor until his retirement in 1980. He has since ministered in 15 churches as an interim pastor.

Twice president of the N.C. Baptist Pastors' Confer-



M.O. Owens, 105, stands next to a statue in his honor at the Owens Worship & Fine Arts Center at Gaston Christian School. (BR photos by K. Allan Blume)

(now LifeWay Christian Resources) and the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board).

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

Timothy Roberts, chairman of the GCS board of trustees, read the inscription on a plaque mounted at the building's entrance:

"In 1979, Dr. M.O. Owens Jr. had a vision for a Christian School in Gaston County that would be unapologetically Christian, non-denominational, financially self-supporting, and open to everyone in the community. Gaston Christian School was birthed out of this vision. Now, almost 40 years later, we celebrate the life and legacy of our founder with the dedication of the M.O. Owens Jr. Worship and Fine Arts Center.

"We recognize Dr. Owens for his relentless commitment to honor Jesus Christ throughout his life and are honored to have Dr. Owens with us at age 105 as we open this building to the glory of God and for the use of our school and community.

"May we be committed to following the example of our patriarch, Dr. Owens, in all that we do in this building and on this campus.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it - Psalm 127:1." **BR**

ence, Owens was elected to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's General Board and a number of committees.

He served as a trustee of the Sunday School Board

International Religious Freedom Act marks 20 years of impact

Baptist Press

The International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) addressed a serious shortcoming in American foreign policy, the law's advocates said at the 20-year mark of its stand against religious persecution.

The legislation, promoted by many evangelical Christian and other religious leaders, became law with President Bill Clinton's signature on Oct. 27, 1998, and its effect has been widespread. The International Religious Freedom Act established mechanisms within the State Department and an independent com-

mission that have raised the visibility of freedom of belief and conscience in U.S. relationships with other countries.

IRFA's importance is ongoing, Southern Baptist religious freedom advocate Russell Moore said. "The world is ablaze with religious persecution, including some of the most violent persecution

in recent history being endured by our brothers and sisters in Christ," Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said in remarks for Baptist Press. "The congressional commitment to international religious freedom secured 20 years ago is needed now more than ever." **BR**

Loritts shares about racism, ethnicity, being an ‘insider-outsider’

By MAINA MWAURA | Special to the Recorder

Bryan Loritts is the son of a well-known evangelical preacher, Crawford Loritts, and has himself become a popular speaker and author in evangelical circles.

He is the lead pastor of Abundant Life Church in the Silicon Valley area of California and president of The Kainos Movement, an organization dedicated to promoting multi-ethnic diversity in the church. In his latest book, *Insider Outsider*, he talks candidly about how evangelicals can do better in the area of race relations.

What follows is a lightly edited transcript of a conversation with Loritts about his views on ethnicity and how evangelicals can better understand one another.

Q: You start the book by explaining your background. Why do you think you’re an insider-outsider?

A: Well, on one hand, it’s pretty obvious. I’m an African-American male, who has African-American parents, who minister in predominately white, evangelical circles.

I can still remember my dad speaking at Campus Crusade events as a young boy. I grew up in white evangelical churches.

On the other hand, there have been times in my life where I felt like white evangelicals were not addressing the things that affect me personally, for example, social justice issues.

Q: When was the first time you experienced racism?

A: I remember when I was in the 9th grade, going out to meet a white girl at the mall. My dad knew that we were going to be meeting each other at the mall. I can still remember the girl’s dad yelling at me, calling me an expletive name when he found out that she would be meeting me at the mall.

Q: In the book, you point out a difference between white evangelicals and white evangelicalism. What is the difference?

A: The two are very different. White evangelicalism is a system led and shaped by a cultural agenda defined solely by whiteness. The term “white evangelical” describes a person.

Q: Why do you think white evangelicalism needs to die?

A: The term “white evangelicalism” is a system where many white evangelicals – not all, by the way – don’t see that they have used their whiteness to hold power over other races and cultures.

They then use their whiteness to normalize their biases toward others, and even at times, tie it into their theology. What makes white evangelicalism problematic is that it never submits itself as one of many perspectives.

It submits itself as the only perspective, which disregards people of color’s points of view.

