

**BACKPACK MINISTRY**  
to bless thousands  
at Christmas



**Survey: Church remains  
key part of Christmas**

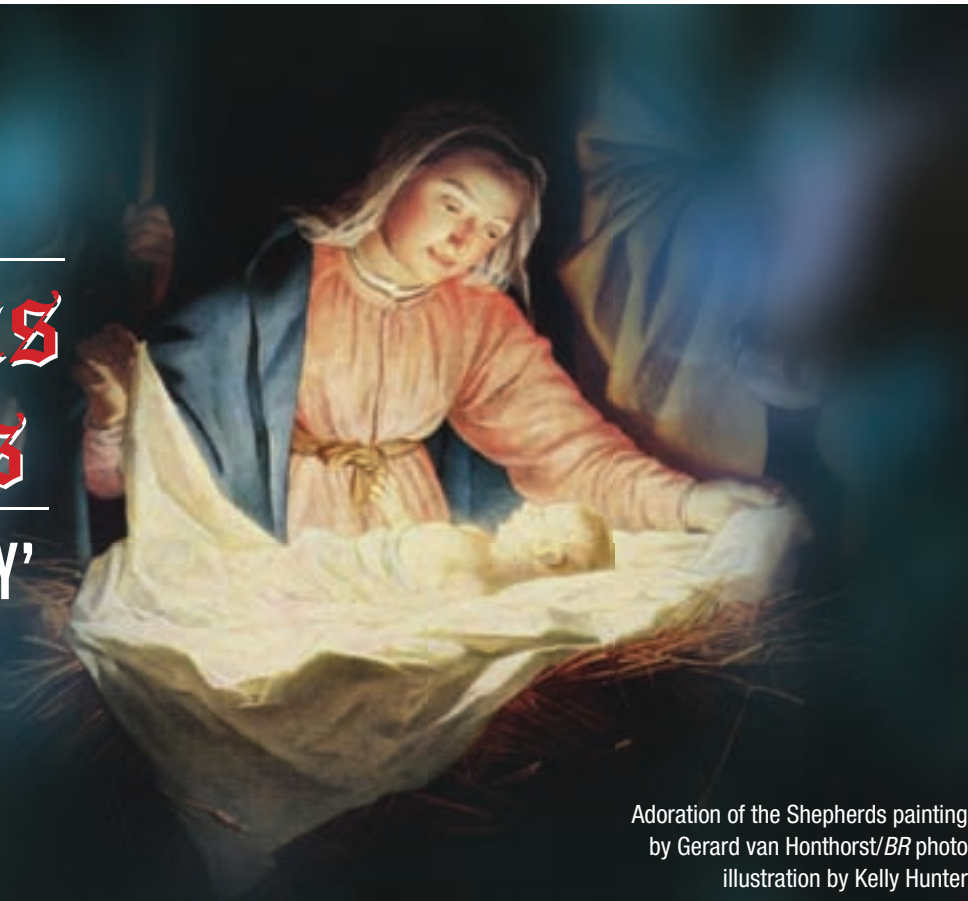


# BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

DECEMBER 20, 2014 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • VOLUME 180 NO. 26 • **BRnow.org**

## THE BIBLE'S Christmas Accounts 'COMPLEMENTARY'

By **DAVID ROACH** | Baptist Press



Adoration of the Shepherds painting  
by Gerard van Honthorst/*BR* photo  
illustration by Kelly Hunter

A historian named Julius Africanus was among the first Christians to wonder why the stories of Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke differ slightly.

Around the year 200, Julius apparently sought Jesus' living relatives to ask them why the genealogies of Christ in the two Gospels aren't exactly the same. Was one of the accounts in error?

Jesus' ancient relatives explained, according to the third-century church historian Eusebius, that the lineage of Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, included

a Levirate marriage – the Old Testament practice by which the brother of a man who died childless would marry the widow and father a child who was legally considered the descendant of the deceased man. One of the Gospel genealogies apparently follows the biological line and the other the legal line, Eusebius reported.

Though the Levirate marriage explanation has been debated by scholars, at least one thing is certain: for the nearly 1,800 years since Julius' inquiry, disciples and skeptics alike have continued to

wonder why the Bible's two accounts of Jesus' birth report the story in slightly different ways.

In response, three seminary professors have explained that the narratives do not contradict one another at any point and tell the story in different ways to highlight different aspects of Jesus' person and work.

Matthew and Luke "are complementary and make different points," Bill Warren, director of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Center for New

**See Accounts page 7**

## Collegiate ministry: One model doesn't fit all

By **MICHAEL MCEWEN** | *BR* Content Editor

Several Baptist churches and ministries across the state are discipling college students, but they employ varying models ultimately committed to fulfilling the Great Commission.

"You can equip and mobilize and encourage [students] to do ministry without a recognized student organization. But, sometimes people would like to have a more formal recognition like a group. ... The main thing, though, is knowing your campus," said Tom Knight, collegiate consultant with the Baptist

State Convention of North Carolina (BSC). Some models – such as the campus-based model – are built on the foundation of a registered student organization (RSO) on or near a college or university campus. This particular ministry serves as a mission hub of students, as a bridge between the campus and local churches. One such example connected to the BSC is the Baptist Collegiate Ministry of the High Country (BCMHC). The BCMHC is a member of the Appalachian Spiritual Life Association, which means it is an RSO group of Appalachian State University (ASU).

**See Ministry page 13**

## Timmy Blair's life a 'work of grace'

By **K. ALLAN BLUME** | *BR* Editor

Timmy D. Blair Sr. is amazed at the course his life has taken – from a broken home, to pastoring the same church for 26 years and now to serving as the president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC). "To look at my life, from where I've come to where I am, it's just a work of God's grace," he said. "I am so thankful and humbled to serve Him and to be saved. Anything beyond that – whether it's pastoring or serving the convention – it's just icing on the cake."

He was elected to the position without opposition at the annual meeting in Greensboro, Nov. 11.

Born in High Point, Blair was five years old when his father left the family. His mother remarried, and they moved to Conway, S.C.

Theirs was not a church-going family. But a high school friend, Kenn Hucks, tried to witness to Blair. Hucks is now pastor of Sardis Baptist Church in Indian Trail. "I am so thankful that God put him in my path," Blair said.

Hucks was scheduled to sing with his youth choir in a revival service. He invited the 16-year-old Blair to attend. "I agreed to go, but I slipped into the back pew of that revival service," he said. "I planned to slip out and go about my life. But that night God spoke to my heart; the Holy Spirit convicted me. I walked the aisle and gave my life to Jesus Christ."

Hucks' parents gave Blair a Bible, marked with the date of his conversion, and encouraged him to read it. "That was the second Bible I ever had. The first one was a Gideon Bible I received in elementary school," he said.

At age 17 he answered the call to preach and began filling in as a lay-preacher wherever he was needed. He attended Fruitland Baptist Bible College

**See Blair page 6**



# The relevant call of Lottie Moon

**A** diminutive woman named Lottie Moon sat down at a table in China on Sept. 15, 1887, and penned a letter that would transform the Southern Baptist Convention forever.

Lottie called for prayer and financial resources to ensure that the gospel would be effectively preached, linking them to the example found in Christmas. She wrote: “Need it be said, why the week before Christmas is chosen? Is not the festive season when families and friends exchange gifts in memory of The Gift laid on the altar of the world for the redemption of the human race, the most appropriate time to consecrate a portion from abounding riches and scant poverty to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth?”

Fortunately, Southern Baptists were wise to follow her lead and eventually formalize two significant giving opportunities to accomplish her goal of gospel proclamation: the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO).

The Cooperative Program is how Southern Baptists decided 90 years ago that we as a network of churches could most consistently and effectively give financially to ensure the advancement of the gospel within our states, across our nation and around the globe.

I’ve often wondered if our forefathers

could have ever imagined the impact that single decision would make in Southern Baptists staying the course as a Great Commission people.

The LMCO goes beyond Cooperative Program support for our missionaries and is also a lifeline for funding and sustaining missions overseas.

Our 4,800 overseas personnel depend on the LMCO for ministry support that includes vehicles, housing, equipment and ministry budget among other needs.

It means everything to them financially. As a result of generous giving by Southern Baptists, our missionaries can spend their time preaching the gospel rather than raising support.

There are some who believe we must rob one of these giving opportunities to pay the other, that if we give more or less to the Cooperative Program then it is either to the benefit or detriment of the LMCO.

That simply is not the case. In fact, I’ve found the opposite to be true: The more we give to one, the more we give to the other.

“Why is that?” you ask. I’ve not done a formal analysis of it, but I can offer an informed opinion after nearly four decades in ministry.

Here are a few thoughts on how both can increase simultaneously:



**RANDY DAVIS**  
Guest Column

## Embrace your place in God’s story

**W**hen our eldest daughter was only 4 years old, I went to her room to talk with her at the end of a very trying day. Sitting on the edge of her bed, I rehearsed some of the day’s events, hoping she would understand why her behavior had demanded a particularly stern amount of discipline. As I spoke, she fastened her eyes on mine, looking at me in rapt attention.

“She’s getting it,” I thought to myself, not just a little pleased at the effectiveness of my conversational approach.

“I think she understands just how troubling her behavior has been.” My deep thoughts and stern lecture were interrupted by her small voice.

“You know what, daddy?” she asked in a voice that could not conceal her wonderment. “I can see me in your eyes!” The truth had now surfaced. Her rapt attention had nothing to do with my lecture. Instead, she was overcome at the

way her face was reflected in my eyes!

Since that interchange with my daughter, I have often thought of her exclamation, “I can see me in your eyes!” If you gaze into the eyes of your Heavenly Father, you will see the same. You are in His eyes.

You have a place in God’s story.

This year’s Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) theme, One Sacred Effort – Find Your Place in God’s Story, is designed to help each of us see our role in God’s great plan of redemption. Yes,

you do have a place in His story.

When the Southern Baptist Convention was formed over 169 years ago, missions was the centerpiece, the stack pole around which Baptists placed their hearts, burning with a desire to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. They believed that missions is the one sacred effort that should bind us together.



**TOM ELLIFF**  
Guest Column

See Elliff page 12

### Increased giving comes from a correct biblical worldview.

The Bible is distinctively clear: Jesus’ expectation of us is that we will go into all the world and reach the nations with the gospel. If that truly is our passion as well as our mandate, we will do whatever it takes, and that includes joyfully giving. A correct biblical worldview reorders how we spend our money. We’ll see missions as an eternal investment rather than a budget line item.

### Increased giving comes because missions is a priority of the pastor.

In virtually every case, the church whose pastor leads it into the community and around that globe sees an increase in generous giving and a desire to see souls saved.

I’ve seen pastors for years protect their budgets and worry that missions will bleed off valuable resources.

This is a lie I’m convinced Satan has perpetrated on pastoral ministry because it is the antithesis of what the Bible calls us to as shepherds of our local flocks. Pastor, lead your people into the harvest fields at home and around the world and watch how the Holy Spirit will set hearts afire for the advance of the gospel.

### Increased giving comes because pastors preach and teach biblical stewardship.

Yes, I know money is a sensitive subject, but it is like any other doctrine we teach from the pulpit.

Pastors, if we don’t teach what the Bible says about financial stewardship, then the majority of our people will never learn biblical stewardship from any other source.

Make it a priority, teach so they’ll grow to maturity, challenge them in light of the Great Commission, teach giving on a regular basis above tithes and offerings (yes, that’s biblical too) and set big goals to accomplish over a period of time.

### Increased giving comes as a matter of prayer.

This is actually where a pastor should begin and then lead the church to pray for its giving.

The world is a never-ending source of need. There is no way, even cooperatively, we can alleviate all that is spiritually and physically wrong with nearly 8 billion people. However, the Holy Spirit has mightily used both the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon offering to advance the Kingdom of God.

But even within these two giving opportunities the place to start is with people. Ask, how can God use you, your resources, your church and your church’s resources to impact the lives of specific people in your community, nation and the world. See the people. Don’t pray for the masses; pray for individuals. See them, go meet them, know the challenges they face in life. Then pray. I honestly believe you’ll see a marked change in your generosity.

