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Fourth pillar in Hollifield's vision

Convention throws weight behind church planting

By Norman Jameson
BR Editor

Chuck Register came to North Carolina to plant his life in soil that grows new churches.

Register, who taught evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and led the First Baptist Church of Gulfport, Miss., during and after Hurricane Katrina, has been the Baptist State Convention's (BSC) executive leader for church planting and missions development since Jan. 1.

He is charged with building the fourth of the seven pillars in North Carolina Baptist Executive Director-Treasurer Milton Hollifield's long-range plan for leading the Convention.

Church planting is North Carolina Baptists' primary growth strategy because new churches win more people, especially more people with no previous church background.

"The principle of being able to spend the rest of my ministry on totally reaching lost people is what attracted me to North Carolina," Register said during

an interview in his office in the BSC staff building in Cary.

He was joined by church planting team leader Mark Gray.

Reaching "people groups" identified by language, geography and ethnic demographics has long been the language of international missions.

But Register said many people groups exist within North Carolina's borders and he intends to identify them, and create a strategy to reach them.

"Church planting is a key strategy for us because it is a biblical priority," said Hollifield.

"When we read the book of Acts it is clear that the Apostle Paul established local churches in every region and those churches, in turn, helped plant other churches."

Register believes North Carolina Baptists will respond when they "understand the vastness of lostness in our state."

He said there is a "healthy environment for church planting" because the pastors he's met "want to reach lost people" and "they understand how important church planting is to that."



Gray



in the funding cycle. New work is "counted" as a church start when the association where the church is located includes it in the annual associational report.

The "new church" definition is "a biblical community that seeks to fulfill the Great Commission."

"We're battling against the idea that you have to have a facility, or be a certain size before you are counted as a church," Register said. "We go to the New Testament and see that a biblical community is living according to scripture, preaching the word, seeking the Father."

Church planting team

North Carolina Baptists have five church planting consultants — Gray, and four in the field: Frank White, Amaury Santos, Ralph Garay and Pam Mungo, who was recognized as national church planting consultant of the year by the North American Mission Board in 2005.

Five others are under contract to work with specific people groups: Vijay Kumar Allampalli, Asian-Indian; Florentino Yanez, Hispanic; Phiet Nguyen, Vietnamese; Lonnie Hall, African-American; and Bud Wrenn, Anglo.

This group led the starting of 108 new churches in 2008, and each of the fulltime consultants works with 40 or 50 people at a time who are in some stage of investigating, planning or working with a church start.

There currently are 175 churches

Multiplication churches

"We used to focus on planting new churches," said Gray. "Now we're focused on planting new churches that plant new churches."

This "multiplication churches" strategy greatly increases the likelihood that church planting will become a "movement" in North Carolina, resulting in new churches springing up almost

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Looking to God's Grace

Quadriplegic pastor thankful for leaders' help

By Dianna L. Cagle
BR Assistant Managing Editor

It took a decade for Scott Blue to respond to the church planting vision that started when he was in seminary in the 1990s.

He admits that with shame "because it took so long."

"Regardless of how many books you read on church planting, it's never preparation enough for the emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges. It can almost completely paralyze you."

He said that with no irony, even though 20 years before responding to his calling, Blue was paralyzed in a diving accident.

Blue, a quadriplegic, maneuvers the stage with ease at his church with his



wheelchair. A ramp gives him access to the church stage, and his van has been customized so he can drive. Because he has some hand and arm mobility, Blue uses a control to drive his van and steer his wheelchair.

Church members don't see his condition as an obstacle. The main difference is there are no handshakes from Blue. The knucklebump is the greeting you receive. He cannot open his hands, so

he offers his fist for greeting.

Blue, a church planter and pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Laurinburg, is a native of the town.

A graduate of St. Andrews Presbyterian College and a missions, evangelism and church growth graduate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Blue also earned a doctorate in Christian preaching from Southern.

