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# BIBLICAL RECORDER

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## Teen shoots hoops for Tanzania trip

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Editor

For two years, Sarah Garner has sponsored a child in Africa.

Now, the 18-year-old homeschool student has set her eyes on visiting the young girl in Tanzania.

"I definitely want to meet my sponsor child," said Garner in an interview with the *Biblical Recorder*. "That sounds really cool."

Garner has donated to Marynagu, the 10-year-old Compassion International child she sponsors, through odd jobs like babysitting and dog walking.

She worked at New Life Camp over the summer and now works at a retail store.

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Sarah Garner holds up a framed picture of her Compassion International child in Tanzania. She hopes to go visit her in June. (Contributed photo)

## N.C. churches see fruit of long-term mission partnerships



Believers among the "T people" are often isolated, with only one or two in a village or city. "They enjoy occasionally having a gathering of all the believers who can attend. They are able to network with and encourage each other. This really strengthens the Body of Christ among the people group," Mark Harrison said. Harrison is the missions pastor at Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C. (Photo courtesy of Mark Harrison)

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Assistant Editor

Seven years after their first visit to an unreached, predominantly Buddhist people group in Southeast Asia, members of Old Town Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., are seeing the fruit of long-term, local commitment and partnership.

Today there are more than 300 believers among a population of 900,000, where there were only 30 believers in 2011.

That's when Old Town first identified the group they refer to as the "T people," for security purposes,

as the one they would commit to reaching with the gospel. The gospel is advancing in "a very dark place," Mark Harrison, Old Town's missions pastor, told the *Biblical Recorder* in a phone interview Nov. 20. "God has worked in a great way to bring about a tenfold increase."

Harrison recently held an early draft of the first Bible translation in the T language.

"They've never had scripture in their language before," he said. It will be a long process to finish what is currently handwritten in a notepad, but

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## Website to help SBC review church misconduct reports

Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Credentials Committee established an online submission portal for reports of a church's alleged departure from Southern Baptist polity, doctrine or practice.

The new portal is available at [SBC.net/](http://SBC.net/)

credentials, chairman Stacy Bramlett told Baptist Press Dec. 2, and may be completed online or in print.

The website includes the Credentials Committee statement of assignment and a statement of relationship between the SBC and other Baptist bodies, including local churches.

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# What we can learn from the shepherds at Christmastime

In the synoptic gospels, Luke 2:8-20, Dr. Luke records the glorious announcement that Jesus Christ had been born in Bethlehem. There was nothing ordinary about this special message. It was delivered by angels to a group of common shepherds on a Judean countryside when it was so unexpected, their night vision was overcome by the brilliant light of God's glory that flashed all around them and scared them to death.

The shepherds play an important part of the Christmas narrative, and they have become popular characters in our modern traditions. Shepherd figurines adorn storefronts, lawn displays and nativity scenes. We sing about shepherds in many of our popular Christmas carols and they are always in nativity displays.

Even though we read of the shepherds in the biblical narrative and are reminded of them throughout

the Christmas season, have you ever stopped to consider who they are, the role they play and what we can learn from them?

We actually don't know much about the shepherds who are referenced in Luke's account, but can you put yourself in their place on that first Christmas night?

As they faithfully kept watch over their flock, angels suddenly appeared to inform that the promised Messiah has been born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-14).

Most of us would expect that such a message would first be proclaimed to those with more status and nobility rather than to lowly shepherds who probably didn't even own the sheep they were tending.

Yet, according to John 3:16, the announcement of Christ's birth serves as a reminder that Jesus came for all people, whether they be rich or poor, male or female, whatever their race,

ethnicity or skin color.

The initial fear that the shepherds experienced soon turned to joy after hearing the angels' message.

And the message that the shepherds heard moved them to respond. Scripture tells us that they hurriedly went to see the newborn Jesus (Luke 2:15-16).

Scripture also records that after they spent some time with Mary, Joseph and Jesus, the shepherds shared the message they had received about Jesus, and everyone who heard what the shepherds had to say were "amazed" (Luke 2:17-18).

Finally, the shepherds returned "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard" (Luke 2:20).

These shepherds can be considered the first evangelists who proclaimed the Good News about Jesus to those around them.

Christ followers that take pride in our American heritage need to


## IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

remind ourselves that Jesus was not a white Anglo-Saxon and His gospel made its way to us by individuals who came from another country. Today they would be referred to as immigrants.

Aren't we glad that some immigrants, in the providence and sovereignty of God, made it possible for us to hear the story of Jesus first proclaimed by the shepherds of Christmas?

As we celebrate and worship Christ this Christmas, may we, like the shepherds, proclaim Him to all people living around us including those from other nations of the world. Merry Christmas!

"Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people'" – Luke 2:10 (NKJV). 

## 10 carols to share the Savior this Christmas

Getty Music

On that first Christmas night, the skies above the shepherds' field were filled with hosts of choiring angels. But even before Jesus lay in the manger, His miraculous story was told in song. Mary sang about him in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-51), and Zechariah sang about him in the Benedictus (Luke 1:68-79).

Throughout the Bible, singing was used to declare the goodness of God. There are at least 50 commands from God to sing His message of grace and truth together. We have been created, compelled, and commanded to sing. Christmas is a wonderful time for us as Christians to sing songs that plumb the richest doctrinal depths, help us absorb and reflect on the

deep and transformative truth of Emmanuel, God with us. It's also a wonderful opportunity to express this truth to those around us.



KEITH GETTY  
Guest Column

Christmas can be the biggest evangelistic event of the year. The very act of singing traditional carols is a radical gospel witness; it reveals the hope of the world to those in our midst who are singing about Him or listening to songs about Him but have yet to believe in Him.

Here are 10 Christmas carols that help us revel in the mystery of the incarnation and share God's heart with our friends and families, our colleagues and communities.

### • "Hark! The Herald Angels

Sing" was penned by Charles Wesley and included in his 1739 Methodist hymnal. This theologically rich classic embodies the entirety

of the gospel. It moves us on from the idea that Jesus's birth is confined to a sweet childlike nativity scene – it forces each of us to confront the raw and powerful truth of who Jesus is and what He came to do: "Born that man no more may die ... Born to give them second birth."