This holiday season, Lottie Moon’s call for international missions is as relevant today as it was 130 years ago. This truly is “the most appropriate time to consecrate a portion from abounding riches and scant poverty to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Randy Davis is executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.) **BR**

## **BR** BIBLICAL RECORDER

(ISSN 0279-8182)

News Journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

Founded 1833 by Thomas Meredith

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

**Michael McEwen**, Content Editor  
(919) 459-5697; michael@brnow.org

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

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

**Emily Blake**  
Editorial Aide

**Erin Gandy**  
Circulation Manager  
(919) 459-5693  
erin@brnow.org

**Kelly Hunter**  
Graphic Designer

**Volume 180 No. 26**

**(919) 847-2127**

**Fax (919) 469-1674**

**BRnow.org**

### Board of Directors

Chris Byrne, chair; Nathan Finn, vice chair; Cindi Stevens, secretary; Jo Andrews; Kevin Atchley; Kelli Benfield; Kevin Clubb; Gene Fowler; Robert Ivey; Chester Jones; Lee Pigg; Michael Smith; Gerald Stephens; Peggy Weiss; and Ed Yount

### Subscriptions

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

### Publication

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

### Postmaster

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



# Backpack ministry to bless thousands at Christmas

By **MICHAEL MCEWEN** | BR Content Editor

**T**he Appalachian Coalfields Ministry (ACM), sponsored by Baptists on Mission (formerly N.C. Baptist Men), helps meet the physical and spiritual needs of people living in the Appalachia. Working with many ministry centers and churches in five Appalachian states, they help mobilize volunteers and resources to meet such needs.

“When all is said and done we will have just over 5,000 backpacks collected and delivered,” said Mark Abernathy, consultant for Baptists on Mission (BOM). “This is a good bit fewer than what we were aiming for, but ... [t]he 5,000 backpacks represent a significant contribution by N.C. churches from all across the state and we are grateful for each one.”

The items collected for each backpack include: school supplies such as crayons, notebook paper, pencils, pens, composition books, folders, erasers and rulers; new clothing such as winter hats, gloves, socks and underwear; small canned food such as ravioli, tuna, beef stew, vegetables and fruit; a least one new, age appropriate non-breakable toy; hygiene items; a children’s Bible; fresh, wrapped candy; and a copy of The Christmas Story and a “Mailbox Bible Club” enrollment.

Twenty-two collection sites were set up across the state and two processing sites at Red Springs and Shelby Mission Camps.

Appalachia is one of the poorest areas in America, and Christ wants to meet physical needs, said Abernathy. But this “also opens the door for the gospel message to be shared.

“These backpacks are the only present some children in these areas will receive this Christmas. We want each child to know that people care, but more than that, to know that God cares,” he said.

Dewey and Kathie Aiken serve as North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries working with the Appalachian Regional Ministry, a ministry of NAMB. For the past five years, they have been site coordinators for the ACM.

Kathie Aiken said, “Through both of these, we help to mobilize volunteers and resources to assist scores of ministries throughout areas of poverty in Appalachia. These ministries submitted applications for assistance with filled Christmas backpacks for the children in their communities.

“They informed us how the gospel would be shared using these backpacks. We processed these applications and matched their needs with churches desiring to help them with Christmas events.”



Dewey and Kathie Aiken serve with the Appalachian Regional Ministry, one of the poorest regions in America, through the North American Mission Board. Baptists on Mission, also known as North Carolina Baptist Men, has been part of collecting about 5,000 backpacks to distribute to children. (BOM photo by Mark Abernathy)

This year, 26 N.C. churches plan to provide food, clothing, games and filled backpacks to ministries in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Other ACM projects include week-long sports events, children’s ministry, evangelism, music and construction sites.

Many of these children’s families have lost jobs in the coal mining business, have difficulty providing the basics of life and are plagued with generational poverty. N.C. Baptists have a history of concern for Appalachian people, and BOM has sponsored the ACM since 2010. The greatest gift given in every backpack is the Bible and the true Christmas story, Abernathy emphasized.

“N.C. Baptists can know that lives are being changed because of the liberating truth that is being shared through Appalachian Christmas Outreach.

“Our hope is that this message of hope and love will change not only that child’s life, but impact the whole family,” he said.

When the backpacks are received by thousands of children living in these dire situations, it will not only be the families that are affected, the givers will be also.

Kathie Aiken said, “We have heard many churches report that their whole congregation was involved in this ministry: young, old, [and] those who cannot travel on a mission trip.

“Some have never been involved in missions before this and are eagerly awaiting next year’s outreach. Being involved in a ministry such as this is doing what Christ told us to do: ‘Remember the poor.’

“We are assured He is pleased with the outpouring of love and obedience that N.C. Baptists have shown this year by working with Appalachian Christmas Outreach.”

Abernathy added, “Many churches expressed to us that they were helping with other collections this year, but would be interested in participating next year. We believe that we can build on the good start of this first effort and increase the number of backpacks we are able to collect and send next December.”

To find out more information or to get involved, visit Baptists on Mission’s website, [baptistsonmission.org/Projects](http://baptistsonmission.org/Projects), scroll to the United States tab and click “Appalachian Coalfields.” **BR**

## Same-sex attraction requires repentance

By **S. CRAIG SANDERS** | SBTS Communications

**C**hristians experiencing same-sex attraction should repent of those desires, but God can transform a person’s sexual identity, said panelists at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting, Nov. 19.

“This is what I would say to guys in my church: ‘If you are in the moment feeling an attraction for a person of the same sex, that’s an occasion for repen-

tance,’” said Denny Burk, professor of biblical studies at Boyce College, the undergraduate school of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. “‘Well, I didn’t choose that.’ That’s still an occasion for repentance.”

Burk presented a paper titled “Is Same-Sex Orientation Sinful?” and participated in a panel discussion on the issue with fellow lecturers Preston M. Sprinkle, vice president of Boise extension at Eternity Bible College, and Wesley Hill, assistant professor of New Testa-

ment at Trinity School for Ministry and self-described celibate gay Christian.

In his paper, Burk assessed three components of same-sex orientation: sexual attraction, romantic attraction and identity.

Burk acknowledged same-sex attraction as a predisposition, but categorized it with sinful predispositions such as pride, anger and anxiousness. Emotional attraction to the same sex, Burk argued,

is sinful so long as it contains “sexual possibility.” The notion of same-sex orientation as a person’s identity is also sinful because “it invites us to embrace fictional identities that go directly against God’s revealed purposes for his creation,” he said.

The terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” were “ways to describe an identity based on a person’s pattern of sexual passions,” Burk added in the

See Attraction page 11



# Southeastern prays for racial reconciliation

SEBTS Communications

**F**or the last chapel of the fall semester, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) hosted a time of prayer and Bible reading for racial understanding and reconciliation.

Friends of Southeastern including students, faculty, staff and local members of the community participated in this special chapel service Dec. 4 in response to the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., and the choking death of Eric Garner in New York.

Daniel Akin, president of SEBTS, forewent his traditional sermon because he felt it was important to lead the seminary in thinking through present issues facing Americans today.

He quoted 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. "Ours is a broken world and a fractured world. It is a world in desperate need of reconciliation."

"The most important reconciliation is that which we have with God," he said. "Apart from reconciliation with God, we will never see reconciliation within ourselves and among ourselves."

Akin reflected on recent events as "a great tragedy in a fallen, broken world."

"I am heartbroken at the loss of life, and tragedy of sin and all that it inflicts on everyone," he said. "Everyone is impacted by these events. It is becoming more evident in these recent days that our nation still has a long way to go when it comes to racial understanding and racial reconciliation and ethic affirmation of one another."

Akin is convinced that reconciliation will not happen in America until it happens in the church. "It is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Body of Christ, that needs to step up at this particular time and lead the way and show the



Reese Wilson, left, a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, leads a time of prayer during the Dec. 4 chapel service at the seminary. The chapel was dedicated to praying for racial understanding and reconciliation in light of verdicts from police brutality cases in New York and Missouri. Daniel Akin, SEBTS president, center, bows with Kristal Wilson, who works in the financial aid office and is a former police officer. (SEBTS photo)

way forward through the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Walter Strickland, special advisor to the President for Kingdom Diversity and professor of Theology at Southeastern, helped organize the event.

Several seminary and community leaders came together to lead the time of prayer, including: Edgar Aponte, director of Hispanic Leadership Development; Brent Aucoin, associate professor of his-

tory and associate dean of The College at Southeastern; Maliek Blade, a student at The College at Southeastern; and Al Fullwood, adjunctive professor of preaching and speech.

Mike Lawson, director of security at SEBTS; Jesse Parker, Th.M. student at Southeastern; James White, pastor at Christ Our King Community Church in Raleigh and executive vice president of organizational relations for the Triangle

YMCA; and Reese and Kristal Wilson also participated. Reese is a student at Southeastern, and Kristal works in the financial aid office and is a former police officer.

The annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering was collected for International Mission Board missionaries during the chapel service. Since 1888 when the offering began, over \$3.5 billion has been raised to fund missionaries. **BR**

## Black, white Southern Baptists react to grand jury decision

By **TOM STRODE** | Baptist Press

**B**lack and white Southern Baptists reacted with grief following a grand jury's decision not to indict a white police officer in the chokehold death of a New York City man despite a widely viewed video of the incident.

A Staten Island grand jury declined Dec. 3 to bring an indictment against officer Daniel Pantaleo in spite of a ruling by the New York City medical examiner's office that Eric Garner's death was a homicide. Pantaleo is shown in a video posted online restraining Garner, 43, with a chokehold and forcing him face down onto the sidewalk with the help of other officers. While prone, Garner is heard saying at least eight times, "I can't breathe."

K. Marshall Williams, president of the Southern Bap-

tist Convention's National African American Fellowship, called the grand jury's action an "outrageous verdict" that is "a clarion call to us to be light in the midst of so much darkness."



**K. MARSHALL WILLIAMS**

"I cry out to the Lord this morning, for my spirit is deeply grieved and filled with righteous indignation, as I mourn with the family of Eric Garner as they endure the pain of this visualized injustice," Williams said in a written statement for Baptist Press.

"I'm stunned speechless by this news," said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious liberty Commission (ERLC). "We hear a lot about the rule of law – and rightly so. But a government that can choke a man to death on video for selling cigarettes is not a government living up to a biblical definition of justice or any recognizable definition of justice."

The Staten Island jury's refusal to indict Pantaleo came at an incredibly raw time for African-Americans regarding treatment by the police. The Dec. 3 decision followed by only nine days a St. Louis County grand jury's decision not to indict white police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown. No incriminating video existed of Brown's August death in Ferguson, Mo., and witnesses provided conflicting accounts. The failure to indict still met widespread criticism and protests.

Trillia Newbell, the ERLC's consultant for women's initiatives and an African-American, said the Garner



**RUSSELL MOORE**

See Baptists page 10



# Survey: Church remains key part of Christmas

By BOB SMITANA | LifeWay/Baptist Press

Most Americans believe Christmas goes better with a visit to church, religious Christmas songs in public school concerts and more focus on Jesus a LifeWay Research survey shows.

And while there's much banter on cable TV talk programs about a "War on Christmas," most Americans are fine when people wish them "Happy Holidays," according to the study.

This year's latest controversy regarding Christmas involves atheist billboards featuring a fictional letter from a little girl who says she's too old for fairy tales. "Dear Santa," the billboard reads, "All I want for Christmas is to skip church."

No thanks, say most Americans, according to the survey. The study asked 1,000 Americans about their views on Christmas in a phone survey Sept. 26 to Oct. 5, 2014.

Scott McConnell, vice-president of Nashville-based LifeWay Research, noted "Christmas traditions that have nothing to do with the Christian faith continue

to multiply. Still, most Americans want more of Jesus in their Christmas rather than less."

Among the findings:

● **Church remains an essential part of Christmas.**

Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of Americans agree Christmas should include a trip to church. A third (32 percent) disagree, while 4 percent are unsure.