Q: You talk a lot about the history of white evangelicals in America. Why is it important to tell the history?



Bryan Loritts, lead pastor of Abundant Life Church in the Silicon Valley area of California, preaches to participants of the Baptists on Missions Conference earlier this year. He is scheduled to preach at the April 2019 meeting in Charlotte. (BR file photo by Steve Cooke)

A: It’s very important to know history – period. However, we should want to know the origins of white evangelicalism, because of the nature of how it has played out in our country and culture.

Q: In the book, you say that people of color usually rush to feelings, while whites usually rush to facts. Why do you think that happens?

A: There is a difference in a number of ways. For example, people of color see themselves as having solidarity with one another, which makes them feel the need and hurt of the person who is mistreated. For many in white culture, they see themselves individually. So, it shouldn’t surprise us that people of color rush toward feelings because of their solidarity with one another, and white people go straight to facts based on their individuality.

I think both sides have something to offer. We should lament first anytime someone is mistreated, then appeal to facts. It’s amazing in healthy marriages, what couples do with one another, they lean into the spouse’s hurt then figure out the facts.

Q: There are some people of color who believe that white evangelicals don’t care about them. Why do you think they feel that way?

A: Well, that’s a tough question. I will try my best to answer it.

I remember when I attended Bible college and seminary, I was never required to study theologians and influencers of color. I’m not saying it was intentional on the professors’ part, but it did make me wonder why they never thought it was beneficial to put people of color on the syllabus.

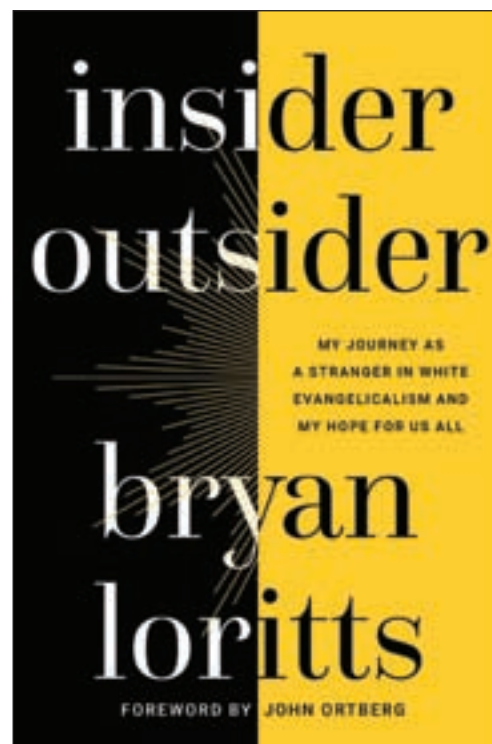
I think another reason is maybe because white evangelicals, as a majority, haven’t addressed social issues that affect people of color.

Q: How do you define “white privilege?”

A: The issue isn’t privilege, it’s stewardship. I don’t think we should demonize privilege. I believe that when certain privileges are given to one race over another, the one that’s been given the privilege should steward the privilege to address systems and structures that are biased toward people of color.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Bryan Loritts will be a keynote speaker at the 2019

N.C. Missions Conference, organized by Baptists on Mission. Visit baptistsonmission.org/events/missions-conference. The event is scheduled for April 5-6 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. Visit bryanloritts.co. Maina Mwaura is a freelance journalist who lives in Atlanta, Ga., with his wife and daughter. They attend Johnson Ferry Baptist Church.) **BR**



IMB Continued from page 1

through the Cooperative Program.

During his pastorates, he served as chairman of the IMB trustees from 2008-10, part of his tenure as an IMB trustee from 2002-10.

His overseas short-term mission involvement includes work in Brazil, Peru, India, China, South Africa, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Kenya, England, Spain, Germany and Haiti.

At Chitwood's request, pending trustee approval, Clyde Meador will remain in the president's office as interim executive vice president during the transition. Meador has served as IMB interim president since Sept. 27.

"I have known Paul for 16 years and have consistently been impressed by and thankful for his commitment to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, as well as his excellent leadership skills," Meador said.

Chitwood was Kentucky Baptist Convention president in 2005-06; first vice president in 2003-04; and president of the state pastors' conference in 2002. He was chairman of the SBC Committee on Nominations in 2015-16. He also has served on several other state mission committees and in associational leadership committees.