Nestled in an old shopping center amid hair and nail salons and across the parking lot from the town's only movie theater (two screens) and an aging skating rink, Grace is sponsored by Stewartsville Baptist Church in Laurinburg, a town of more than 25,000 in southeast

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PREACHING — Scott Blue, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, maneuvers his wheelchair during a service.

BR photo by Dianna L. Cagle

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Young people will stay in 'essential churches' say authors

By Steve DeVane
BR Managing Editor

Churches can keep young people loyal by becoming important to them, say the authors of a book on how the church can be essential.

Essential churches simplify how they make disciples, deepen the content they provide members, raise expectations and multiply themselves, said Thom Rainer and his son Sam Rainer at a conference April 28 at Apex Baptist Church.

The Rainers wrote "Essential Church: Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts" based on a recent study of 1,000 people and 20 years of previous research.

The conference was the first event other than the Baptist State Convention (BSC) annual meeting to be live-streamed over the BSC web site. BSC officials said about 45 people watched the conference over the Internet from as far away as Ohio, California and overseas. About 150 people attended in person.

Thom Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources. Sam Rainer is an associate pastor at Sarasota Baptist Church in Florida.

Sam Rainer said 70 percent of people who leave the church, drop out when they are 18 to 22 years old. About 78 percent of those who stay in church say it is important or essential to them, but less than three in 10 of those who drop out say that, he said.

"It's a problem of urgency, and it's a problem of mission," he said.

Taking a break

The top reason young people give for leaving is that they simply want to take a break from church, Sam Rainer said.

"That breaks my heart," he said. "Church, to them, was a chore."

The second highest reason for leaving is because church members seem judgmental or hypocritical.

Other reasons include going to college, work responsibilities, moving, too busy, not feeling connected to the church, disagreeing with the church, choosing friends over the church and went to church only to please other people.

"Valid or not, it is what they perceive, and it's what

we must deal with," Sam Rainer said.

The Rainers offered four ways churches can become essential.

First, they should have a simple, clearly defined process of discipleship.

Thom Rainer suggested aligning the church's mission statement with that process.

Essential churches will also provide deep, relevant content.

Sam Rainer said there are four myths about church dropouts — secular universities push them away; they're planning to leave; the media is to blame; and depth and relevance are mutually exclusive.

"It's a myth that you cannot go deep and connect with the younger generation," he said.

Thom Rainer talked about what makes people stay in church.

"You're going to lose a generation if you do not take them deep in God's word," he said.

Going deep

Three components of depth are the pastor and preaching; small groups or Sunday School; and personal devotion and Bible study, Thom Rainer said.

Essential churches raise the bar of expectations, and churches that are "nonchalant about membership" make themselves non-essential, Sam Rainer said.

Two thirds of young people who stayed in church said they could not see themselves as vibrant Christians without the church, he said, even though they knew their churches weren't perfect.

Thom Rainer said churches can raise expectations in small groups, through the pastor and in an entry class.

About 83 percent of people who are still in church five years after joining got involved in small group.

Sam Rainer said high expectations begin in the pulpit.

"Your church does listen to you," he told pastors. "They do put a lot of weight in what you say."

Thom Rainer said entry point or new member



GREETING — Sam Rainer, above, and Thom Rainer speak with participants after Essential Church Conference April 28 at Apex Baptist Church.

classes should include information about the church and expectations of church membership.

Essential churches also multiply, according to the Rainers. Sam Rainer talked about reclaiming people who are no longer involved in church. He said church members should invite their friends and family, and the church should be tight knit.

"Our churches used to be where it all happened, good or bad," he said.

"We've lost that sense of community."

Thom Rainer said statistics show that older people are much more likely to attend church than younger people. The younger people who attend, though, are serious about Bible study and ministry, he said.

"They're even serious about dying for the gospel if necessary," he said. "Ladies and gentlemen, if you reach this generation, you're reaching a missionary force."

"It's a myth that you cannot go deep and connect with the younger generation."