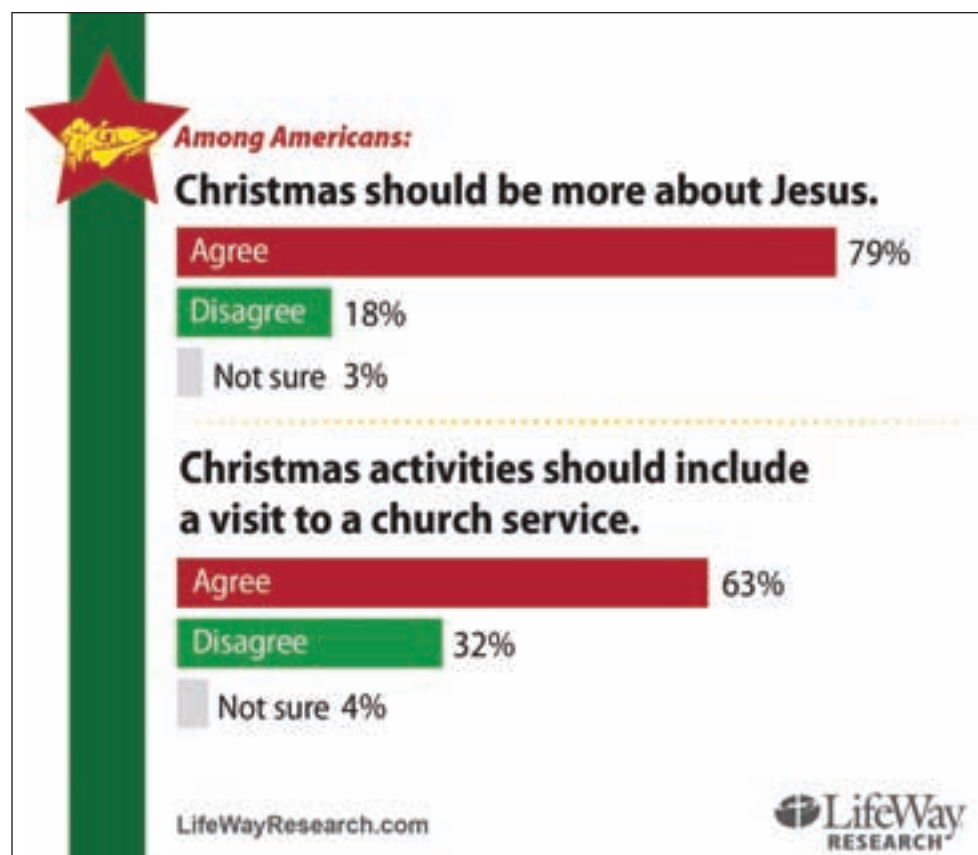
Younger Americans are least interested in church at Christmas time. Fewer than four in 10 (38 percent) of those 18 to 24 say church is an essential part of Christmas, followed by 55 percent of those 25 to 34.

Christians (77 percent) are more likely to agree than those from other faiths (44 percent) and the Nones (28 percent).

● **Americans prefer the sacred to the secular at Christmas.**

Eight out of 10 Americans (79 percent) agree with the statement: "Christmas should be more about Jesus." About one in five (18 percent) disagree. A few (3 percent) are not sure.

Southerners (86 percent) are more likely to agree than Midwesterners (76



percent) and those in the West (69 percent).

Older Americans are more interested in focusing on Jesus at Christmas than younger Americans.

Nearly nine in 10 Americans who are over 65 (88 percent) agree. Among those 18 to 24, the number drops to six in 10 (61 percent).

● **Americans want to keep Christ in Christmas. Younger people aren't so sure.**

Seven in 10 Americans believe "Christmas would be a better experience if it had a more Christian focus."

One in four (26 percent) disagree, while four percent are not sure. Three quarters of women (73 percent) agree and two thirds of men (66 percent) agree.

Younger Americans – those 18 to 24 (46 percent), and 25 to 34 (57 percent) – are

less likely to agree than those 35 to 44 (70 percent) and 65 plus (83 percent).

● **Americans want to let school kids sing "Silent Night."**

Most Americans (86 percent) say children in public schools should be allowed to sing religious Christmas songs in school-sponsored musicals. About one in 10 (12 percent) disagree. Two percent are not sure.

Nine in 10 women (89 percent) and eight in 10 men (83 percent) agree. So do most Westerners (80 percent) and even more of those in the Northeast (90 percent) and South (88 percent).

Most younger Americans – those 18 to 34 – (80 percent) agree, as do 9 in 10 of those 35 and older.

Even many Nones – those who claim no religious faith – don't seem to mind religious Christmas songs in school.

Three quarters (73 percent) of Nones agree school kids should be allowed to sing religious songs in Christmas concerts.

So do most Christians (92 percent), almost all (96 percent) Evangelicals, and even those from other faiths (71 percent).

See Christmas page 11

## Worship the Christ Child in the New Year

Christmas is a great time of the year for worship. People who don't think about our Savior very much throughout the year begin to focus on Him during the Christmas season. Everywhere you look there are reminders of the Christ Child.

Now is a good time to be thinking about our worship lives in 2015. How can we keep a focus on Christ at the forefront of our lives every day? How can we make our times of corporate worship each week more powerful and meaningful?

We often blame the pastor and other worship leaders if we didn't feel like a worship service was very good. We prepare ourselves as spectators.

Will the music be the style we like? Will the pastor be dynamic and entertaining? Will the video elements be dazzling?

When these are the thoughts that pervade our evaluation, we have moved away from biblical worship.

Perhaps we should turn our gaze in-

wardly to see if we are adequately prepared for worship. Have we spent time daily with God studying His word?

Have we prayed for our worship leaders? Have we meditated on the sermon's scripture passage and congregational songs, if known? Have we asked God to reveal Himself to us in worship?

Have we asked God to help us lay aside personal preferences that may interfere with our worship?

The responsibility of having a great worship experience doesn't just rest with your worship leaders.

Your preparation in worshipping God throughout the week is paramount to what takes place in times of corporate worship.

I pray you will have a glorious celebration of the birth of our Savior!

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Kenny

Lamm is a consultant for worship and music with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Contact him at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5638, or [klamm@ncbaptist.org](mailto:klamm@ncbaptist.org). Visit his blog at [renewingworshipnc.org](http://renewingworshipnc.org).)



KENNY LAMM

engaging NC Baptists in worship  
**renewingworship**

PEW UPHOLSTERING & REFINISHING  
REVERSIBLE PEW CUSHIONS  
NEW PEWS CARPETING  
COMPLETE RENOVATIONS  
1-800-289-7397  
**Church Interiors Inc.**  
The Nation's Leading Church Renovation Specialists  
High Point, North Carolina  
[www.churchinteriors.com](http://www.churchinteriors.com)

**Interstate Transportation Equipment, Inc.**

New and Used Buses  
Financing Programs Available

The South's Oldest Bus Company  
Since 1947

[interstatetransportation.com](http://interstatetransportation.com)

HIGH POINT, NC • 800.726.0779



# Blair

Continued from page 1

“just to take Kenneth Ridings’ class on homiletics.” Blair transferred his credits to Luther Rice Seminary where he completed the bachelor and masters programs. In 1984 Bolton Baptist Church in Bolton, N.C., called him as their pastor.

“When the Lord called me to preach I thought that meant I would preach in my county in S.C. I never dreamed that I would move to another community let alone another state,” Blair said. “It was a good experience for a young preacher who was 24 years old. They were good to our family,” said Blair.

A retired pastor that he knew from the Whiteville area, John Stevenson, became the interim pastor of Piney Grove Chapel in Angier, N.C. “One day, out of the blue, John called me up and said, ‘Tim, I’m at a church in Angier. Knowing the church and knowing you, I just feel like you might be a good fit.’”

Again, Blair thought any move he made would take him south, not further north. But in 1987 he became the pastor of Piney Grove Chapel.

In five years of ministry the church grew and built additional facilities. “But the church was not growing as I thought it should,” Blair said.

They were financially strong and had good facilities. “But I thought, maybe if I leave, somebody new could come, and maybe the church would take off.” A church near his home town called him. He moved his family to Aynor, S.C., to become the pastor of Salem Baptist Church.

“About three months of being there I realized that I had probably made a mistake. I was out of the Lord’s will,” Blair said. At the same time the new pastor of Piney Grove did not work out either. “The chairman of the pastor search committee called me and said, ‘I’m sitting here with all of our committee and we’ve got a stack of resumes, but they don’t want to look at them. They said they want their pastor back. Would you remotely consider coming back?’”

Blair agreed to preach a weekend revival to “see how things go.” The church and the community turned out in strong numbers. “We had an awesome revival, and it was confirmation that the Lord was leading me and leading them to call me back as their pastor. So I came back,” he said.

“It has been an amazing journey for us. The Lord has blessed us beyond anything I could ever have thought or imagined.” The church has grown from a membership of 200 to more than 960. Renovations have doubled the capacity of the sanctuary, other facilities have been added and additional land has been purchased.



Timmy Blair, pastor of Piney Grove Chapel in Angier and president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, is thankful for God’s work in his life. (BR photo by K. Allan Blume)

“The church has been good to my family,” Blair added. “My boys grew up here. ... and got married here. My oldest son serves as the vice chairman of our deacons.

“That’s been an honor. To my children, it has put a positive outlook on what church is about, for which I will always be very grateful.”

When asked to identify the most important elements of his life and ministry, Blair did not hesitate. “I think the greatest accomplishments of my life was seeing my two boys come to Christ. I felt that if I failed as their dad and their pastor, though I have touched the masses, if I failed them, I would feel like I have not done the most important thing in ministry – to model the Christian life before them.

“To see them receive Christ and become Christian men who know the Lord, love the Lord and love the church has been the greatest joy of my life. One day I will step away from all of this and that’s what will count – your family.”

Blair said he and his wife, Wendy, were “childhood sweethearts” who wrote notes to each other in the fourth grade. They are now the proud grandparents of a nine-year-old girl and a three-year-old boy.

Their youngest son, Brandon, is the student pastor at Langston Baptist Church in Conway, S.C., serving with former N.C. pastor, Hampton Drum.

Having grown up in a broken home where his father was abusive and an alcoholic, he sees the importance of a spiritually healthy home.

“It was a very hard life,” he said. “I never knew where my daddy was. He took my mother’s wedding ring and

hocked it to buy cheap wine. He never contacted us, and never tried to have any relationship with us in any way.”

When Blair was in his 20s he joined his brother and sister to hire a private detective to locate their father. They found him in a prison in N.C. “We went to the prison and met him, just to see if we could have a relationship with him, but there was no interest in that, which was another blow for a young man. I just can’t imagine how someone would not

want to have a relationship with their children.” Their father died in prison.

“Statistically I would have been the same as my dad – a product of the family I came from. But God, in His power, can break the cycle. That’s why I say my life is a work of grace. That’s why it is so humbling to know that while my dad ended his life in prison, I get to be elected as president of our convention – it’s just a work of grace. That’s all I can say. It’s a work of grace!”

Blair’s background not only intensifies his desire to be a good husband and father, but also fosters strong admiration for the Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina (BCH).

“Because of the life I lived, I can identify with so many of those children,” he said. “My heart goes out to them, and I’m just thankful for the work our convention is doing through the BCH: touching those young lives, giving them a place of safety, helping them to become productive adults and leading many of them to the Lord.”

His most fulfilling pastoral work is to preach the gospel and love people. “What you do Monday through Saturday to touch the people – being there with the people, whether they are hurting or rejoicing – I’ve always felt like that gave me the platform for what I do on Sunday. I love to be with my people.”

Blair has tried to stay involved with the Southern Baptist Convention and the BSC.

As a young pastor he often found convention life challenging. “In those earlier days I remember how hard it was going [to the annual meeting], and I was so discouraged. In fact there was one time in Fayetteville when I said, ‘I’ll never go

back again.’ I was just so discouraged. But some time during the year we would get a good candidate and everybody would go again.” His perseverance paid off.

“Finally the convention began to turn and I was able to get involved serving on some committees,” Blair said. He has since served on the BSC’s Committee on Committees (2003-2004), the Program, Place and Preacher Committee (2006-2009, chairman in 2009) and the Board of Directors (2011). He served two terms as second vice president of the BSC (2012-2013) and one year as first vice president (2014).

As president of the BSC Blair wants to “... continue the right course as a convention, to make sure that we have [leaders] that understand some of the battles that were fought in the early days, and the sacrifices and commitments that were made in those days,” he said.