He has served as a trustee of Crossings Ministries, Sunrise Children's Services, Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Oneida

Baptist Institute, Baptist Haiti Mission and Bridges to Nigeria.

He is an adjunct professor of leadership at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). He previously has been an assistant professor of missions and evangelism at SBTS, University of the Cumberland and Boyce College.

A native of Jellico, Tenn., Chitwood is a 1992 graduate of Cumberland College (now University of the Cumberlands), where he has served as a trustee. He earned a master of divinity degree from SBTS in 1995 and a doctorate from the seminary in 2001.

He currently is pursuing a master's degree in nonprofit administration from the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame.

Chitwood and his wife Michelle have been married for 25 years. Their family includes son Daniel, 22, and daughter-in-law Derrika; daughter Anna, 20; daughter Cai, 12; and a foster daughter, age 6, who they hope will soon join the family through adoption.

Trustees will vote on the recommendation of Chitwood as president during their plenary session, scheduled for Nov. 15 at 10 a.m. EST.

Prior to the vote, Southern Baptists will honor the appointment of new missionaries during a Sending Celebration in Richmond on Nov. 14 at 7 p.m. EST. **BR**

Mission:Dignity gifts on #GivingTuesday can be doubled

GuideStone Financial Resources

GivingTuesday gifts to Mission:Dignity®, the GuideStone® ministry for retired Southern Baptist ministers and their widows near the poverty line, will be effectively doubled thanks to generous donors who have offered \$250,000 in matching gifts.

#GivingTuesday is a global effort to encourage gifts to charities on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving (Nov. 27). It was conceived as a way to give back following Black Friday and Cyber Monday shopping days.

100 percent of gifts to Mission:Dignity benefit recipients – an established endowment covers all administrative and overhead costs for the ministry.

"We are so thankful for the donors who understand the importance of this God-birthed and God-honoring ministry and are willing to help double the impact for our recipients," said GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins.

John Ambra, director of Mission:Dignity, says in his travels throughout the year, meeting with recipients of the grants Mission:Dignity donors make possible, he constantly hears what the gifts mean to them.

"I hear regularly that their Mission:Dignity checks serve as a reminder from the Lord that His people haven't forgotten their service and that their service to Him mattered," Ambra said.

To share a gift, or for more information, visit MissionDignity.org. **BR**

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Love Life culminates its 40 weeks of prayer walks Nov. 17 with a "Celebrate Life" event in three cities – Charlotte (1004 Palmer Plaza Lane), Greensboro (2401 Randleman Road) and Raleigh (1522 Jones Franklin Road). The events, which are from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m., will take place at or near abortion clinics in those three cities.

Prayer walks usually include a time of



worship, truth about abortions, testimonies of lives changed and prayer time. Carpooling is encouraged.

Visit lovelife.org to inquire more about this organization or to find out about the event nearest you.

Southeastern's Logan Carson, 86, dies

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

On Nov. 3, Logan Carson, 86, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SEBTS) first full-time African-American professor, died.

Carson, who taught theology at SEBTS from 1994-2009, will be remembered for his vibrant zeal for life, love for teaching scripture to his students and his humility in serving others.

Danny Akin, SEBTS president, said, "The thing I remember most about Dr. Carson is that he said he didn't want his sight back in this life because, 'the first thing I want to see is Jesus' face.'"

Carson was born in McDowell County in July 1932 and suffered from blindness at birth due to malformed retinas.

However, blindness did not stop Carson's zeal in ministry and his love for the Lord. In 1955, Carson was pursuing his degree to become a constitutional attorney when he was called by God to change his educational endeavors to teach students the Bible.

Carson received his bachelor of arts in Bible and social science from Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., in May 1957. In 1960, just three days after marrying his wife, Glenwood, he received his bachelor of divinity from Hartford Seminary Foundation in Connecticut. Twenty years later in May 1980, the Graduate School of Drew University conferred on Carson a doctor of philosophy degree.

His students through the years have been impacted by the way he taught them to know and love scripture and to honor the Lord through doing everything well for his glory. His motto was, "In Christ, strive for excellence."