• **"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"** appeared in Charles Wesley's book of 18 Christmas songs in 1745, and it's one of my three favorite hymns today. The song captures how centuries of waiting, longing, and weeping find ultimate resolution in Christ. It is probably less familiar to a younger audience, but the words express a timeless truth: we all need hope, and we all have a longing inside of us that can only find fulfillment in Christ.

• **"O Come, All Ye Faithful,"** mostly likely written by hymnist John Francis Wade in 1744, is a Christmas call to worship; it beckons us to simply

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The statue of Sveta Sofia, or “Holy Wisdom,” looks over Bulgaria’s capital city, a place where the spiritual climate is dark, according to International Mission Board (IMB) missionary Brian Davis. But IMB missionaries are working to introduce the people there to God’s wisdom and the hope He offers. As they study the Word with the people of Sofia, they are seeing God at work. (IMB photos)

International Mission Board

George remembers the secret police raiding his house twice when he was young. He went to secret Christian meetings, and his family tucked their Bibles away so they wouldn’t be found. “We were a persecuted Christian family,” he said.

But despite his family’s gritty faith, George’s heart hadn’t experienced real change. Christianity was a cause to him, not a relationship. It wasn’t until after the fall of communism when International Mission Board (IMB) missionary Bill Wardlaw came and preached at George’s church that he heard the gospel differently.

“Before I thought it was just the right thing to do, and now it seemed like it was a more personal thing to do,” George said.

As he listened to Bill’s sermons, he would go back and talk about them with his grandmother. Over time, God began to change his heart. Today at 39 years old, he’s pastor of the oldest Baptist church in Bulgaria, and he’s seeing God work in the lives of people all around him.

But it’s a slow go. Evangelism there is difficult – on the heels of communism, much of the country is atheist.

IMB missionary Brian Davis, who has ties to North Carolina, says Bulgarians are openly disinterested in religion. The spiritual climate is dark, and the people are desperate for hope, but they’re not looking to find it in the church.

“It’s sad to see,” he said. “We’re praying for the Spirit to work and that God would lead us to the people who are interested.”



George Gardev, right, pastor of a Baptist church in Bulgaria, hugs a shut-in member of his church during a visit to her home. George says he sees obstacles in sharing the gospel broadly, but his church is trying to find ways to share the love of Christ in the context of relationships and community projects.

One of those is a man who calls himself an intellectual and has welcomed Brian into his home to study the Book of Romans with him. Another is Donka, an 85-year-old widow who comes into the Davises’ home every week for Bible study.

She’s a self-proclaimed atheist, but Brian’s wife, Mandy, says she hopes that her heart is slowly changing.

“She has not yet professed faith, but she tells

**Pray for ...**


- God to draw people across Bulgaria to see their need for the hope Jesus offers.
- The Davises to be able to build relationships with people who are open to studying the Bible and exploring faith.
- Bulgarian believers like George to show the love of Christ to the community in a way that cultivates interest in Jesus.

everyone she meets about us and how the world would be better ‘if everyone believed and lived like Brian and Mandy.’ We keep turning her focus from our good works to the ‘why’ behind our good works,” Mandy said.

George’s church is trying the same approach, sharing the gospel in the context of relationships. Church members are running medical clinics and soup kitchens and helping at orphanages with the goal of showing the community a love that looks different from anything it has ever known.

“Everything we do has only one purpose – to make His name known to others,” George said. “That’s what our main thing is – to give the hope of God.”

December is the month Southern Baptists give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions. The week of prayer was officially held the first week of the month but can be recognized at any time.

Visit [imb.org/lmco](http://imb.org/lmco). 



# Hunt preaches final sermon as FBC Woodstock pastor

By SCOTT BARKLEY | *Christian Index*

In its unmistakable cadence Johnny Hunt's voice echoed across the sanctuary at First Baptist Church Woodstock, Ga., Dec. 1, saying the world wanted to know how to find "the way."

"I believe there's a question the whole world is asking," Hunt declared to the crowd filling the 7,500-seat worship center. "You'll say, 'Oh preacher, you're being narrow. There's people who just aren't interested in knowing about Christ.'"

"Oh, friend, you're mistaken. They really are. They just really don't know how to ask. It is our duty to go and tell."

In this instance, the voice came from a recording of Hunt's first Sunday as pastor at the church in 1986. However, it mirrored what has been proclaimed ever since by the 67-year-old, a simple message of salvation found only in Christ and the urgency to share it with others.

That general message didn't change during his final sermon as the congregation's pastor. In fact, Hunt's first appearance at the service wasn't on stage, but in the baptismal pool above



Johnny Hunt delivers his final sermon as pastor of First Baptist Church in Woodstock Sun., Dec. 1. Hunt has served at the church since 1986. (Photo by Scott Barkley, *Index*)

the choir. There, he baptized five of the six individuals taking part, including a mother and her young son, both of whom Hunt had prayed with as they received Christ last week in his office.

"One of the greatest privileges of my life is to have been the pastor of First Baptist Church Woodstock the last 33 years," said Hunt, standing on the stage later.

"But I balanced the privilege with the responsibility that in Acts 20:28 ...

the Bible says I am to shepherd the church of God that He purchased with His blood.

"Privilege balances responsibility when you realize the price that God paid for you to be part of the body of Christ. I pray that I always take that seriously."

Hunt spoke to the challenges of serving as pastor of a church the size of First Woodstock.

"It's hard to get to know everyone," he said. "There's so many of you. Maybe that's one of the reasons we look forward to eternity, because we will have forever to get to know each other. And to be honest with you, it will take forever to get to know this large of a congregation."

"In my early days when the church began to explode people would say stuff like, 'I'd never want to be in a church so big. The pastor can't even get to know all the people.'"

"I want you to hear something that has never changed and is a theological truth in my heart. Jesus did not send me here for you to get to know me or for me to get to know you. Jesus sent me here to make sure that before you check out, you get to know Him."