He described Milton Hollifield’s vision and leadership as “awesome.” Hollifield is the BSC’s executive director-treasurer.

“I am very grateful for the leadership, the staff and all of the employees of the BSC,” Blair added. “Until you serve in some capacity in the work of the convention, you really have no idea of the level of commitment and the level of passion in these people who serve us.”

His vision is to see N.C. Baptist churches of every size work together to reach the state and take the gospel to the whole world. “I think the greatest vehicle for that is the Cooperative Program (CP),” he said. “To me the CP was ‘networking’ before networking was cool. CP is basically churches choosing to network together and partner together to carry out a particular mission to the community, the country and the world, seeing lives changed by the power of God.

“I think we need to recapture the vision our leaders had years ago with the CP. No one church and no small group of churches could ever do what is being done through CP now. It would be hard for small churches to have the resources to underwrite families and send them out on the [international] mission field.”

He said CP is not a program, but a vision that all Baptist churches can buy into. Piney Grove Chapel has a record of leadership in baptisms, leads mission trips in North America and has continuing ministry in Swaziland, South Africa. The church has accepted the 1% CP Challenge, increasing their gifts to six percent annually.

“It’s time to put the pedal to the metal and go all out to reach the world for Christ. [CP’s] bigger than any of us could do on our own.” **BR**



# Accounts

Continued from page 1

Testament Textual Studies, told Baptist Press (BP) in written comments.

“For example, in Matthew we can see the temptation of feeling threatened by Jesus and wanting to retain control even at the cost of doing ungodly things like Herod did. And we can see how we need to be sensitive to God’s leadership as the magi were, offering their best based on God’s message to them,” Warren said. In Luke’s account God first reveals His Son’s birth to “common folks, the shepherds. And God still uses common folks to carry His message forward.”

All professors at Southern Baptist Convention seminaries pledge their agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message, which states that the Bible has “truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter” and “is totally true and trustworthy.”

## Conflicting stories?

Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth is famous for its presentation of the wise men, or magi in Greek; King Herod’s murderous extermination of male children in Bethlehem; and the flight of Jesus and His parents to Egypt. Luke omits those details but reports the visit of shepherds following Jesus’ birth; Mary’s song of praise known as the “Magnificat,” named for the first word in the song’s Latin translation; and angels proclaiming, “Glory to God in the highest.”

Theologically, Matthew highlights Jesus’ status as King of the Jews while Luke depicts Him as the Savior of all people regardless of their social standing.

“If we focus on the different details the Gospel writers report, we may miss the amazing similarities,” Rob Plummer, chairman of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s New Testament department, told BP in written comments. “Both report that Jesus’ mother was named Mary and His adoptive father was named Joseph, both report Jesus was supernaturally born of a virgin, both identify Jesus

as a descendent of David, both say Jesus was born in Bethlehem, both report that He eventually ended up in Nazareth.”

Plummer used an example from his own life to explain why it is unreasonable for skeptics to conclude that Matthew and Luke contradict.

“When my students get hung up on different details in the Gospel accounts, I encourage them to consider the complexity of their own lives,” Plummer said. “Life is full of surprising coincidences and unexpected turns. My senior year in college, I roomed with a young man also named Rob who went on to study at seminary (like me) – but he went to Princeton, while I went to Southern. A skeptical later historian might wrongly conclude that there was only one original Rob, whom some later followers attached to a ‘Princetonian’ tradition and other followers connected to a ‘Southern Seminary’ tradition.”

Plummer continued, “But wait! Imagine that after you read this article you run into someone I knew in college. He says, ‘Rob Plummer roomed with a guy named Eric his senior year in college.’ Or you meet another former acquaintance who says, ‘Rob Plummer had a single dorm room his senior year in college.’

“Am I a liar? In fact, all of those statements are true. I roomed in a single dorm room half of my senior year, and then switched to co-renting a house with two roommates – one named Eric and one named Rob.”

Analogous to the various accounts of his college days that are all true but may seem conflicting, Plummer noted, “The biblical authors often choose to focus on part of this historical account and do not give exhaustive details.”

The Gospels are not “exhaustive raw footage of events,” Plummer wrote, but “inspired documentaries” that are “historical and accurate” yet “are also written from the vantage point of the inspired human authors.”

## Why different characters?

The different characters included in the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke align with the two authors’ doctrinal emphases, Thor Madsen, professor of New Testament, ethics and philosophy at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, told BP.

“Matthew wants us to notice how, by the grace of God, the ‘wrong’ people can understand who Jesus is, while the ‘right’ ones do not,” Madsen said. The magi were “pagan star-gazers from the east who see the supernatural star and come a great distance to worship Jesus,” but “the locals in Jerusalem” did not recognize the Savior’s birth.

Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus further demonstrates God’s willingness to accept the “wrong” people as His own by including three women – Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba – whose sinful pasts would have caused Jews to regard them as outsiders.

“Sometimes wicked characters and their evil deeds play a role in Matthew’s narrative, as we find with Herod,” Madsen said. “His rage against the boys in Bethlehem causes the weeping in Ramah (Jeremiah 31:15) that gives way to the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). No one appears in Matthew’s Gospel merely for the record.”

In Luke “God is the Ultimate Promise-Keeper whose Word never fails,” Madsen said.

“Accordingly, John the Baptist becomes everything predicted by Gabriel, being filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb.... Even the census in 2:1-4 highlights God’s promise-keeping power: He will move the whole earth, so to speak, in order to put Mary in Bethlehem on schedule for the birth of her Son. Angels tell shepherds that a time of peace has come, the sign of which is a baby in a manger – a sign which they eventually see, as God had promised. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would see the Messiah before his death; and he does, just as God had promised. We gather that something similar occurred in Anna’s case. Thus, the importance of Luke’s characters is their availability to show God’s faithfulness to His promises.”

Warren said the wise men’s appearance in Matthew authenticates “the kingly role of Jesus.”

The magi were “king-makers, almost certainly from the ... Parthian Empire (an Empire that Rome had not yet conquered at that time),” Warren said.

“Prior to Herod the Great claiming the throne, he had to battle the Parthians, who were trying to put their own choice of a person in as the King of the Jews. So they are now coming to do so again it appears, with Herod well aware of the threat as seen in the text’s mention of the fear that arose when the magi came to Jerusalem: ‘oh no, here we go with another war again’ would have been the feeling, only this time it would be a different type of king.”

## Timeline of events

Warren proposed a timeline of how the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke might fit together:

- Mary miraculously becomes pregnant (Matthew and Luke).
- Joseph decides not to divorce her due to the visit of the angel (Matthew and Luke).
- The birth of John the Baptist happens (Luke).
- The star appears to the magi and they begin their journey (Matthew).
- Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem (Luke).
- Jesus is born in a cave where the animals were kept below the house in Bethlehem (Luke) (7 to 4 B.C.).
- The shepherds get the notice about Jesus’ birth and visit Him in the birth cave (Luke).
- The magi arrive in Jerusalem and then go to Bethlehem to see Jesus at the house (Matthew).
- Herod realizes that the magi are not going to return to Jerusalem and orders the killing of the babies in Bethlehem (Matthew).
- Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt with Jesus (Matthew).
- Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth (Matthew) (after Herod’s death in 4 B.C., but prior to A.D. 6 since Archelaus is still in power in Judea – he is replaced in A.D. 6).

However believers think the two accounts fit together, it is illogical to say they contradict, Madsen said.

“Matthew’s infancy narrative would contradict Luke’s only if, in some respect, Matthew says ‘A’ and Luke says ‘not A,’” Madsen said.

“But the two accounts don’t differ in that kind of way. What we see, rather, are differences arising from the standards by which Matthew chooses to include information not given by Luke, and vice versa.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – David Roach is chief national correspondent for Baptist Press.) **BR**



**FRUITLAND BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE**  
ENROLL NOW FOR NEW QUARTER ON JAN. 6, 2015

- Preparing the “God Called” to minister since 1946
- Our graduates are serving churches all across the S.B.C.
- Earn an Associates Degree in Religion (choose from Christian Ministry, Church Planting, and Christian Worldview tracks)
- Our Associate degree is now fully available online
- Courses offered for Spanish speaking students at several N.C. locations (Call Robert Fernandez at 828-399-0109)

For more information call (828) 685-8886, or write: David Horton, President  
Fruitland Baptist Bible College, 1455 Gilliam Road, Hendersonville, N.C. 28792  
Owned and operated by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

Visit **BR**now.org



IMAGINE  
joining the Author of all history  
in

# ONE SACRED EFFORT

FIND YOUR PLACE IN GOD'S STORY

MATTHEW 28:19-20

2014 LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING®  
NATIONAL GOAL: \$175 MILLION

## N.C. laser engineer connects with S. Asians

By DON GRAHAM | IMB/Baptist Press

**W**alt Tucker is an MIT grad who is as comfortable starting house churches as he is building lasers to protect aircraft from heat-seeking missiles.

Tucker, 52, spends much of his time sharing Christ and making disciples in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, also known as RTP.

But he hasn't quit his day job; his engineering career is his entree to a sizeable population of South Asian immigrants and expats who have come to work or study among the Triangle's cluster of universities and high-tech firms.

Tucker moved to the Raleigh-Durham area in 2013 with his wife Katie, but not because of a job. Though he could have taken his engineering career anywhere, a mission trip to India in 2009 made it clear God was calling the couple to reach South Asians.

There are neighborhoods in the Triangle where as many as 80 percent of residents are South Asian, Tucker notes. The high population density, combined with the "technical camaraderie" he'd share with South Asians working in similar fields, made the Triangle a strategic place to live, work and play – on mission.

Katie, in her work and witness, is a clinical director at a chiropractic neurology center.

**See Connects page 15**



Walt and Katie Tucker, inset, use their jobs to live out the gospel among a large population of South Asian immigrants and expats in North Carolina's Research Triangle. Walt works as an engineer; Katie is a clinical director at a chiropractic neurology center. The Tuckers are trying to reach internationals in North Carolina with the gospel. In the main photograph, a South Asian family watches Brahmin priests perform an elaborate Hindu ceremony on the banks of the Ganges River. (Main photo is by Paul W. Lee; inset photo is contributed)



# Pouring gas on South Asia's church-planting fire

By DON GRAHAM | IMB/Baptist Press

For Mitch Englehart,\* it's a beautiful sight that's taking place in some very dirty water. The South Carolina native watches from the bank of a stagnant canal as six new believers are baptized outside a small village in the South Asian countryside. Dhanwan is one of them.

"I want to follow Jesus!" the young man says, explaining that he became a Christian following a miraculous healing through the prayers of a local pastor. That pastor, Lalbahadur, is a fifth-generation Christian whose faith can be traced back to Englehart's church-planting network. It is mid-January, and Dhanwan shivers as he steps into the canal. Lalbahadur starts the baptism chain, first dunking Dhanwan, as each newly baptized believer baptizes the next. This is discipleship in action, Englehart says, and it's what's brought him to South Asia.

He and his wife, Nellie,\* from Texas, have spent the past nine years training church leaders like Lalbahadur. For Englehart, 47, that means travel – and lots of it. On average, he spends 10 to 12 nights a month away from Nellie and their two children, Rachel\* and Peyton,\* as he disciples national believers. But he says the sacrifice is worthwhile; it's part of the commitment the Texas couple made when God called them as full-time Christian workers.

"When you look back at Paul and Jesus, you can almost spell 'disciple' T-I-M-E," Englehart says. "If we want to see God move in an area, then we need to invest between 60 and 90 days a year into these guys."

"These guys" are Englehart's two main church-planting partners, Rakesh and Manoj. Between them, they've seen more than 1,200 new churches and 3,000-plus baptisms in the past five years. Trouble is, they work more than 500 miles apart.

Rakesh is six hours away by train; Manoj is much farther (14 hours by train), which is why Englehart opts to fly. The \$140 ticket shaves travel time down to an hour. Both the partners' ministries center around rural villages, which means that after Englehart arrives in their respective cities, there's often hours of driving still ahead to get where they're going.

"One hundred dollars gets us a taxi or jeep to travel around for three days so we can go from village to village," Englehart says. The same amount buys about 35 Bibles, "so we can put the Word in people's hands."