During his time at SEBTS, Carson also served as pastor of Green-Bethel Baptist Church in Boiling Springs, N.C. Carson taught at a number of other schools, including as an instructor of religion at Montclair State College, N.J.; a professor at Gardner-Webb College in Boiling Springs; and a Bible knowledge master at Waka Schools, Bui, Northeastern State, Nigeria, West Africa. Carson's ministerial positions included pastor of Olive Branch Baptist Church in Wake Forest, N.C.; associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Jeffersonton, Ky.; pastor of Webb First Baptist Church in Ellenboro, N.C.; and pastor of Christ Community Baptist Church in Gastonia, N.C.

Throughout his educational journey, Carson was both an outstanding student and beloved professor. As a student, Carson graduated with high honors from Shaw University, received special commendation in receiving his master's degree and maintained a 4.0 grade point average during his doctoral studies, while also being rewarded with multiple fellowships.

During his time as SEBTS professor, Carson was awarded the excellence in teaching award in 2003.

Carson served in other capacities during his career as well, including as a music writer for a Kentucky news-



Logan Carson was well known and highly respected at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. (SEBTS photo)

paper called *The American Baptist*, parliamentarian for the Ebenezer Baptist Association and Garner-Webb College faculty meetings, moderator of the Gold Hill Missionary Baptist Association, a speaker and evangelist for revival services and a conference leader for multiple Winter Bible Studies.

Carson was preceded in death by his wife Glenwood (whom he affectionately called "Pep") and is survived by his two adult children Aaron and Tricia. **BR**

November 25

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

December 2

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Focal passage: Psalm 138:1-8

In these sessions, we’ve sought to follow the lifestyle of Jesus by studying His prayer life.

Like the disciples, we still today ask Jesus to “teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

Clearly from the gospel accounts, Jesus’ patterns of prayer were simply part of the warp and woof of His life.

The example of the “model” prayer can be an encouragement as we seek communion with our heavenly Father who loves us.

One result of this intimate communion with God is praise and thanksgiving.

As we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we cannot help but become a thankful person.

An excellent example of thankfulness in God is found in Psalm 138.

The psalmist starts by praising God for His covenant loyalty and faithfulness (vv. 1-2).

The psalmist’s response is to give praise and thanks for who God is and what He has done.

A thankful heart looks at the works of God in his or her life and turns that thankfulness into praise.

Next, the psalmist praises God for His provision.

God meets with the lowly and with kings alike (vv. 3-6) and our response must be humility and thankful praise.

Lastly, God protects His people (vv. 7-8). In these verses, God is the one acting on behalf of His people – we get the help and God gets the glory and praise. That’s a pretty good deal!

One can easily see how these requests, petitions and praises are echoed in our Lord’s model prayer.

The Christian life is marked by thanksgiving.

In the hard knocks of life, we learn from our Teacher the way of humility and thanksgiving.

Even the model prayer was a petition for God’s will, Kingdom and provision to work on behalf of His people.

This joyful thanksgiving is the fruit of vibrancy in our prayer lives – something that God wants for us all!



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

Isaiah’s Prophecy

Focal passages: Isaiah 7:10-14; 9:6-7; 11:1-5

As a parent of three children, planning for Christmas can be quite the job. It begins with

my wife and I talking with the kids in early October about what they want for Christmas. Then, throughout November and December we begin making arrangements through various channels (grandparents, aunts and uncles, shopping etc.) to secure those items.

However, the real planning begins the night before Christmas morning. Our children never know what we go through to make Christmas morning such a special time.

Sometimes it requires an all-night construction party or a midnight run to the store because we forgot batteries. Interestingly, when the kids wake up the next morning they have no clue what had taken place prior to that special morning. Could you imagine how you would feel if your child came into the room on that Christmas morning and immediately ignored all that was prepared

and did not demonstrate any gratitude for all that had been given? I am sure, in a similar way, our heavenly Father feels the same way when we take for granted all that He has done in sending to us the greatest Gift – His Son, Jesus.

As our lesson teaches us, the incarnation of Christ was no mere circumstance, but was planned by God. Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah prophesied of His arrival (Isaiah 7:10-14). Talk about planning for Christmas!