"Pastor Johnny" recounted his time as a pastor before coming to Woodstock. Most notably, he talked about a church in Texas that seemed like a natural fit, but he and the church didn't feel God was in the calling. His time meeting with leaders at First Woodstock appeared to be going the same way.

Staying at the Woodstock Days Inn while visiting First Baptist, he went to bed thinking God wasn't calling him there, either.


"I told Janet before we went to bed to call her parents and say we're not going [to First Woodstock]."

"These are nice people, but God's not in it."

But, he said, God gave him a verse out of Proverbs 6.

"He said, 'I will give you conversation in the morning,'" Hunt recalled. "When I woke up, the conversation was this: 'You're the pastor.'"

Before Hunt relayed the message, his wife confirmed the calling. So did his in-laws before he could say a word over the phone.

"The staying power of being at Woodstock for 33 years is the clarity of my call," he said. "I know that God called me here." 

## Southeastern celebrates scholars during ETS dinner

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) faculty, staff and colleagues gathered for the Southeastern Theological Fellowship dinner to celebrate the outstanding scholarship of five individuals during the 71st annual Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) meeting.

SEBTS acting provost Keith Whitfield welcomed guests from liberal arts colleges, research universities, seminaries, publishing houses and more to the event, noting that its purpose was to "elevate and celebrate the work of God's people for the Kingdom."

"This event represents Southeastern's culture and our mission so well," said Whitfield. "Our president calls us to be a Great Commission seminary, and that means as a school we also recognize that our mission is bigger than our institution."

Every year, SEBTS honors five colleagues in various categories of scholarship. These include those who have exemplified extraordinary work in a Southern Baptist college and university, a Southern Baptist seminary, an evangelical college and university, an evangelical seminary and a SEBTS alumnus. Award winners included the following:

- Kelly Kopic, professor of theological studies at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Ga.

- Craig Keener, F. M. and Ada Thompson professor of the New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky.

- Roy Ciampa, former professor of New Testament and chair of the division of biblical studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and current chair of the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

- Stephen Presley, associate professor of church history and director of the Southwestern Center for Early Christian Studies in Fort Worth, Texas

- Elizabeth Mburu, associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Pan African Christian University as well as the International Leadership University and African International University in Nairobi, Kenya


In 2008, Mburu became Southeastern's first female Ph.D. graduate, leading the way for more women to follow in the path of pursuing advanced degrees in theological education. During the Evangelical Theological Fellowship dinner, Mburu gave the keynote address in which she challenged fellow scholars to consider how partnering together in the work of scholarship can bring unity among believers of all ethnicities.

"The Church, as it stands, is like a half-finished song – one beautiful to listen to but has an unfinished quality that leaves one yearning for more,"



Elizabeth Mburu, associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Pan African Christian University, gives the keynote address to the Southeastern Theological Fellowship dinner at the Evangelical Theological Society meeting. (SEBTS photo)

said Mburu, who also serves on the editorial team of the *Africa Bible Commentary* and the African Society for Evangelical Theology. She is the African regional coordinator for Langham Literature and is a curriculum evaluator for the Association of Christian Theological Education in Africa. Mburu and her husband Caxton have three adult children.

"You might ask, 'Why, in a discussion about scholarship, would I focus on the Church?' It's because I believe, ultimately, our scholarship exists to serve the Church," said Mburu. "That's why partnership is so crucial." 



# Hoops

Continued from page 1

Garner surpassed the \$500 goal in late November, and is nearing \$800 with the addition of personal gifts.

The goal amount is \$5,000, to cover the \$4,300 trip plus the flight to Washington, D.C., a hotel and other travel expenses not covered in the cost of the June 2020 trip through Compassion. Her deadline for paying for the trip is March 15, 2020.

Garner said she learned about Compassion International through attending concerts of artists who support the nonprofit organization.

“I’m really excited about it,” she said in a submission to the *Recorder*.

“I really want to go on the trip. However, I don’t expect people to hand me cash, or to magically receive a check in the mail for \$5,000. I’m willing to use my talents and abilities in a unique way in order to raise money.”

That plan includes reserving a gym Jan. 7, 2020, to shoot 500 free throws to raise money for her trip. If she had 275 sponsors pledge \$20, she would make her goal.

Garner plays in a homeschool basketball league. “For prepping, I have continued to condition, mostly by running and doing other workouts,” said Garner in an email. “I reserved the gym for three hours, but I do not think it will take that long. I want to give myself enough time. I will be shooting all 500 shots from the free throw line.”

## Not her first fundraiser

This campaign is not her first effort at raising funds. At age 12, she was flipping through a Samaritan’s Purse catalog and decided “it would be cool to give like more than \$20,” she said.

Her parents were supportive of the efforts. She recruited pledges for her to ride her bike in her neighborhood. She rode about 30 miles in one day and raised \$2,000 to build a hospital.

Garner plans to go to The College at Southeastern and is praying about serving on the international mission field.

Her father, who works as a sales representative at a cable TV provider, went to Southeastern as did both of her grandfathers. She is a member at North Wake Church in Wake Forest and lives in Franklin. Her mom teaches Garner and her siblings while serving full-time at home. She has an older brother in college and a younger brother and sister.

Garner remembers becoming a Christian at age 4, but becoming more dedicated as she became a teenager. “It’s something I realized I needed to do for myself,” she said.

She read her Bible through in a year, and said she has been growing in her prayer life.

Earlier this year, she went to Colombia with her dad on a mission trip with Faith Baptist Church in Youngsville. They worked with an International Mission Board missionary at an orphanage, as well




Sarah Garner plays basketball in a homeschool league. Her love for the sport inspired her fundraiser to send her to visit her Compassion International child in Tanzania. (Final Shot Photography photo by Jeff Kerr)

as at local parks and nearby towns. They prayer-walked in the morning and would go back in the afternoon to evangelize.

Her father preached at a church, and Garner made balloon animals and helped package items for refugee families escaping Venezuela.