All of these expenses – from trains to taxis to Bibles – represent just a few of the Engleharts' needs provided for by Southern Baptists' giving through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

"We can do so much more together than we can by ourselves, and that's the genius of Lottie Moon," Englehart says, speaking of the offering that supports him, his family and their ministry, as well as that of more than 4,800 other Southern Baptist workers overseas. "When we go home [to America], they call us heroes. But all of us are heroes because we couldn't do it without those folks who are praying and giving. They're our heroes."

Englehart believes it's all part of one sacred effort that God is using to fulfill the Great Commission. The total number of believers in the Engleharts' church-planting network alone tops 10,000, and there are doz-



Mitch Englehart,\* left, and Manoj, right, one of Englehart's main church-planting partners, take time to pray over believers following a church service in a rural South Asian village. Many ask for prayer for healing; others share testimonies of coming to faith in Christ after being healed, some through traditional medicine and some through miraculous circumstances. (IMB photos by Paul W. Lee)

ens more Christian workers scattered throughout the region. Better still, Englehart says much of the growth is happening among unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs) who are hearing the gospel for the first time. But there's still plenty of work to be done.

Englehart's team is busy developing a new wave of church planters focused on the area's least-reached districts – many less than 0.1 percent Christian. Progress can sometimes seem painfully slow, but Englehart knows that's a small price to pay compared with that of the South Asian believers he's training.

He's awed by the sacrifices many are willing to make – like walking nine miles in sweltering heat to attend a training event. "Who wouldn't want to be around a leader like that? It's from those guys I've learned how to give my life for the gospel," Englehart says. "I've seen these guys suffer and the joy they have in doing it."

But it's not their dedication – or even their success – that keeps him going. It's about calling – about finding his place in God's story.

Englehart remembers when God first began pulling him toward full-time Christian work. A successful businessman chasing the American dream, he was first introduced to South Asians in Texas. Almost immediately, Englehart knew something was different. He was able to connect with them in a way he couldn't with his American friends – especially when it came to sharing the gospel.

With Americans, "it was like I was pushing a boulder up a hill," Englehart explains. "But when I sat with South Asian friends ..., it was like chasing that boulder down a hill – it was that easy."

And today, after helping train dozens of church planters, there's little doubt Englehart is exactly where God wants him to be. "I wish I could stretch my day into 36 hours, I wish I could have 45 days in a month — that's how much I love what I do," he says.



A South Asian believer prays with Christian worker Mitch Englehart.\* "I wish I could stretch my day into 36 hours. I wish I could have 45 days in a month – that's how much I love what I do," Englehart says of his nine-year ministry among South Asians.

"God is using these guys in mighty ways," Englehart adds with a grin. "There's already a fire burning. My role is to pour a little gasoline on that fire."

\*Name changed

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Don Graham is a senior writer with the International Mission Board.)

Learn more about South Asian people groups and how to pray for and reach them with the gospel at [southasianpeoples.imb.org](http://southasianpeoples.imb.org).

Go to [imb.org/offering](http://imb.org/offering) for resources to help promote the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. **BR**



# Baptists

Continued from page 4

case – as well as what happened in Ferguson – “is yet another reminder that all is not well in America. It’s a reminder that racial tensions and divisions are high. It’s a reminder that there is a glaring racial disparity in our justice system.”

Moore agreed, saying African-Americans – especially males – “are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be executed, more likely to be killed.”

“We have to acknowledge that something is wrong with the system at this point and something has to be done,” he said. “We may not agree in this country on every particular case and situation, but it’s high time we start listening to our African-American brothers and sisters in this country when they tell us they are experiencing a problem.”

“For those of us in Christ, we need to recognize that when one part of the body of Christ hurts, the whole body of Christ hurts,” Moore said. “It’s time for us in Christian churches to not just talk about the gospel but live out the gospel by tearing down these dividing walls not only by learning and listening to one another but also by standing up and speaking out for one another.”

Bart Barber, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Farmersville, Texas, and a former Southern Baptist Convention first vice president, called Garner’s death “needless and tragic.”

“As I witness rising tension between black Americans and American law enforcement, I am reminded that for much of our modern history (and in many places even today) Baptists have suffered under antagonistic relationships with the civil order,” Barber said. “This reality should dispose us to relate sympathetically with those who feel they are in the same situation today, should instruct us as to how Christians ought to behave in confrontations with the law and should encourage us that Christ can bring reconciliation and even camaraderie between those who were once estranged. Let us pray for God to bring about the same outcome today.”

Williams, senior pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church in Philadelphia, urged the church toward “inexplicable unity and a radical obedience to the Greatest Commandment [to love God, as in Matthew 22], which will set the platform for healing and reconciliation through an unprecedented spiritual revival and awakening. We need prophetic voices all across our convention to passionately pray and unashamedly sound the trumpet against all unrighteousness. Because of His unending love for all men, let us acknowledge the problems and lead the charge to assemble all the saints for peace and justice.”

Walter Strickland, special adviser to the president for diversity at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote that “the barrage of verbal epithets and violence must come to an end and dialogues laced with Christ-like humility must take its place,” in a Dec. 4 commentary.

“Environments need to be cultivated where individuals can be heard on their own terms, without their lived experience being invalidated by another’s,” Strickland, also a theology instructor at the North Carolina seminary, noted at his *walter-strickland.com* website.

“Finally, after each of us has given an honest and sustained effort to stand in one another’s shoes, as Christ modeled in the incarnation, we as a society can begin to work together to address the individual and systemic issues that trouble us as a nation.”

Strickland asked, “Where do we go from here? I’m convinced that the resources to move forward are in the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Every person is “blinded by their sinfulness,” which “can only be healed by the one who is without blinders, limitation and sin – Jesus Christ,” he wrote.

“[T]oo many Christians have long forgotten the humility of Christ demonstrated in the gospel and its inherent role in our lives ... to help us overcome our often truncated understanding of his world,” Strickland said. “It’s only by imitating the humility of Christ that we can ‘consider others as better than ourselves’ (Philippians 2:3) and therefore lessen the division in our country.”

Now is not the time to wish away difficult conversations about race and racism, Newbell wrote in a post for the ERLC at <http://erlc.com/article/the-sin-of-racism>.

The church “must be a safe place for difficult discussions about race,” she said.

“We must not only be unafraid to discuss it, but [acknowledge racism] still exists in many places in our country and can often be hidden away in our own hearts. We cannot be passive. Just like all temptations, pride and arrogance toward others must be confronted and fought with the truth of God’s Word.

“Tragedies like what we’ve seen in the Garner case are a reminder of the presence of injustice in the world,” Newbell wrote. “It’s a call to speak, listen and pray. Because we are the body of Christ, we must learn to mourn with those who mourn. So I ask you, are you ready to join arms with your fellow brothers and sisters to pursue true racial reconciliation that can only be achieved through the cross of Christ?”

Frank S. Page, in comments to Baptist Press, said the grand jury decisions in Ferguson and New York City have “peeled back the layers of deep-seated racial tensions and precipitated a new wave of social unrest in our nation.” Page said he also is distressed “at the opportunists who use social unrest as an excuse for criminal behavior. Many innocent people have had their businesses or property destroyed.”

Page voiced concern “that we are at a place where trust of police is being deeply diminished. I have always been a strong proponent of supporting and trusting the police. I remain so. The vast majority of law enforcement officers are individuals of high integrity who act professionally. We must not handcuff our police so that they are not able to do their jobs effectively.

“With that being said, I do not believe police should be given the latitude to use excessive force in enforcing the law,” Page said. “I find it incredulous that a grand jury would not bring forth any kind of indictment with such clear video evidence of excessive force. I am disturbed by all illegal behavior, whether those who break the law are on either side of the fence, citizens and police alike. ...

“Being a child of the ’60s, I have seen many things in my life. I had hoped that we had come past many of the things we have seen occur in the last few weeks,” Page said. “We must not slow down, back up, or back away from God’s vision of racial harmony and unity. We must continue to respect authority, but we must also hold authority accountable in the arenas of justice, fairness and compassion.”

In a Dec. 3 statement, President

Obama said it is important for Americans – “regardless of race, region, faith” – to realize “this is an American problem and not just a black problem or a brown problem or a Native American problem. This is an American problem. When anybody in this country is not being treated equally under the law, that’s a problem.”

The president said police have an “incredibly difficult job” and are risking their lives to protect Americans, but “right now, unfortunately, we are seeing too many instances where people just do not have confidence that folks are being treated fairly. And in some cases, those may be misperceptions; but in some cases, that’s a reality.”

The White House announced Dec. 1 a task force to make recommendations on improving relations between law enforcement and minority communities.

Attorney General Eric Holder announced later Dec. 3 that the Department of Justice would conduct a federal civil rights investigation into Garner’s death. The Staten Island grand jury’s decision not to bring an indictment came after more than three months of deliberations by its 23 members. Only 12 needed to agree in order to indict Pantaleo, a member of the New York Police Department for eight years.

In the video, Pantaleo and another officer are shown approaching and apparently attempting to handcuff Garner for what police said was the illegal sale of cigarettes. When the 6-3, 350-pound Garner protested and resisted, Pantaleo applied a hold around his neck before other officers helped force him to the sidewalk.

The New York Police Department has banned the use of a chokehold since 1993, according to the *New York Daily News*.

None of the police officers or emergency medical personnel who responded performed CPR, and Garner, the father of six, died on the way to the hospital, according to a briefing paper compiled by Joe Carter, communications specialist for the ERLC.

The medical examiner’s office concluded Garner’s death was caused by “compression of neck (chokehold), compression of chest and prone positioning during physical restraint by police,” Carter reported. Other factors contributing to Garner’s death included asthma and heart disease, according to the medical examiner’s office.

Garner had been arrested 31 times since he was 16 on charges that included assault, grand larceny and resisting arrest, Carter reported.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Tom Strode is the Washington bureau chief for Baptist Press. BP editor Art Toalston contributed to this article.) **BR**



TRILLIA NEWBELL

## ERLC to host racial summit

**T**he 2015 Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) Leadership Summit will address “The Gospel and Racial Reconciliation” to equip Christians to apply the

gospel on these issues with convictional kindness in their communities, their families and their churches. This event will be held in Nashville on March 26-27, 2015. Visit [erlc.com/summit2015](http://erlc.com/summit2015). **BR**



# Christmas

Continued from page 5

## ● Most people are fine with Happy Holidays.

One of the staples of the “War on Christmas” debates is the fact that some store clerks and businesses have substituted “Happy Holidays” for “Merry Christmas.” But few Americans seem to mind “Happy Holidays.”

Less than a third (29 percent) agree with the statement, “It is offensive when people say Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas.” Two-thirds (67 percent) disagree. Four percent are not sure.

Four in 10 evangelicals (41 percent) and about a third of Christians (35 percent) say the phrase is offensive. That drops to one in five (20 percent) for people of other faiths, and one in 10 (11 percent) for Nones.

## ● Some are bothered by “X-mas.”

Using the term “X-mas” in place of Christmas bothers Americans more than “Happy Holidays.” About four in 10 (39 percent) say using “X-mas” is offensive. More than half (55 percent) disagree, while 6 percent are not sure.

Women (43 percent) are more likely to be offended by X-mas than men (36 percent.) And more than half of Americans age 55 to 64 (52 percent) are offended by X-mas.

Younger Americans don’t seem to mind X-mas. About one in five (18 percent) of those 18 to 24, and a third (35 percent) of those 25 to 34 find the phrase offensive.

About a quarter (26 percent) of Hispanic Americans say using X-Mas is offensive. Whites (44 percent) are more likely to find the phrase offensive, as are African Americans (39 percent).

About half of Christians (47 percent) say they agree, along with about a third (32 percent) of people of other faiths. Only one in five (19 percent) of Nones are bothered by X-mas.

Meanwhile, more Protestants (51 percent) than Catholics (37 percent) take offense.

## ● Theology remains a bit shaky, even at Christmas.

Traditional Christian theology, based on the Gospel of John, teaches Jesus existed with God the Father at the beginning. “He was with God in the beginning,” says

John 1:2. But, Americans aren’t so clear about the details of the incarnation and the Trinity.

A little more than half (56 percent) agree with the statement, “God’s son existed before Jesus was born in Bethlehem.” Three in 10 (29 percent) disagree. Fifteen percent are not sure.