Of course, we can go back further than Isaiah to Genesis and see the first prophetic words about the coming Messiah (Genesis 3:15). I am simply stating that in God’s goodness, He planned in advance a way for us to experience the greatest blessing in all of life, namely a relationship with Him through His Son.

When Christmas comes this year, let’s not be like that child who ignores all the sacrificial work that has been put in before time. Instead, we should spend time thanking God for every little detail that was given for us that we could experience life to the fullest in Jesus Christ.



BARTLEY WOOTEN
*Pastor,
Beulaville Baptist
Church*

November 25

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

December 2

With Anticipation

Focal Passage: James 5:7-9, 13-20

Everyone’s waiting for something, whether it’s a new job, a spouse or the weekend. Waiting is a part of living, it seems. But as Christians, we are ultimately waiting for one thing. Concluding his letter, James reminds his readers that what we are waiting for is the return of our King. He also reminds us how we should wait.

We know God did not promise us a life free from trials. In this time between Christ’s first and second coming, we have and will experience hardship. Praise God that we have an eternal hope in Jesus! Though we struggle, we know that at just the right time, our Savior King will return and put an end to pain forever! In our sickness and suffering, then, James reminds us of the importance of turning to God in prayer. Because of the righteousness we have in Christ, our prayers are powerful and effective. Just as Elijah’s prayer moved God

to stop the rain (and start it back again!), so our prayers move God to help us in our sin and sorrow.

Sometimes, life’s difficulties cause believers to falter in their faith. Scripture tells us to seek out those who have strayed. We are to show grace to those who have fallen into sin and seek to restore them. In verse 20, James teaches that this seeking and reclaiming can save a person even from physical death. In this way, we help others wait well.

When Jesus returns, every evil thing will be upended, and we will live forever with the One who died for us. We wait in hope, knowing that our God is faithful and will return as He promised. We wait in prayer, knowing that He is the only one who can sustain us through our every circumstance. We wait in faithfulness, encouraging others to be faithful too. With anticipation we wait. For we know that our minds cannot even conceive the half of what God has prepared for those who love Him!



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

The Deceiver

Focal Passage: Genesis 27:18-29

My wife and I allot a certain amount of time each day for our children to watch TV.

We also try to bless each child with the privilege of choosing which program to watch. My son, however, is the master manipulator over his sister. He has figured out which of his programs she finds tolerable, so even when it is her turn to choose he will trick her into watching what he wants.

We have promised him a blessing, but instead of waiting for that blessing he steals it. Sound familiar?

In Genesis 25, God prophesizes a blessing for Jacob, the younger of twin brothers. Little do we know at this point how that blessing will come about. First, Jacob tricks Esau out of his birthright. Then, Rebekah and Isaac connive to steal the blessing. And if you think Isaac and Esau are innocent, think again. Isaac is well-prepared to bless the wrong son even though he knows

God has promised to bless Jacob. Esau despises his birthright for a bowl of stew. Yet all the while, God’s sovereign hand is in control in spite of the sinful actions of His creatures.

Romans 9:8-13 teaches us God had chosen Jacob prior to his birth and without regard to either brother’s sin or righteousness. As you can see in the passage, no one deserves the blessing. But God is gracious. His sovereign plan of redemption through Abraham’s seed pressed on.

There is a right way to enjoy God’s blessings, and it isn’t through deception or personal favoritism. We honor God by walking in love and integrity no matter the consequences.

As we walk, we trust in the sovereignty of God to accomplish His good purposes in us and through us.

Romans 8:28 says God is working all things for His glory and our good. And when we fail, we can rest in the promise of I John 1:9. He is faithful and just to forgive.



CASEY SHORT
*Pastor,
Reddicks Grove Baptist
Church, Williamston*

N.C. Baptists launch redesigned website

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina launched its newly redesigned website Nov. 1.

The site is accessible by visiting *ncbaptist.org*.