Garner has also helped refugees from around the world through her work with New Life Camp.

Garner’s donation site is at [gofundme.com/f/five-hundred-free-throws-for-marynagu](https://gofundme.com/f/five-hundred-free-throws-for-marynagu). 

# Reports

Continued from page 1

It also offers an optional support phone call for those who have submitted a report to the Credentials Committee in cases related to abuse.

This call would be from an individual outside the committee who is trained to assist victims of sexual or other forms of abuse, and will include information about the abuse recovery

process and identification of resources in the individual’s local area.

While the form may be used to report concerns related to a church’s handling of sexual abuse, racism and various other pertinent issues, Bramlett cautions that suspicions of recent or current sexual or other forms of abuse should be reported to

law enforcement officials. “The duty to investigate such crimes falls to law enforcement,” she said. “Our committee has no investigative authority or power.”

Messengers to the 2019 SBC annual meeting established the committee to receive reports of a church’s suspected departure from Southern Baptist polity, doctrine or practice and make recommendations to the SBC Executive Committee regarding the possible disfellowship of churches from the SBC.


The Credentials Committee elected Bramlett as chair in July and has met multiple times to establish procedures for conducting its duties,

Bramlett told BP.

Recommendations, when needed, will be reported by the Credentials Committee at SBC Executive Committee meetings in February, June and September. The Credentials Committee will also notify churches and submitters of the status of church inquiries throughout the Credentials Committee inquiry process.

The group “feels the importance and the weight of the responsibility of our task,” Bramlett told BP. “We have pledged to pray for one another as we do this important work. We are especially praying for those who have been impacted by sexual abuse in a church setting.”

Bramlett is senior vice president of Independent Bank in Collierville, Tenn., and has been a member of the EC since 2016.

In addition to forms completed through the online portal, the committee will receive forms by email at [credentials@sbnet.net](mailto:credentials@sbnet.net), or through delivery to 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203. 

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# DISCIPLE-MAKING CONFERENCE TO EMPHASIZE 'GOSPEL ABOVE ALL'

by Chad Austin,  
BSCNC Communications

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Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

Aligning with a national focus among Southern Baptists, “Gospel Above All” will be the theme for the 2020 N.C. Baptist Disciple-making Conference that is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 25 at Green Street Baptist Church in High Point.

“Gospel Above All” was also the theme for the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Birmingham, Ala., and will be the theme for the 2020 SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Fla. as well.

Organizers of the annual Disciple-making Conference said that theme is worth incorporating on a statewide level, also.

“We wanted to have a unified voice with our larger Baptist family this year to really emphasize that the focus of all disciple-making is the gospel,” said Brian Upshaw, team leader for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) Disciple-making team that plans and organizes the event.

“If we can bring preeminence to the gospel, everything else falls into place.

“Our efforts over the past few years with this event have been to demonstrate how evangelism and discipleship go together.

“This year’s conference will emphasize the power of the gospel both to save us and to sanctify us.”

The event will feature Jimmy Scroggins, lead pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., and more than 40 distinct breakout sessions on a variety of topics related to applying and living out the gospel in our families, churches and communities.

Scroggins developed the “3 Circles” witnessing tool early in his tenure at Family Church, which began in 2008.

Since then, the “3 Circles” has become a popular and simple way for Christians to easily engage in gospel conversations.

The tool is conversational and visual in that it utilizes three circles that can be drawn on a piece of paper or a napkin to represent God’s perfect design for the world, brokenness that resulted from sin and the hope of the gospel found in Jesus Christ.

## WANT TO GO?

**What:** 2020 Disciple-making Conference

**When:** Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020

**Where:** Green Street Baptist Church, High Point, N.C.

**Cost:** \$12 per person (includes lunch)

**Info:** [disciplemakingconference.org](http://disciplemakingconference.org)

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has produced a variety of resources around the “3 Circles,” which include books, videos, a Bible study and a free mobile app for Apple and Android devices.

The BSC utilizes the “3 Circles” as the core framework for its Gospel Conversations training events, emphasizing the importance of relationally sharing the gospel.

Scroggins developed the “3 Circles” as a way to equip and mobilize his congregation for personal evangelism.

By God’s grace, Scroggins’ vision has caught on in South Florida and beyond,

resulting in more disciples being made and multiplied.

“Jimmy has a practitioner’s heart, a theologian’s mind and a winsome spirit,” Upshaw said.

“God has changed the culture of the church he pastors through his leadership, which has resulted in revitalization, church planting, multiplication and more. His church embodies the type of culture we’d like to see in our churches across North Carolina.”

In addition to the two keynote addresses from Scroggins, several local church pastors will lead breakout sessions during the event focused on various aspects of disciple-making.

Topics will include how to build a discipleship strategy, disciple-making triads, discipling young men, the relationship of worship and church revitalization, doing ministry with excellence and many more. At least two breakout session topics will be offered in Spanish.

“Attendees will get a glimpse of several pastoral leadership styles and the multiple ways that churches are living out a disciple-making culture,” Upshaw said.

This year, a streamlined registration process will allow attendees to select the breakout sessions they want to attend in advance when they register for the event.

Attendees will also receive a bundle of resources, including Scroggins’ book *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*.

Registration is \$12 per person and includes lunch. Registration is available online at [disciplemakingconference.org](http://disciplemakingconference.org).

“We hope and pray that this year’s

conference will be a time of refreshment, encouragement and challenge for everyone who attends,” Upshaw said.

“Our desire is to add value to the lives of N.C. Baptists through this event.”

## CONNECT NOW

## VIDEOS

There are a plethora of inspirational and training videos available to you for download through our Vimeo site.

[vimeo.com/ncbaptist](http://vimeo.com/ncbaptist)

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[ncbaptist.podbean.com](http://ncbaptist.podbean.com)

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







## Fruit Continued from page 1

Old Town's mission team is collaborating with an agency and national partners in the country who are working almost full-time to complete the translation.

When a team of eight Old Town members first met the T people in 2012, there was no intentional evangelism or discipleship in the area. Knowing they had little chance of engaging the population with no knowledge of the language or culture, they looked for potential partners.