— Sam Rainer

SEBTS raises housing rates, but not tuition

From staff and wire reports

Trustees at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) approved a budget that will not raise tuition for students next year, but will increase housing rates for students who live on campus.

The budget does not call for any job eliminations on campus.

"As we worked on this budget, our chief priorities were to keep costs down for our students and to retain all of our employees," SEBTS President Daniel Akin said when he presented the budget proposal to trustees during their April 20-21 meeting at the Wake Forest campus.

"I am pleased that, despite the economic climate we are faced with, we were able to meet those goals."

SEBTS officials said the housing increases vary depending on where students live, but will generally be about 6 percent.

The increases were needed because

long-term lease payments on 228 apartments and bond payments for 140 other apartments were going up, they said.

About 35 percent of the school's 1,900 students live in campus housing, school officials said.

The total fiscal 2009-10 budget approved by the trustees was \$20.24 million, a decrease of about 5.2 percent from the previous year's \$21.34 million.

Ryan Hutchinson, senior vice president of business administration, said all departments were asked to cut their budgets by 10 percent.

This spread cost-cutting across the board with no particular initiative or area targeted, he said.

For the second consecutive year, no salary increases were included in the budget, but administrators said they will monitor economic conditions throughout the year and explore other avenues for increasing employee compensation.

Last year, Southeastern paid year-end bonuses to all employees after the school sold some land.

Young evangelicals seek end of nuclear weapons

AUSTIN, Texas (ABP) — A group of under-40 evangelicals announced April 28 a new initiative to mobilize American Christians to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, 31, an ordained Baptist minister and member

of First Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., is the founding director of the Two Futures Project.

"The truth that has been recognized in foreign-policy circles over the past several years must now make its way into the public consciousness," he said.

Correction

Holt first 3-term board president

A story in the April 25 issue indicated that Allan Blume is the first person to serve three terms as president of the Baptist State Convention's board of directors. In fact, Glen Holt, then pastor of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, was elected to that position when it was

known as the General Board in 1989, 1990 and 1991. He then was elected president of the Baptist State Convention in 1992 and 1993.

Holt is retired and living near his daughter in a suburb of Athens, Ga.

—The Editor

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Women leaders embrace networking event

By Dianna L. Cagle

BR Assistant Managing Editor

Networking begins naturally when women get together.

That's what Chris Adams, senior lead women's ministry specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources, said about Embrace Leadership Network, held April 25 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest.

The one-day event, which was free and included lunch, drew 150 women from around North Carolina who want to build women's ministries in their churches.

Adams said the turnout "says a lot about the desires of you as leaders."

Phyllis Foy, Embrace's interim director, was "thrilled about (the) diversity" of women who chose to come.

"Our heart is to meet the needs of these women," Foy said.

Embrace is a new women's ministry launched in November 2008 by the Baptist State Convention and response has been positive.

Registration for the first two Embrace events (including a mother/daughter retreat at Fort Caswell) has met capacity.

Embrace Leadership Network is the first of three such events to encourage women to share ideas for ministry with and to women.

In addition to hearing Adams, women leaders learned of resources available to them and discussed their own challenges and successes.

"A woman networks all day," said Becky Garrett, who has been women's ministry director at Mud Creek Baptist Church in Hendersonville for seven years.

Before the prayer she led for lunch Garrett shared what happened the



BR photo by Dianna L. Cagle

ASKING — When one of the ladies at their table has to leave early from the Embrace Leadership Network, the table of women pray for God to watch over her as she travels and for God to continue to use her in ministry. Other tables continued sharing ideas and stories about how to reach women.

Wednesday before: a morning at the jail with inmates; lunch at church with ladies; counseling session in the afternoon; time with college girls in the evening and home to be mom.

"Oh what a day," Garrett said. "It was just an amazing day."

Marveling that all these women she encountered "see the same Jesus," Garrett encouraged the women in their ministries.

At her table, Garrett steered ladies through discussion questions. To the topic of ministry burnout she said she makes sure she takes time for her family as well as her Lord.