Those living in the Northeast (64 percent) are more likely to agree than those in the Midwest (44 percent) or West (52 percent).

Young Americans are less likely to agree Christ existed prior to His birth. About half (48 percent) of those 18 to 44 agree, but that number jumps to nearly two-thirds (64 percent) for those over 44 years.

Evangelicals (70 percent) have the highest agreement. Christians (64 percent) are more likely to agree than those from other faiths (52 percent) and the Nones (31 percent).

“The entire Christian narrative is fulfilled in Jesus further humbling himself to become obedient to the point of death on a cross,” McConnell said. “Without Jesus coming to take the punishment for sin men deserved, there would be no point to celebrating His birth.”

**Methodology:** The phone survey of Americans was conducted Sept. 26-Oct. 5, 2014. The calling utilized Random Digit Dialing. Sixty percent of completes were among landlines and 40 percent among cell phones. Maximum quotas and slight weights were used for gender, region, age, ethnicity and education 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 3.5 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Those labeled Evangelicals consider themselves “a born again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian.” Those labeled Christian include those whose religious preference is Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox or Non-denominational Christian.

(EDITOR’S NOTE - Bob Smietana is senior writer for *Life-way’s Facts & Trends* magazine at [FactsandTrends.net](http://FactsandTrends.net).) **BR**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### GWU recognized for service

(Gardner-Webb University) For the seventh consecutive year, Gardner-Webb University (GWU) in Boiling Springs has been named to the 2014 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the U.S. Department of Education. Less than 100 institutions across the nation received the honor this year, and GWU is one of just 38 schools to be recognized “with distinction.”

In the past year alone, 905 Gardner-Webb students engaged in academic service-learning initiatives, while 1,006 students participated in community service opportunities outside of class. Through a wide range of projects, students logged a total of 34,174 hours of intentional community service.

CNCS oversees the Honor Roll in collaboration with the U.S. departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development, Campus Compact, and the American Council on Education. For a complete list of recipients, visit [www.ed.gov/edblogs/fbnp/presidents-campus-challenge/](http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/fbnp/presidents-campus-challenge/).

### BPC accreditation reaffirmed

(*Christian Index*/Baptist Press) The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) has reaffirmed the accreditation of Brewton-Parker College (BPC), reversing an earlier decision.

The Dec. 9 announcement means the Georgia Baptist college, which had been on probation and then lost its academic ranking on June 19, will remain fully accredited without any blemish on its record. The governing group announced its decision Dec. 10 at the conclusion of its annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

The college originally was informed it had lost its accreditation on June 19 but after launching an appeals process, administrators were told on Sept. 29 that it would remain an accredited member on probation as additional information was being prepared for reconsideration.

# Attraction

Continued from page 3

panel discussion. “That is not going to be helpful to us or useful to us at the end of the day if we add our endorsements to those identities.”

Burk, however, noted the necessity of using the terminology of sexual orientation, while “scrutinizing it from a biblical perspective” to focus on God’s purpose in creation for sexual desires.

Hill and Sprinkle likewise emphasized the importance of using the terms, even though they are not found in Scripture, for the purpose of recasting that language in a gospel context. “To say that Christians will simply avoid altogether the language of sexual orientation – gay, lesbian, homosexuality – that would mean in my own experience forfeiting a lot of conversations with people from my own generation who that’s just the language they speak,” said Hill, author of the forthcoming book, *Spiritual Friendship*:

*Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian.*

Sprinkle’s paper, “Sexual Orientation in Paul’s World: It’s Not What You Think,” focused on the absence of understanding sexual orientation as identity in the first century. In the discussion, he affirmed Hill’s statement in line with Paul, who “infuses” Greco-Roman terms with “new meaning or gutted them where they needed to be gutted and transformed them.”

In the panel discussion, the participants clarified the terminology and found themselves in agreement on the sinfulness of experiencing same-sex attraction. Burk distinguished the act of feeling same-sex attraction from the predisposition to sinful desire.

While same-sex attraction cannot be reduced to sexual desire, Burk said, it is the “defining characteristic.” Burk

insisted on clarifying that orientation is not feeling sexually attracted “at every moment” but that a person is inclined to have desires in a certain direction.

Same-sex “orientation is not a natural evil to be swept away with tornadoes and earthquakes” as issues of moral indifference. Rather, Burk argued, “it’s a moral concern” with which every disciple of Christ must come to terms.

Hill affirmed Burk’s approach to call for repentance when experiencing same-sex desire and added: “I want to be able to say to someone who experiences no shift at all in their unchosen patterns of same-sex attraction, that a life of faithful, Christian holiness is still open to them, every bit as much as if they experienced a dramatic shift in their sexual attraction or their sexual desire.”

Burk added that repenting of illicit sexual desire, whether heterosexual

or homosexual, does not mean it will instantly disappear. “Repentance is a way of life,” Burk said. “We’re talking about wrestlings that are deep and visceral” and could go on indefinitely.

Panelists also noted the principles of temptation and sexual desire apply not just to same-sex attraction but to heterosexual lust outside of marriage, providing an opportunity for repentance and growth in Christian discipleship.

“The moral space between a sinful lust and a benign recognition of beauty,” Burk said, is the “apprehension of beauty in which there is no sexual possibility,” just as brothers and sisters in Christ.

“If you’re looking at a woman with the purpose of pursuing this illicit lust that’s wrong. But I would also say the experience in any degree of that desire is sinful and it’s something we should repent of when we become aware of it.” **BR**



# When truth is applied to the church first

By **MATTHIAS PONCE-DE-LEON** | Guest Column

It is a great burden to see our culture shift so far from biblical truth on the issue of same-sex relationships. Scripture is clear regarding the sinfulness of these types of relationships. These behaviors are characteristic of cultures given to idolatry and all types of sexual immorality.

This does not happen suddenly or without warning. It is the neglect of the primacy of scripture that produces an acceptance of moral laxity. The Word of God is replaced by the word of man. Apathy of this nature does not happen outside of the church, but within. When the Word is neglected, the warnings about the danger of forgetting God and living according to self-will are missed. This process begins slowly and subtly. Churches seek to arrange life to suit their own will rather than aligning life to suit the will of God. Small concessions are made in morality that deprecates the Christian example.

The starting point of these concessions are in the areas of integrity and character – doing whatever I need to do, and saying whatever I need to say to get what I want. Before sin ever takes place in the church, it has already gained a foothold in the heart and mind of a believer.

Remember, the heart and mind, not the outward action of flesh, are the seat of defilement. When there are concessions in integrity and character, personal desires and opinions become the standard for actions among believers. The church, in such a state, is being propelled by the will of man and not God. Consequentially, the church is plagued with the pressure to accept moral looseness and succumb because they do what they feel like doing. This is what the lost world sees from the church.

In many ways the silence over ungodly, unscriptural heterosexual relationships among believers has had the greatest impact upon our lack of influence than any other single behavior.

The problem can always be traced back to apathy and neglect of the Word. It sets an example to the world of the exact opposite of what the church is to be. The world becomes indifferent to the “noise” of the church and often views our “stands” as hypocritical. While our lips

don’t promote same-sex relationships and unions, our hypocrisy does.

Until the church accepts responsibility for the role it has played in the production of the carnality that surrounds us, there will never be any progress.

What is tragically missed in the midst of all the anger related to the same-sex issue is that the church possesses the power of the Living God to radically impact the world.



**MATTHIAS PONCE-DE-LEON**  
Guest Column

What is going to transform the society is not the addition or subtraction of laws, but the establishment of genuine, blood-purchased, personal relationships with Jesus Christ! One of the greatest weapons in our arsenal is the union God has sanctified between one man and one woman for life. It is the “divine metaphor” of Christ’s love for His church!

Does the world see the beauty in the provision, protection and unconditional love in our marriages? Are we teaching our children through our example of the husband and wife relationship in our home? Are we teaching the definition of a covenant relationship and how careful and prayerful we should be when it comes to the marriage union? Does the church realize that our witness depends in large part upon the sanctification and success of our marriages? Our marriages should shout the awe-some, beautiful love of the Savior! Do they?

As the church, we are bound to proclaim truth. The truth is, sin is never OK. It is the knowledge and acceptance of truth that brings freedom. We are in a challenging time where the temptation is great to find ways to distance ourselves from an extremely uncomfortable issue.

But this troubling issue is merely the next symptom in a progression of symptoms that always happens when God’s people neglect His Word. This progression will continue if there is not genuine repentance among the people of God for our own personal sin. Until the Lord calls us home, movements of God will always be initiated through the church, for that is where the power of God’s Spirit resides. If we are waiting for the world to change in any other way than that, we will continue to be disappointed in the direction of our society.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Matthias “Matty” Ponce-de-Leon is pastor of Arlington First Baptist Church in Jonesville.) **BR**

# Christmas reminders

I love the sights and sounds that remind us the Christmas season is here. Even if Christmas has become commercialized to the point that the true meaning of the season has been lost to some, it is still possible to find many reminders of the Christ in Christmas that can warm our hearts and point others



**MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.**  
BSC executive  
director-treasurer

to Him. As some examples, think about how the lights, the trees and the exchanging of gifts can remind us of the true meaning of Christmas.

When you see all the Christmas lights this year radiating in the darkness, be reminded that Jesus is the true light of the world (John 8:12).

On the night Jesus was born, the heavens were filled with light as the glory of the Lord shined around the angels who proclaimed His birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:10). When Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate Him shortly after his birth, Simeon said Jesus would give light to the Gentiles and glory to Israel (Luke 2:32).

In John 1:4-5, the scriptures say in Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness. In verse 9 John proclaims Jesus to be the true light. After beginning his public ministry, Jesus proclaimed, “*I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life*” (John 8:12). Similarly, Christ calls His followers to be lights in a dark world. Think about ways you can shine your light for Christ this Christmas.

When we see the sparkling lights on Christmas trees, let’s also be reminded of another tree – the tree upon which Christ suffered and died to pay the penalty for our sins.

Following his virgin birth into this world, Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, grew into an adult and lived a sinless life so that He could die a substitutionary death on our behalf.

The message the angels proclaimed that first Christmas is the same message we proclaim this Christmas: “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11). Jesus was born in Bethlehem so that one day, He could take our place on the cross and be our Savior.

When we see those Christmas gifts, let’s be reminded of the greatest gift of all – the gift of salvation that has been offered freely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8).

In the midst of all the rush of the Christmas season, pause and reflect on the joy and peace that came into your life when you personally accepted God’s gift of salvation and committed to follow Him as your master.

Perhaps you will make a new acquaintance or see a friend this Christmas who needs to hear the story of how Jesus changed your life. Perhaps the sights and sounds of the season will provide an opportunity for you to share the real meaning of Christmas.

Enjoy and celebrate all there is to love about Christmas as we are reminded of all that God has done for us through His Son! What a wonderful gift, what a great story to share. Hallelujah, what a Savior! **BR**

## Elliff

Continued from page 2

The International Mission Board (IMB) is, in fact, Southern Baptist churches focused together in one sacred effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

IMB, originally called the Foreign Mission Board, quickly found its place in Southern Baptist hearts. And we found our home in Richmond, Va., from which missionaries of old would travel down the James River, out into the Chesapeake Bay, and from there across the oceans over which many of them would never return. On some occasions missionaries actually packed their belongings inside the very coffin in which they would later be buried.

**One Sacred Effort.** That’s what it will take for us to reach the world with the message of Christ. And you, your church and all Southern Baptists have a place in God’s continuing story of redemption. Missions requires teamwork. At the very outset we are each co-missioned

by Christ, joining Him and others in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. What is your role? Going? Letting go? Helping others to go? Praying for those who go? What a wonderful sense of fulfillment comes when you find your place in God’s story.

This year, join Southern Baptists everywhere in One Sacred Effort. Find your place in God’s story.