"Unfortunately we didn't find anybody," Harrison said. "They [T people] were on nobody's radar."

They continued to visit the city in short-term mission trips a few times a year, advocating for the T people within local churches of other people groups and praying for them. The team met International Mission Board (IMB) personnel serving in another city in the country, who accompanied them to translate and teach them about the culture.

Over the next three years, Old Town members were introduced to a theological school in the Asian country that had a burden for the same T people. Through the relationships built and knowledge gained during Old Town's exploratory trips, Harrison and the team connected school officials to the local area.

The school, in partnership with

other churches in the country, sent six national believers to live in the community and engage the T people. They have done so for the last five years and have grown to a network of 12-15 church planters and pastors and their families.

The team from Old Town continues to support the work through what Harrison calls a three-pronged approach: empowering, equipping and encouraging national partners. Old Town still sends teams on short-term trips to work with partners in teaching English language seminars and coordinating Bible classes, as well as preaching and evangelism training.

"It's hard, it wears them down. The response is steady, but it's slow," Harrison said about the local work, so the Old Town team meets with the national partners to listen and pray with them.

He said he was excited about "the unity and beauty of that – the body of Christ serving. We're diverse, we're different backgrounds, different cultures, but we're able to serve together church to church."

Old Town's mission to reach the T people has also extended to forming a partnership with another North Carolina church. Around 2014, Oak View Baptist Church in High Point, N.C., chose to partner with them to reach the same people group living in



The "T people" live in a coastal area, and many make their livelihood off of seafood. (Photo courtesy of Mark Harrison)


## CP giving off to best start in a decade

Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) reported the strongest first two months of a fiscal year since 2009 as contributions to SBC national and international missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program (CP) exceeded \$17.3 million in November 2019.

As of Nov. 30, gifts received by the EC for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget total \$32,571,296.53. This exceeds last year's budget contribution through two months of \$31,535,913.44 by \$1,035,383.09 or 3.28 percent. The amount given is slightly less than the \$32,750,000.00 year-to-date budgeted projection to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America by

\$17,703.47 or 0.55 percent. The final amount received in November totaled \$17,363,645.09, which was \$282,369.01 more than the \$17,081,276.08 received in November 2018 and \$988,645.09 more than the monthly budgeted amount of \$16,375,000.00.


Designated gifts received in November amounted to \$4,004,198.16. This total was \$867,671.96 or 27.66 percent above gifts of \$3,136,526.20 received last November. This year's designated gifts through two months amount to \$7,857,451.24, which is \$1,378,466.43 or 21.28 percent more than the \$6,478,984.81 given through two months in the previous fiscal year. The CP is Southern Baptists' channel of giving through which a local church can contribute to the ministries of its state convention and SBC missions and ministries. 

another city in the Southeast Asian region.

"We very quickly discovered the greatest need was and continues to be to assist the very few national pastors and believers in spiritual growth and encouragement," said Don Duncan, executive pastor at Oak View, in a statement to the *Recorder*.

"In the many years we have been sending two to four-person teams, I know of only three open professions of faith. Was it worth it? We're talking thousands of dollars here over a pe-

riod of years ... We must ask, 'What's one soul worth?' Yes, it's worth every penny!"

The network of U.S. and Asian churches have created a "beautiful, beautiful thing," Harrison said, crediting IMB personnel for facilitating the connections. He said their guidance, encouragement and expertise have been "invaluable." "There are not IMB missionaries who work among this people group, but without the presence of IMB missionaries in that country, we would never have been introduced to this network of people that we serve with." 

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# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Is Jesus God?

December 22

**Focal Passage: Luke 1:26-35**

**M**y children are mine. I know they are because I have been there from the moment of conception until now. My name is on each birth certificate. At least two of them look like me, and at various points and in different ways, they all act like me. Bless their hearts!

Still, someone could ask, “How do you know? How do you know your wife was faithful? How do you know that one or more were not switched at birth?” Here, I trust the woman who pledged her love and devotion to me on our wedding day, and I trust a health care system that, for all its flaws, is, for the most part, reliable in this regard.

When it comes to Jesus’ identity as God, however, there is no question. First, a virgin birth is something only God could accomplish, especially

when one considers that the virgin was a sinner. Second, the innumerable Old Testament promises, alluded to by Gabriel, and their fulfillment in Jesus surely point to His being the Son of God and God the Son. Finally, all of this is undergirded by the fact that God calls Him “*my beloved Son*.”

My children are mine because I have raised them as my own. In a more perfect and astounding way, we can trust that Jesus is God’s Son and thusly, God, because God claims Jesus as His Son in His Word. We can also trust the amazing signs He gave us along the way to attest to this claim. This means we can also trust the promises of Christ to return and visibly reign from the throne of David.

Jesus is God. He really is.



**CASEY SHORT**  
Pastor, Pinetops Baptist Church

## Aren’t All Religions the Same?

December 29

**Focal Passage: Isaiah 44:6-11; John 14:5-7**

**A** friend of mine lives in Macclesfield, N.C. My wife and I only recently moved to the area, and between the towns in this region there isn’t much. What’s interesting is that no matter where we go, it seems there is always a sign pointing toward Macclesfield. As they say, “All roads lead to Rome.” No, they lead to Macclesfield.

This is how many approach religion. For them, there is one destination but many paths. Therefore, we should learn to coexist in peace and harmony, without judgment. Those who hold to such a way of thinking fail to consider that the various paths being offered contra-

dict one another on a fundamental level. Islam, Judaism and Christianity are monotheistic, but Hinduism is polytheistic. If all are different paths to the same destination, where I assume we would meet some higher power, which higher power is it? The one or the many? Do the monotheistic religions even espouse the same God? The Bible answers these questions for us. No one comes to God the Father except through Jesus (John 6:44), and lest there be any doubt about the exclusive nature of salvation in Christ, there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

There is one road, not many. With this knowledge, we are called to go, not to persuade people that our faith is right and theirs is wrong, but rather to proclaim the Good News that the one true God has come to offer salvation to them that believe.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## God Saves

December 22

**Focal Passage: Matthew 1:18-25, Numbers 21:6-9**

**I**s it too early for Christmas music? That was the topic of discussion for my wife and I as we traveled home the day after Halloween. As we were driving home from visiting with family, we had scanned the radio to find a station playing nothing but Christmas music.