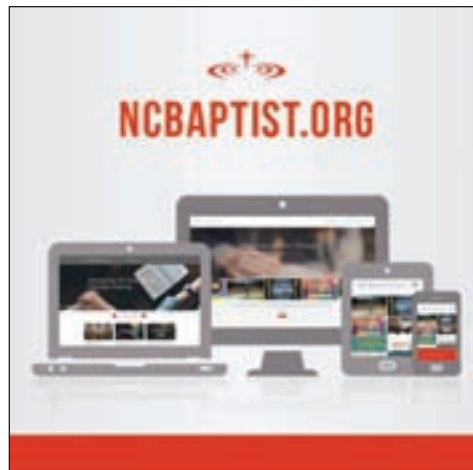
The new site features an updated design, improved navigation and new resources and features that are all aimed at giving users an enhanced online experience that emphasizes accessibility and ease of use.

In conjunction with the revamped site, the convention also launched an online classroom that offers free, high-quality training materials designed to equip individuals and churches in a variety of ministry areas.

Three training courses are currently available with more planned in the future. Visit the online classroom at *ncbaptist.org/onlineclassroom*.

Other highlights of the site include:

- A new responsive design that optimizes the site for viewing on your computer, tablet or mobile device.
- A reorganized site navigation that allows you to find the ministry or area of interest quickly and easily through a



simple, streamlined and modern interface.

- A vast array of resources, articles, videos, event listings and more that highlight ministry leaders, pastors, missionaries and others.

The goal of the new site is to deliver content and information that's relevant to North Carolina Baptists and accessible wherever they may be.

Visitors to the site may also sign up for the state convention's monthly email newsletter to stay informed about the work God is doing through North Carolina Baptists in the state, nation and world. **BR**

AROUND THE STATE

Obituary

A. JUDSON ROTAN, 82, of Asheville died Oct. 8.

He attended Mars Hill College (now university) before finishing at Carson-Newman College. He also went to South-eastern Seminary.

He was ordained to the gospel ministry and served 18 years as a pastor to five churches from the coast to the mountains in North Carolina. In 1977, he became director of missions for the Randolph Baptist Association in Asheboro, where he served for 24 years until his retirement in 2001. He had several interim pastorates. In 2005 he and his wife moved to Asheville and came out of retirement to pastor Buckeye Baptist Church, Swannanoa, for six years, until he retired a second time in June 2012. He served a total of 54 years in Christian ministry. Even in retirement

he continued to serve in the life of his church (First Baptist Church, Asheville) as deacon, on committees and mission projects.

He is survived by his loving wife of 57 years, Gwendolyn Ezzell, Whiteville; son, Kenneth E. Rotan; daughter, Beverly R. Buffaloe; sister, Gloria R. Keown; brother, William E. Rotan; and five grandchildren.

Memorials to: Samaritan's Purse, c/o Hurricane Florence Relief, PO Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607.

Staff changes

MICHAEL BARRETT has been called as associational mission strategist at Piedmont Baptist Association, Greensboro. He was previously pastor of Pleasant Garden Baptist Church. He and his wife, Teresa, have two children and four grandchildren.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Denominational

The Randolph Baptist Association is seeking a **full-time Associational Missionary**. This is an association of 46 Bible-believing Southern Baptist churches. We are looking for a candidate who is evangelistic and missions minded. To apply, send résumés to *RBAMissionary@gmail.com* or to PO Box 2167, Asheboro, NC 27204, Attention: Search Committee. Résumés must be received by December 31 in order to be considered.

Pastor

Lankford Memorial Baptist Church, 3708 Yanceyville Street, Greensboro, NC 27405. A conservative, Bible-based church, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send résumé and sermon links to pastor search committee at the above address. Deadline December 15, 2018.

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.

Church Staff

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

Advertise your ministry or business? The **Biblical Recorder** offers competitive denominational and nondenominational rates for media outlets our size. Contact *alison@BRnow.org* for information or visit *BRnow.org/Advertise*.

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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.

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Retreat encourages women to embrace identity in Christ

By MAKAYLA RIGGS | BSC Communications

More than 250 women gathered at Caraway Conference Center and Camp in late October for a weekend of encouragement and reflection upon the truth of who God created them to be – holy, chosen and beloved daughters of the King.

“Holy. Chosen. Beloved.” was the theme of this year’s retreat, which was held Oct. 26-27 and sponsored by the Embrace women’s ministry of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC). The retreat theme was based upon the apostle Paul’s encouragement to the church at Colossae in Colossians 3:12-14.