Here are some resources:

- **Pray:** [pray.imb.org](http://pray.imb.org).
  - **Give:** [give.imb.org](http://give.imb.org) – to the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions through your local Southern Baptist church.
  - **Go:** [going.imb.org](http://going.imb.org) – has guidance on volunteer, partnership and career service opportunities.
  - **Connect:** View a related video on One Sacred Effort at [vimeo.com/96915293](http://vimeo.com/96915293), as well as at [imb.org/lmcovideo](http://imb.org/lmcovideo).
- (EDITOR’S NOTE – Tom Elliff is IMB’s past president.) **BR**



# Ministry

Continued from page 1

Executive director and lead missionary of BCMHC, Mike “Puck” Puckett, said their purpose is to be a missionary hub on campus for and with the local churches. Historically, the BCM has served as the campus ministry front for the convention.

“Our structure is built on weekly worship. We have a small group system in place ... for students to understand that they aren’t just here for themselves or for a degree, but that God has intentionally placed them here,” he said.

BCMHC’s ministry is dependent upon students who are missionaries on their local campus. Puckett emphasized, “We on staff at BCM in the High Country cannot exist if we’re the ones making everything happen. We’re more of the equippers and the senders and support. ... Once it comes down to it, it’s going to take students reaching students to have an impact on the campus with the gospel.”

Numerous events are planned throughout the year to connect with students. Each year, ASU hosts a spiritual opportunities fair that gives both the BCMHC and local churches the chance to meet some of ASU’s students and to connect them with area churches.

Puckett added, “The campus will allow registered student organizations to send mailers that go free to all of the [campus] post office boxes as long as the Center for Student Involvement approves it. We’ll put our list of events on a well-designed card, and I think we sent out about 10,000 of those this year. ... All of these students will get this list of events along with our contact info.”

But ultimately, Puckett said, “it’s all about our students involved in reaching other students, because we can have the slickest promo, the best facilities, the biggest crowd and things like that, but that’s only going to win a few students.”

Community colleges are different. Jonathan Yarboro, team leader and consultant for BSC’s collegiate partnerships, noted that these are unique because they are structured differently than four-year residential universities. “When you look at a community college, it is different because the students who are coming for a nursing program are on the same schedule. They take the same classes at exactly the same time, and they even have their lunch breaks at the same time. When the class ends, they do one of two things: they go home, or they go to work,” he said.

Kelton Hinton, director of missions of the Johnston Baptist Association, said community college students do not have a lot of free time because they juggle several responsibilities such as home life

and a possible full-time job while going to school. He said, “They have zero free time, so we have to catch them while they are on campus and between classes.”

Also, serving as a campus ministry coordinator at Johnston Community College in Smithfield, Hinton said various Bible studies and social events are started in order to meet and engage community college students. Because the structure isn’t conducive to social events outside of the classroom setting, ministries must create a social culture on these campuses. “Many [community] college students come into a particular area of study, and they come on campus ... and interact only with their fellow cohorts in their program and then they leave,” he said.

Hinton and others have developed a series of Bible studies specific to different groupings based on a student’s area of study. “For example, we have a separate Bible study that meets weekly with basic law-enforcement training, ... another study group that works with the truck driver trainees, and we have hopes to expand to the nursing program.

“This is what I call the silo mentality,” said Hinton.

He appoints volunteers to lead these Bible studies on a weekly basis, and his goal “is to have Bible student leaders who understand that world to advise [students] as well as use illustrations and applications of the biblical text to speak into their career choices.”

Associate pastor at Woodland Hills Church in Asheville, Jason Speier utilizes a missional community model for engaging students; in fact, the church uses Training for Trainers (T4T) to disciple individuals and groups. T4T was developed by an Asian-American missionary named Ying Kai while serving in Asia; Kai saw more than 80,000 churches started and two million baptisms within 10 years of using the T4T model.

Speier said they’re implementing T4T in three phases: phase one includes Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College in Asheville; phase two targets Mars Hill University in Mars Hill; and phase three is at the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

He said, “We’ve started with the first two phases by identifying student-believers from our community and churches, and having them engage in the [T4T] training, while also teaching them how to disciple one-on-one with fellow students.”

With each campus having a unique identity, Speier and others are trying to communicate the gospel through effective models in the numerous settings of the Buncombe Baptist Association – and abroad. In fact, Speier said he doesn’t

believe ministries should recreate Woodland Hills’ chosen model into their own contexts.

“What we’re trying to do is identify anyone who is ready and willing to disciple students in a one-on-one or one-on-group basis,” he said. “The hope of this is that we can contextualize the gospel at the most basic level of person-to-person. ... Here, I can find out exactly where you’re at and I can help you to see what God has done through you. Then, I can disciple you in the most efficient and best way possible. Great, great things happen in one-on-one [discipleship].”

Approximately two years ago, The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham planted Mercy Hill Church in Greensboro with the intentions of reaching the Triad. Within that time, the college ministry grew from slightly more than five students to 250-275 students.

Pastor of age-based ministry at Mercy Hill, Jeremy Dager noted the six different schools the college ministry represents: University of North Carolina at Greensboro, High Point University, Elon University, Winston-Salem State University, Greensboro College and North Carolina A&T State University.

Dager said the church has seen tremendous growth due to their relationships with on-campus ministries and personal relationships with students. “Through these relationships, we were able to help students get discipled and get them excited about the local church,” he said. “From there, we’ve seen that replicate as students see us pouring into them.”

Mercy Hill encourages their students to be committed to both weekly small groups and worship. “And also,” added Dager, “we push them to live missionally on campus. All of that is done through relationships. ... What’s neat about it is that we’ve seen students not only come, but also grow. They’re now thinking about how to leverage their life after graduation to do something, whether it be internationally or working with a domestic church plant. They’re making big decisions for the Kingdom of Christ.” **BR**



JEREMY DAGER

## AROUND THE STATE

### Staff change

Fuquay Varina Baptist Church is happy to announce their new pastor **TOMMY PILLOW**. Prior to this position Pillow served at States Street Baptist Church, Cayce, S.C.

### Retirement

**DAVID TURNER** has resigned from Corinth Baptist Church, Elizabeth City, after 10 years as senior pastor. He is relocating to the Charlotte area to care for elderly parents and is available for supply preaching and ministry as an interim pastor. Contact information him at [dmturner55@gmail.com](mailto:dmturner55@gmail.com) or (252) 339-0119.

**STEVE HARDY**, associate pastor of missions at Calvary Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, announced his retirement after 15 years at the church. He will retire Dec. 31 and will be available for supply and interim ministry. Contact [steve.hardy@triad.rr.com](mailto:steve.hardy@triad.rr.com) or (336) 403-1653.



STEVE HARDY



DON BALLENGER

**DON BAL-LENGER** retired recently from Ives Memorial Baptist Church, Pinebluff, after 29 years of ministry. Called to preach in 1955, he went on to serve at six churches in North and South Carolina before

pastoring Ives Memorial. He also served for 18 years as a volunteer chaplain at FirstHealth Regional Hospital.

**HARVEY SHARPE** will retire from his position as associational missionary to the Yancey Baptist Association in Burnsville on Dec. 31. Sharpe has served the association for 15 years. Prior to that he pastored Mt. Grove Baptist Church in the Tar River Association, New Life Baptist Church in the Neuse Association, Shoal Creek Baptist Church in the Yancey Association and Beaverdam Baptist Church in South Carolina. Letters or cards can be mailed to P.O. Box 488, Burnsville, N.C. 28714. There will be a retirement reception honoring Sharpe and his wife, Loretta, on Jan. 11. Sharpe will be available for pulpit supply, interim and Bible conferences. He may be contacted at [mt-missionary@yahoo.com](mailto:mt-missionary@yahoo.com).



December 28

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

January 4

## The Shelter of God's Encouragement

**Focal Passages: Psalm 42:1-3, 6-8; 43:3-5**

In Donald McCulley's sermon – "Got Hope?" – he tells of a famous painting by G.F. Watt with the title of "Hope." The painting pictures a poor woman against the world. Her eyes are bandaged so she cannot see ahead. In her hands is a harp, but all the strings are broken save one. Those broken strings represent her shattered expectations, her bitter disappointments. That one last unbroken string is the string of hope. She strikes that string and a glorious melody floats out over the world; it fills her dark skies with stars. The artist painted a great truth: Even when all else seems gone, you can still have hope!

Have you ever felt depressed? If so, then you will find good company in Psalms 42-43. These psalms are about a person who is desperately longing for God's presence and rescue but is overwhelmed with feelings of depression. Water is a big theme in Psalm 42. This writer is feeling separated from God and he can feel it so much in his soul that he is like a thirsty animal, searching for water. He has a spiritual need in his life: a

longing for God's presence.

The psalmist cannot figure out why he is so depressed. He goes on to describe himself as "deeply depressed." Now the theme of water returns – describing the depression, which he sees as a conspiracy of the waves that cascade over him and drag him to the bottom.

Depression is like that. You cannot breathe, cannot see your way out and you feel like you're sinking fast. Even in the midst, he knows he must continue to look to God's faithful love at all times.

Sometimes all we can do in the midst of depression is keep crying to God.

Ponder over two truths from this Psalm. First, depression can happen even to a believer. We are not immune from this struggle. Then remember that ultimately it is God who is our hope. We can trust in the promises of God that no matter what is happening around us, it will be okay because God is in control. God does have a plan, God does love you and he will see you through even this.



**THOMAS MARSHALL**  
Spring Hill Baptist  
Church, Wagram

**Focal Passage: Psalm 46:1-11**

**S**elah. A word used 74 times in the Hebrew Bible – 71 of these are in the Psalms. We find it used three times in Psalm 46 – possibly marking the end of each stanza or thought in this Psalm.

So, what does Selah mean? Many believe it is a musical interlude, a pause or a rest. I like the way the Amplified Bible states it: "pause, and calmly think of that." We struggle day-by-day facing obstacles, fears and turmoil. If we listen to the news, it is enough to "scare us to death." In verse two, the Psalm tells that "we will not be afraid."

How can he say this? How can we know peace in a world that seems so out of control? The Psalmist begins by telling us "*God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble.*" God is our Peace. God is in control. The answer to finding peace is not complicated. Selah. Pause. Rest easy. We should never expect life to

make sense. We should not fear because surprises occur. Life is full of surprises, shocks and senselessness. However, remember that nothing takes God by surprise.

Consider the three stanzas in this Psalm. First, even if the whole world should crumble, we can find Selah (v. 1-3) because God is our refuge. Then, even through floods and nations collapsing, we can find Selah (v. 4-7) because God is our stronghold. Finally, the Psalmist invites us to witness the works of God – He is exalted, with us and the Stronghold.

Horatio Spafford in 1871 lost most of his investments in "The Great Chicago Fire." He sent his wife and daughters for some rest and recovery. The ship they were on sank, and all of his daughters drowned. He boarded a ship to go to his wife's grieving side in England. As the ship went past the spot where this had happened, he went on deck; then he went back to his cabin and penned the words that would become a beloved hymn during crisis – "It is Well With My Soul." This reminds us to settle, to pause and to find rest in God. God our Refuge, our Stronghold, our Selah.

December 28

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

January 4

## God Ordains Restoration

**Focal Passages: Ezra 3:1-7, 10-11; 6:19-22**

**I** was recently given a small fiberglass jon boat that had been abandoned. When I got it, it was filled with water, covered in moss, grown up with weeds and full of leaves and sticks. The tires on the trailer were flat and dry rotted.

The boat was a far cry from the well-functioning fishing boat it had been made to be. I have stripped it down to the shell of the boat and am getting ready to restore it.

How will I know when that mission has been accomplished and a success? When the boat is once again on the lake being used for fishing, the purpose for which the boat was made.

The people of God that had been exiled in Babylon had returned to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the temple, which laid in shambles after being destroyed. God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the holy city to rebuild the house of worship.

Under edict of the king and with the financial resources of the royal treasury, they returned to rebuild God's house. They faced great persecution during the rebuilding from opponents who tried

to discourage them and stop the work. However, they listened to and trusted God's promises through the prophets.

How did they know when the job was complete? When they were once again fulfilling God's intended purpose for His house – when the people of God were again bringing sacrifices to worship God according to God's design and command.

But the temple was but a shadow of what was to come. While they worshipped God according to His design, the day would come when the fulfillment of that to which the temple worship pointed would be fulfilled.

The Son of God would be the once-for-all sacrifice for the sin of the world, and one day, His people would worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

God created us to know, love, worship and obey Him, so how do we see evidence of those purposes being fulfilled in our lives?