Weeks and even months before Christmas, you will find retail stores stocked with Christmas items in preparation for the holiday season. Grocery stores quickly rush to replace pumpkin spice flavored foods with candy canes. It seems as if every year Christmas begins earlier and earlier.

The biblical story of Christmas, however, does not just start with Matthew 1. The Christmas story begins in Genesis 3, when God Himself

prophecies to the serpent that the seed of a woman will “*crush your head and you will strike his heel*” (Genesis 3:15, NIV).

Jesus’ purpose for being born was to be struck down; to die for the sins of not only our first parents, but to die for the sins of all who call on His name.

In Numbers 21, Moses interceded for the people when they realized their sin, and God directed Moses to make an image of a bronze snake and place it on a pole. Whoever would be bitten could turn to the bronze snake and recover.

The picture of the bronze serpent points us to the ultimate purpose of Christmas. Jesus was born to be lifted up on a cross, so that whoever turns to Him in faith may be rescued.



**WILL MATTHEWS**  
Student Pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Clinton

## God Calls

December 29

**Focal Passage: Numbers 22:22-35**

**T**he story of Balaam and his donkey is one that many skeptics and scholars have criticized over the years. If you read this passage with a 21st century lens, you may think you were reading the script from the movie “Shrek.”

In an almost unbelievable scene, Balaam, the pagan diviner, is confronted by an invisible angel – only visible to his donkey as he followed Balak’s men in a scheme to curse the Israelites. After being spooked by the angel, Balaam beat the animal out of frustration, and in response, God performs the first miracle in opening the mouth of the donkey.

A lot of emphasis is usually placed on the speaking donkey, and under-

standably so: God will ultimately accomplish His will by whatever means necessary. But what we sometimes fail to see is the other miracle in the story: the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes (Numbers 22:32).

It is exciting to see what takes place in a believer when God calls them to faith in Christ.

Even more fascinating is the transformation, or the sanctification, that happens as righteousness is expressed in obedience. Balaam was deceitful with his words and his actions showed his heart, that is, until the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes to what he could not see. The miracle was to take a rebel sorcerer and turn his heart towards the purposes of God.

Balaam and his donkey point us to the gospel. We are all blind to our sinfulness until the Lord opens our eyes to our hopeless condition.



# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## What Proof Does My Testimony Offer?

January 5

**Focal Passage: Acts 26:2-5, 12-18, 24-26**

Every time I get into our charcoal 2011 Chevy Traverse, I pray. I pray, because I am long overdue for an oil change. I can feel it as I drive. I can hear it with my ears. Let's be honest, this is always the case right before I give in and take the car to the shop. After the attendant is finished, I feel like I'm in a brand new car. All of my senses are engaged. Something is different.

Those who have come to Christ experience a profound change as well. They are immediately imbued with new affections that, given time and sanctification, result in new behaviors. The dishonest heart that produced lies before now overflows with truth. The angry heart that reared its head in fits of rage now reaches out with arms of love. Every-

one who has truly repented of their sin and put their faith in Jesus for salvation, no matter the severity of their past sins, shares this experience to some degree.

He echoes the sentiments of Jesus who said in Luke 6:44, "*For each tree is known by its own fruit.*"

People see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but it's often hard for them to look past the one they knew before.

In our witnessing, the gospel message is what the Spirit will use to save, but He may very well use our story to bear witness to the gospel's power. For those desperately searching to fill a void that only God can fill, our story of change in Christ might be the final straw leading to salvation.



**CASEY SHORT**  
Pastor, Pinetops  
Baptist Church

## Why Does Suffering Exist?

January 12

**Focal Passage: Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 8:18-25**

Last January, my wife suddenly grew ill. What started as a panic attack, within a few days, became a series of uncontrollable and sometimes painful spasms and convulsions from her head to her feet. She has since been diagnosed with a condition called PNES (psychogenic non-epileptic seizures) and is learning to cope with her illness, but in those early days of unanswered questions, we could not help but ask why.

God's Word has much to say on the topic of suffering from its origin to its purpose in God's plan of redemption in Christ. Suffering is the plight of sinful humanity. It is part and parcel to living in a world

that has been ravaged by the effects of the Fall. It is also part and parcel to the Christian life as well. As we hold out the light of the gospel and seek to walk circumspectly in the world, we will suffer (2 Timothy 3:12). Yet, we are not without hope.

Our hope during suffering comes first in knowing that our sovereign God is at the helm and has a purpose for our pain. My wife's condition varies from day to day, sometimes from morning to evening. At times, there are no outward symptoms. At other times, she can't get out of bed without a seizure. But oh, how the Lord has grown our trust in Him these last 12 months. His precious promises of restoration at the end of days have been a balm for our souls.

Take heart, believer, and praise the Lord. Sin and its companion will soon be abolished, for God is faithful to keep His promises.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## God Commissions

January 5

**Focal Passage: Numbers 27:12-23**

In the business world, many executives will tell you that the most important thing you can do is to train your replacement. The reason is logical: it is easier for one to be promoted if someone is ready to step in to take their place.

Joshua was to succeed Moses as the leader of God's people. Moses was nearing the end of his life and asked the Lord to give the people someone who would be like a shepherd. Moses himself was not qualified to be Israel's shepherd. He had failed to honor God as holy before the people when they rebelled (Numbers 27:14). Rather, Moses was the imperfect under-shepherd. He had spent his years as Israel's under-shepherd by leading them only as the Lord led him. The Lord was the true Shepherd.

Joshua would be commissioned, a term that carries with it political and military implications.

Joshua was not to accomplish the mission of leading God's people in his own strength, he was given the spirit of leadership by the Lord.