Lori McDaniel, church initiatives manager for the International Mission Board, was the retreat’s worship speaker. She spoke around the question, “Who am I?”

McDaniel said there are many identities and labels that women put on themselves – friend, mom, wife and more.

“But we must know Him to know how to live holy, chosen and beloved [lives],” McDaniel said, noting that one’s identity must be found in Christ and not in labels that may change.

“A wrong assessment of our identity subtracts God out of our story,” McDaniel said.

In between the main sessions, attendees could choose from among 12 different breakout sessions that addressed a variety of topics from the Book of Colossians. Topics included disciple-making, prayer, forgiveness, identity, holiness and more.

“It’s extremely hard to choose a breakout session – there are so many,” said Kristie Hunnicutt, an attendee from Mill Creek Baptist Church in Monroe, N.C. “This year as soon as I got my book, the first thing I did was start praying and looking at the breakout sessions. You just want to go to all of them.”

Hunnicutt attended a session titled “Taming the Tongue,” led by Ashley Allen, who serves as senior consultant for the BSC’s Embrace women’s ministry.

“Every time I think about taming the tongue I think about the book of James because there is such strong scripture on that,” Hunnicutt said. “(Ashley) just brought to light some other scriptures and how we’re to conduct ourselves through our speech. I’m going to be able to use this when I am teaching and speaking on this topic at church. Now I have some other tools.”

The women also enjoyed a time of fellowship Friday evening through several events offered, including s’mores by a fire pit, board games and desserts from Nothing Bundt Cakes.

Betsy Bolick, founder of Small Enough Ministries and college minister at Perkinsville Baptist Church in Boone, shared a moving testimony Saturday morning about identity and the power of God to heal a “broken” girl.

“Brokenness points to the holiness of God,” Bolick said. “What a mighty God we serve that He doesn’t give us what we want but instead gives us Himself.”

Bolick urged attendees to trust God as they walk along the path He sets before them as holy, chosen and beloved daughters of Christ. Her testimony of how God used a small, broken girl to show His glory, left many in the auditorium in tears.

Following Bolick’s testimony, Kimberly Merida of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, and violinist Tasha Via of Journey Church in Raleigh, led worship to “You’re Worthy of it All.” Attendees echoed in unison, “All of my hopes, all of my fears, all of my wants and all of my years. Everything now, everything then, all my life I resolved. You’re worthy of it all.”

“The Holy Spirit was just in that room,” said Barbara Spence of Dayspring Baptist Church. “I just felt so reminded about how much God loves us. We are so little, and He is so big. He purposed us and He chose us. He wants Himself to be on display through us.”

Many women commented about the



“Brokenness points to the holiness of God,” said Betsy Bolick, founder of Small Enough Ministries and college minister at Perkinsville Baptist Church in Boone. “What a mighty God we serve that He doesn’t give us what we want but instead gives us Himself.” (BSC photo by Hannah Adkins)

event’s atmosphere, which was described as real and authentic. Attendees left with a sense of renewal in who God created them to be and ready to walk in the light in which they have been called.

“(We) got to pull back the onion peel and see the side of people that you don’t normally see, and it’s OK,” Hunnicutt said. “(This weekend) there were real women and real lives. God is a real God,

and He can tend to each and every one of our needs.”

At the conclusion of the event, conference organizers announced the date, theme and location of next year’s retreat. The 2019 N.C. Baptist Women’s Retreat will be held Friday and Saturday, Oct. 25-26 at Caraway Conference Center and Camp. The event’s theme is “Abide.”

Visit embracenc.org/abide. **BR**

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PRAY 30 DAYS FOR 30 UNREACHED PEOPLES IN NORTH CAROLINA

An unreached people group is defined as a grouping of people who share the same ethnicity and language and is less than 2 percent evangelical Christian. Today, upwards of 15 percent of North Carolina’s population — that is 1.5 million people — are foreign-born or are the children of foreign-born immigrants. Many of these people are from unreached people groups who have never heard the gospel.

In January 2019, pray with us for 30 people groups now living in North Carolina. To register for a prayer guide, daily email updates and text messages, visit ncbaptist.org/30days30peoples.

wMu