When we are worshipping Him and living our lives sacrificially (Rom. 12:1), as He created us to do for His glory.



**RANDY MANN**  
Lead Pastor, Central  
Baptist Church,  
Henderson

**Focal Passage: Ezra 7:1-10**

**A**s a parent I command obedience from my children. Sometimes my commands are easily understood, and sometimes they may not be from their perspective. They may see my commands as burdensome or restrictive. I know the things I am asking of them will bring them both freedom and joy. Their obedience will not only cause them to avoid punishment. It will also allow them to walk in joyful fellowship with their father.

The people of God had disobeyed Him in many ways, resulting in exile to Babylon. In the immediate context of Ezra 7-10, one of the clear ways they had disobeyed was by intermarrying with pagan nations. God had warned them against this practice, knowing that marrying those who worshipped false gods would cause the hearts of God's people to turn away from Him. But, wanting their own way and ignoring God's commands, God's people disobeyed and suffered the consequences.

## God Commands Obedience

Ezra's response, upon returning to Jerusalem, was threefold. First, he "*set his heart to study the law of God.*" He knew that if he and the people were going to walk in obedience, they must first know God's law. They must meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:2). Second, Ezra set his heart to "do" God's law – that is, to obey it. God has not given us His law so that we might simply read it, know it or memorize it. He gave us His law so that we might do it (James 1:22). Third, Ezra set his heart to teach God's statutes in Israel. He would remind the people of the necessity of obedience to the law of God.

We know, ultimately, we will not perfectly obey God's law. In fact, Paul says in Galatians that God did not give us the law so we could keep it and be good, but rather to show us that we could not keep it and thus needed a savior. Christ perfectly obeyed and fulfilled God's law. This does not mean, then, that we can live however we want. It means that because His Spirit now lives in us, He has empowered us to study God's truth, obey it and teach it to others. Living in obedience to God's commands, by the power of His Spirit, always results in our good and His glory.



# Connects

Continued from page 8

For Tucker, there's no divide between work life and spiritual life. He views the Great Commission in Matthew 28 as an all-encompassing command to make disciples through every aspect of a believer's experience.

"I make my faith pretty obvious," he says. "You preach the gospel by how you live as well as by what you say.

"What you don't do is direct evangelism during work time," Tucker cautions. Instead, he looks for the in-between opportunities: coffee breaks, around the water cooler, at lunch. Business trips are another prime opportunity.

"When you travel you get one-on-one with somebody and you have a lot of time, so you really can get into some good discussions," he says. "I just try to use the time wisely and not be in anybody's face. You know when someone is not interested so you go slower with them."

Sometimes, spiritual conversations come when Tucker least expects them. Working late one night at a previous job in Florida, he remembers kneeling with

**"I make my faith pretty obvious.  
... We're trying to train them up to  
reach their neighbors and  
co-workers. It's not just about  
converting them; it's about  
teaching them to make disciples."  
— Walt Tucker**

a laser technician on the floor of their lab as the man prayed to receive Christ.

Excellence at work can be a witness unto itself, Tucker notes. For Christ-followers, he believes a job well done is an act of worship. "People wonder why you're doing such a good job, and you tell them it's because I'm doing it for the Lord," he says.

"Also, when you do your work, you do it with excellence because now people know you're a Christian; it's

like having a fish bumper sticker on the back of your car and driving like a maniac – it's just not a good witness."

When Tucker is off the clock, he spends most of his evenings discipling South Asian believers to become disciple-makers themselves.

"We're trying to train them up to reach their neighbors and co-workers," he says. "It's not just about converting them; it's about teaching them to make disciples."

So far, the Tuckers have started several small Bible study groups in the Triangle with a vision of them growing house churches. But they know it won't be easy – or quick.

"Of the South Asians we know who have come to Christ, it's taken them a period of two to three years of seeing legitimate Christians who really live out their faith before they've made a decision," Tucker says. "We're in it for the long haul."

(EDITOR'S NOTE - Don Graham writes for the International Mission Board. Learn more about using your job to make disciples overseas at [marketplaceadvance.com](http://marketplaceadvance.com).) **BR**

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### Pastor

**Senior Pastor.** Second Baptist Church of Washington, NC ([www.sbcwashington.org](http://www.sbcwashington.org)), is seeking a full-time pastor for our conservative, evangelical, Southern Baptist church. We are looking for a candidate that has strong preaching, communication, and leadership skills. Candidates must believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God. Degree from an accredited seminary is preferred. Email cover letter and resume to [secondbaptist2@embarqmail.com](mailto:secondbaptist2@embarqmail.com) or mail to Second Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, Attn: Mike White, 2516 W. 5th. St., Washington, NC 27889.

Baptist Chapel Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **full-time interim pastor** led by God and willing to lead our church by glorifying our Lord and Savior through worship, discipleship, fellowship, prayer and ministering to our church family. Preferred candidates should have a seminary degree as well as 10 years pastoral experience. The interim pastor will be bridging the gap between our retiring pastor of 18 years and our future pastor. Primary duties will include Sunday morning service, Sunday evening Bible study, Wednesday evening prayer, visiting the sick and shut-ins and ministering to the needs of the congregation. Please send resume and references to Baptist Chapel Pastor Search Committee, 9339 High House Road, Salemburg, NC 28385, [csbrown@intrstar.net](mailto:csbrown@intrstar.net). Resumes will be received thru December 31, 2014.

Glorieta Baptist Church in Concord, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **Pastor**. We are a Southern Baptist church with an average attendance in worship of 100 and 80 in Sunday School. We are looking for a Pastor who is biblically grounded, mission minded, with visionary leadership and strong communication skills. Seminary degree with three to five years of pastoral experience preferred. Please send resume with cover letter and references to Pastor Search Committee, Glorieta Baptist Church, 4912 Hwy. 73 East, Concord, NC 28025. Resumes will be accepted until January 31, 2015.

Lake Lynn Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **spirit-filled leader**, excelling in preaching and teaching skills, and possessing a strong passion for fulfilling all duties of a pastor. Pastoral candidate must submit resume by January 1, 2015, to [lakelynnbaptistchurch@embarqmail.com](mailto:lakelynnbaptistchurch@embarqmail.com) or Pastor Search Committee, Lake Lynn Baptist Church, 3363 Gillespie Street, Fayetteville, NC 28306.

Peachtree Memorial Baptist Church, Murphy, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **Senior Pastor**. Average attendance of 210 in worship service and 135 in Sunday School. Seminary graduate and pastoral experience preferred. Please send resume to Pastor Search Committee, Peachtree Memorial Baptist Church, 1650 Highway 141, Murphy, NC 28906. Resumes will be accepted until February 1, 2015.

Chapin Baptist Church (CBC) is prayerfully seeking the man God has chosen to be the new **pastor** and spiritual leader of our growing fellowship of disciples. CBC is looking for a pastor who preaches from a place of grace and shows us a God who loves all. Known as the Capital of Lake Murray, Chapin is a robust suburban community of Columbia, SC. CBC is a friendly, biblically based congregation with an active membership of 400-500. Send resumes to Pastor Search Team, PO Box 309, Chapin, SC 29036, or email to [cbcpst1@gmail.com](mailto:cbcpst1@gmail.com).

### Church Staff

Southern Baptist church seeks **full-time Associate Pastor for Family Ministry**. MRE/MDiv from SACS accredited seminary. Requires a detailed understanding of children/youth. Work/volunteer experience helpful. Send resume and salary requirements to First Baptist Irmo, Associate Pastor Search Committee, 7068 Nursery Road, Columbia, SC 29212.

Macedonia Baptist Church, Raleigh/Cary, NC, seeks **part-time** (25 hour/week) **Youth Minister** for 7-8 graders & high school students. To apply, submit a letter of interest & a resume that includes both a Statement of Faith & a Statement of Call to Ministry to our email address at: [YouthMinisterSearch@mbcnc.org](mailto:YouthMinisterSearch@mbcnc.org). A full job description can be found at [www.mbcnc.org](http://www.mbcnc.org). Questions may be directed to the church office at [office@mbcnc.org](mailto:office@mbcnc.org) or by calling 919-851-3216.

The Memorial Baptist Church of Greenville, NC, a Baptist congregation ministering to the community for 187 years, invites applications for a **full-time Associate Pastor/ Minister of Families**. TMBC is CBF affiliated and is located approximately 2 miles from East Carolina University. Primary responsibilities include ministering to youth, children and their families as well as other ministry opportunities that may arise. Minimum education requirements: Bachelor's Degree/Master's preferred or working toward. Please send resumes to Holly Sloan, 1512 Greenville Blvd. SE, Greenville, NC 27858, or to [hollybsloan@gmail.com](mailto:hollybsloan@gmail.com). Review of resumes will begin immediately.

Mount Olive Baptist Church of King, NC, seeks **part-time music leader** to oversee all areas of music ministry. This includes, but is not limited to, all worship services, special services, and event oriented services in which music is needed. Experience in a church music setting with traditional and contemporary styles is preferred. Send resume to Carl Goodman, c/o Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 5413 NC 66 Hwy S., King, NC 27021, or email to [carlgoodman@mtolivesbc.org](mailto:carlgoodman@mtolivesbc.org).

### Miscellaneous

**For Sale:** 75+ Plastic table chairs and 275+ metal folding chairs. Contact: Mr. Pegrum at 252-492-2292.

NCBAM encourages you to reach out to an aging adult this Christmas with a card, phone call or friendly visit. Call 1.877.506.2226 for a copy of Passport – monthly ideas for providing "help for the journey" to aging adults.

**Do you have staff changes at your church or association?** Let the BR know by calling (919) 847-2127 or email [editor@BRnow.org](mailto:editor@BRnow.org).

**BRnow.org**

### Kivett's - Your Source for Renewal

Complete Renovations • Refinish  
New Pews • Steeples • Stained Glass  
Steeple Cleaning • Baptistries

[www.kivetts.com](http://www.kivetts.com)  
**KIVETT'S INC.**  
The Largest Family Owned  
Church Furniture Manufacturer in the US

1-800-334-1139 • Clinton, NC

### Placing a classified ad in the Biblical Recorder

Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: [alison@BRnow.org](mailto:alison@BRnow.org).
- Submit the information via the Recorder's website at [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org).
- Send a Fax to (919) 469-1674.

For more information, call the office at (919) 459-5691.

Cost for Baptist churches/organizations is \$1.20 per word, number and stand-alone initial (\$1.42 for commercial and non-Baptist entities) with a minimum charge of \$35. Classifieds also are carried online.





#discipleNC

# 1 STORY

Hear. Connect. Share.

## Disciple-Making Conference

[ncbaptist.org/disciplenc](http://ncbaptist.org/disciplenc)

### Featuring



**Afshin Ziafat**  
Pastor, Providence Church, Frisco, Texas



**Ed Stetzer**  
Vice President, LifeWay, Insights Division



**Robby Gallaty**  
Pastor, Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn.

**February 23, 2015**

Center Grove Baptist Church  
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.



**Women's Track**  
Featuring  
Lori McDaniel, Global  
Mission Catalyst, IMB



Baptist State Convention of North Carolina • Milton A. Holifield, Jr., Executive Director-Treasurer  
205 Convention Drive • Cary, NC 27511 • (919) 467-5100 • (800) 395-5102 • [www.ncbaptist.org](http://www.ncbaptist.org)

The missions and ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina are made possible by your gifts through the Cooperative Program and the North Carolina Missions Offering.



Baptist State Convention of North Carolina • Milton A. Holifield, Jr., Executive Director-Treasurer  
205 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511 • (919) 467-5100 • (800) 395-5102 • [www.ncbaptist.org](http://www.ncbaptist.org)

The missions and ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina are made possible by your gifts through the Cooperative Program and the North Carolina Missions Offering.



Recommend individuals to serve on the:

**CONVENTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**INSTITUTION & AGENCY BOARDS**  
**CONVENTION COMMITTEES**

[www.ncbaptist.org/recommend](http://www.ncbaptist.org/recommend)

Submissions received after January 31 of each year  
will be held for consideration the following year.



Merry Christmas  
from the

# BR BIBLICAL RECORDER

STAFF

**BEHOLD**  
*The virgin shall conceive*  
**AND BEAR A SON**  
AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME  
*Immanuel*

Matthew 1:23