God calls out people to lead His people. God calls and commissions under-shepherds to do the dirty work of ministry: to live among sheep and instruct them in the ways of the Lord. It is critical that we pray for our pastors and leaders. Pray that they would be led by the Lord in their ministries to lead us. Pray that their commission to faithfully do the work of the ministry would come from an overflow of their own walk with the true Shepherd.



**WILL MATTHEWS**  
Student Pastor, Immanuel  
Baptist Church, Clinton

## God Expects

January 12

**Focal Passage: Numbers 32:20-32**

A friend of mine has a great story from his childhood that is always funny to me. My friend's father took him and his brother to a local wrestling event that featured the legendary tag team, the Rock and Roll Express. At the end of the event, my friend's brother was in line to get an autograph of the hall of fame duo when security pulled him out of line.

My friend's father started arguing with security and, eventually, a fight broke out, ending with my friend's dad being thrown through and breaking a set of wooden double doors.

Professional wrestling is a scripted athletic event that portrays a fight. The performers tell a story in the

ring that persuades the audience to suspend their disbelief. The wrestling that night in the local gym was choreographed, but the fight that ensued in the meet and greet line was real.

God had commanded His people to arm themselves before the battle. One term that sticks out all throughout Numbers 32:20-32 is the phrase "*before the Lord.*" Moses knew the victory completely depended on God, and for God to fight for them, they would need to keep their commitment to him in good faith.

God expects His people to keep their promises and commitments. Our best model for this type of commitment is Christ. Christ willingly submitted to His Father's desires by going to the cross for us, even when he didn't want to (Luke 22:42). Because of his commitment, we can stand blameless before God.



# Planning ahead for 2020

Below is a list of upcoming dates (in January) important for North Carolina and Southern Baptists. Check the *Biblical Recorder's* next print edition for more events during the year.

- **Pray Together. Go Together;** Jan. 1-30; pray 30 days for unreached people groups and pockets of lostness in North Carolina; [ncbaptist.org/prayandgo/](http://ncbaptist.org/prayandgo/)
- **Here & Now – Collide,** Jan. 3-5; a missions experience for college students and young adults; Lumberton Rebuild Center; [baptistsonmission.org/Programs/College-Missions](http://baptistsonmission.org/Programs/College-Missions)
- **Missions College,** Jan. 7-10 in Rockville, Va.; [imb.org/2019/09/03/missions-college-2020/](http://imb.org/2019/09/03/missions-college-2020/)

- **Vocational Evangelist Retreat,** Jan. 16-17, Caraway Conference Center; [ncbaptist.org/event-vocational-evangelists-retreat/](http://ncbaptist.org/event-vocational-evangelists-retreat/)
- **Evangelicals for Life,** Jan. 23-24 in Washington, D.C.; [evangelicals.life](http://evangelicals.life)
- **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday,** Jan. 19
- **Conclave** (youth ministers, workers), Jan. 23-25, Chattanooga, Tenn.; [bedotell.com/conclave](http://bedotell.com/conclave)
- **Jacksonville Pastors' Conference,** Jan. 23-26, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; [jaxpastorsconference.com/](http://jaxpastorsconference.com/)
- **Youth Ski Retreat,** Jan. 31-Feb. 2; Beckley, W.Va; [bedotell.com/ski-retreat](http://bedotell.com/ski-retreat)

# AROUND THE SBC

## Retirement

**TOM CROW**, executive pastor at Nashville (Tenn.) First Baptist Church, announced his retirement after 13 years with the downtown church. Crow earned his master's degree in Christian education from Southwestern Seminary and has been in ministry since 1973 first with the U.S. Army Field Artillery Division Chaplain's Office in Fort Sill, Okla., then ministering at churches in Texas, New Mexico and North Carolina for more than 40 years. He looks forward to spending more time with family, enjoying the outdoors, making fishers of men and continuing to serve the Lord through Christian coaching and church consulting in church administration, men's ministries, veterans and law enforcement

discipleship. Crow Consulting & Coaching will launch in early 2020. You can reach him at [onecrowsnest@gmail.com](mailto:onecrowsnest@gmail.com) or (615) 969-1388.

## Staff change

**JOHNNY YOUNT** has been called to pastor Island Creek Baptist Church, Henderson. Yount, a graduate from UNC-Chapel Hill (1998), has taken classes within the Duke Divinity School. He previously pastored Henderson churches for the past nine years. Yount and his wife, Callie, have two sons.



JOHNNY YOUNT

# CLASSIFIEDS

## Pastor

Trinity Baptist Church in Newton, NC, is seeking the **full-time pastor** that God has been preparing to lead our church. We are looking for someone who is interested in ministering to all age groups, as we are a multi-generational congregation. Trinity is a welcoming church that loves to worship God through beautiful music, Christ-centered messages, Bible study, fellowship and community outreach. We have an average attendance of approximately 120 for Sunday morning worship. Located in western NC, in the heart of Catawba County, we are a diverse, safe, family-oriented community that offers good schools, many cultural activities, sports and business opportunities. Our ideal candidate will have a theologically sound education from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Salary commensurate with experience. Please send résumé to our search committee email address: [trinitynewtonresumes@gmail.com](mailto:trinitynewtonresumes@gmail.com).

Sunset Park Baptist Church, located at 231 Central Blvd., in Wilmington, NC 28401, is seeking a **Senior Pastor** to lead our church. Résumé should be sent to the address above. Must be in agreement with 2000 Baptist Faith & Message.

Colonial Baptist Church, Trinity, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church affiliated with the SBC, BSCNC and the Liberty Baptist Association. Applicants should be licensed and ordained by an SBC church. Mail cover letter and résumé to: Search Committee, Colonial Baptist Church, c/o T. Payne, PO Box 7252, High Point, NC 27264, or email to [ColonialPastorSearch@gmail.com](mailto:ColonialPastorSearch@gmail.com).

Clement Missionary Baptist Church, Autryville, NC, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative, mission minded, rural church with an average attendance of 105. Applicant should be licensed and ordained by a Southern Baptist church. Mail résumés to Jennifer Matthews, PSC 60 Waterwheel Ln., Godwin, NC 28344, or email to [Clementpastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:Clementpastorsearch@gmail.com).

Calvary Baptist Church Reidsville, NC, is seeking to call a **full-time pastor** who will lead our congregation to fulfill our mission as we exist to grow in our relationship with God, share the truth of God's word and reach out to our community and beyond. We are affiliated with BSCNC, SBC, CBF and Dan Valley Baptist Association. Applicants should have a seminary degree and at least 5 years of pastoral experience. Mail résumé to Calvary Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 7860 NC 87, Reidsville, NC 27320, or email to [cbcsearch2020@gmail.com](mailto:cbcsearch2020@gmail.com).

Kenansville Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor** to lead our congregation. We are a mission minded, moderately conservative church, support the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message and have ordained women deacons. We are affiliated with the Eastern Baptist Association, BSCNC and SBC. Our church has 184 resident members and attendance at our morning worship service averages 90. We are located in southeastern North Carolina in the small historic town of Kenansville, the Duplin County seat. A degree with experience is preferred. If you feel you are called to be considered for this position, please send your résumé with a cover letter as a PDF file to Gene Outlaw, Pastor Search Team Chair, at [kbcpst19@gmail.com](mailto:kbcpst19@gmail.com). Résumés will be accepted until January 17, 2020.

**ADVERTISE – (919) 459-5691**

## Church Staff

Dry Ponds Baptist Church in Granite Falls, NC, is seeking a **full-time Minister of Youth and Children**. The youth and children associate minister of Dry Ponds Baptist Church needs to provide innovative and strong Christian leadership to develop relationships for Christ for and within Dry Ponds Baptist Church. Please send résumés to Dry Ponds Baptist Church 5235 Union Church Road Granite Fall, NC 28630, or e-mail them to [secretary@dryponds.org](mailto:secretary@dryponds.org). Résumés need to be in by December 20th.

**Pastor of Senior Adults** is needed by FBC-Clayton. This is a part-time position. MDIV degree is strongly preferred. Salary \$27,000-\$30,000. Should be ordained or in process. Require twenty five (25) years experience in a ministerial or people oriented leadership role (with specifications). Use this link for complete description <http://fbcclaytonnc.org/first-baptist-resources/baptist-church-jobs/>.

## Miscellaneous

**Advertise your ministry or business.** The *Biblical Recorder* offers competitive denominational and nondenominational rates for media outlets our size. Contact [alison@BRnow.org](mailto:alison@BRnow.org) for information or visit [BRnow.org/Advertise](http://BRnow.org/Advertise).

**Do you have staff changes at your church or association?** Or special news you would like to share (significant church or church staff anniversaries or a mission effort to reach your community)? Let the *Biblical Recorder* know by calling (919) 847-2127 or email [editor@BRnow.org](mailto:editor@BRnow.org).

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

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



# Carols

Continued from page 2

come and adore “Christ the Lord.” Whether it’s sung a capella or with a big brass band, it will connect with just about every person who enters our churches over this Christmas season, as so many of us will have sung it at school assemblies and nativity plays as children!

• **“In the Bleak Midwinter”** is among our most plaintive carols, partly because of the melancholic melody by Gustav Holst.

Penned by English poet Christina Rossetti, the lyrics first appeared in 1872. The last stanza brings us to a place of personal reflection and response – what should we do about the message of Jesus’ birth? What does the gospel story require of each of us who hear it?

• **“Joy to the World,”** with its triumphant cadence and rousing spirit, is, unsurprisingly, one of the United Kingdom’s most popular carols (according to a BBC poll). Written by Isaac Watts in 1719, it is based on Psalm 98 and wasn’t even originally intended to be a Christmas carol. Yet

no Christmas concert or Christmas Eve service would be complete without it. It is an undeniably joy-filled declaration of God’s goodness.

• **“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”** is a medieval Latin hymn dating from the 800s. The haunting melody draws us to place of deeper reflection, especially as it contrasts so powerfully with the more exuberant praise-filled carols. It allows people both inside and outside our churches, for whom Christmas may not be the time of joy they feel it should be, to reflect on and connect with a carol that expresses a deeper longing for God’s promises to be fulfilled.

• **“Silent Night”** is, arguably, the best-known Christmas carol in the world; it has been translated into 300 languages and dialects. Originally a poem with six verses written by Joseph Mohr, an Austrian priest in 1816, the repetition in each stanza of the line “Silent Night, Holy Night” evokes tranquility, stillness, mystery – a heart’s cry for the kind of peace that only Jesus can bring.


• **“Angels We Have Heard on High”** is one of the most joyful and well-written choruses ever composed. The lyrical journey shines a light on the reality of the incarnation in a way that refreshes the soul. This carol contributes wonderfully to that sense of celebration expressed by the angels in the gospel of Luke. And the first line and chorus, “Gloria in excelsis Deo” provides a fun vocal exercise for anyone who sings it!

• **“O Little Town of Bethlehem,”** written in 1867, was inspired by Philadelphia pastor Phillips Brooks’ visit to Bethlehem. The first three verses take us through the events of the night Christ was born with the fourth and last verse culminating in a heart-felt response: “Cast out our sin and enter in / Be born in us today.” Often a favorite with children, it was in fact first sung by a group of Sunday School children and their teachers.

• **“Once in Royal David’s City”** is perhaps less popular than it used to be, but we mustn’t lose its message or music. Cecil Frances Alexander was

an Irish pastor’s wife who published this carol for children in 1848. It ultimately reminds all who sing it of the humanity of Jesus and the tremendous mystery of God becoming man: “He was little, weak, and helpless / Tears and smiles, like us He knew.”

These carols are treasures that cause all of us, Christians and non-Christians alike, to remember that hope has dawned; the promised Messiah has come. O come, let us adore him – Christ the Lord!

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Keith Getty is an award-winning musician and hymn writer. He and his wife, Kristyn, are known for songs such as “In Christ Alone.” )

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