"I'm sorry but as a leader, that's a requirement," Garrett said. "Jesus found time to spend with God."

Being open to change is also key, said Lucy Houser of Gainesville Baptist

Church in Lincolnton.

"I think we've got to be open to new ideas," Houser said.

The ladies also discussed how to stay current with the latest ministry resources; motivating women for service; publicizing events; honorariums; maintaining a balance; what events worked and why; recruiting new leaders; incorporating missions and ministry; and what would help them with their ministry.

Adams said the rules have changed for women's ministry and life is moving at a faster pace. Women expect more in ministry.

"You are a limited resource," Adams said. "You cannot do it all and be it all. Leadership is a draining experience. It's just tiring."

Defining women's ministry has been a long-time problem. Adams said women's ministry is, "whatever you're doing for women in the church."

"Our job is to listen to be aware of

What must we do?

LifeWay women's ministry specialist Chris Adams' advice to women at a recent Embrace networking event:

- Know your core purpose. "Make that clear to your leaders," said Adams.
- Model godly leadership.
- Encourage women to stay in God's word.
 - Provide accountability.
 - Set boundaries.
 - Equip women.

"We need to be training women all the time," she said.

- Embrace all generations of women in church.
- Invest in younger generations "because that's the future," Adams said. "We must invest and embrace those younger women."

- Drop stereotypes.
 - Build relationships.
 - Listen to women.
- What are they saying?
- Disciple for life change.
 - Be open to options.

What are we doing that we should not be doing anymore?

where He's walking among the women," she said. "Is it hard? You better believe it's hard. Is it exciting? Absolutely it's exciting."

Two more networking events are planned in the fall:

Oct. 3 — Cape Carteret Baptist Church; speaker: Shirley Moses, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Nov. 7 — Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute, Hendersonville; speaker: Chris Adams, LifeWay.

Contact Embrace Ministries, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512; www.embracenc.org; (800) 395-5102; e-mail: embracenc@ncbaptist.org.

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Pastor survives deer encounter

By Steve Huffman

Special to the Recorder

Trading Ford Baptist Church pastor Mike Motley avoided the first deer he saw while riding his motorcycle home March 31, but collided with the second and did a belly flop on asphalt at 30 miles per hour.

According to a story in the *Salisbury Post*, Motley, 48, was wearing a leather jacket he'd owned for 20 years. It was shredded by the asphalt, but did what it was supposed to do, leaving Motley "with a basic road rash."

Motley resisted a trip to the hospital that night, but the next day he was in so much pain his nurse wife Sandy drove him to the hospital in Lexington, where a CT scan revealed a ruptured spleen.

During the night he'd lost 20 percent of his blood through internal bleeding.

Doctors told him he needed to go immediately to Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem to have his spleen removed.

But a miraculous thing happened en route to Winston-Salem. Motley's spleen quit bleeding. He said a doctor at Baptist gave him some encouraging news.

"Someone who knows more than I do wants you to keep your spleen," Motley said, and paused: "He was referring to the Lord."

Motley said his full recovery will take several months, but not a day passes that he doesn't pause to give thanks that his injuries weren't more severe than they were.

"I'm a believer in Jesus Christ," Motley said. "My life is in His hands. If He was through with me, I'd be with Him in heaven."

"The fact that I'm here, that shows He's got more for me to do."

Motley has been minister at Trading Ford Baptist for 10 years.

The church is one of Rowan County's fastest-growing, drawing about 350 people on a typical Sunday. A new sanctuary was completed just last year.

"The Lord has been good to us," Motley said. "We're very grateful."

Motley plans to continue riding motorcycles, something he's done since age 19.

The Bandit on which he crashed is a big 1200 cc model that he just purchased in February. Motley also kept his previous motorcycle, a Suzuki 1100 that has 67,000 miles showing on its odometer.

"I've ridden thousands and thousands and thousands of miles," he said. "I'm more wary now, especially when I'm riding through highly populated deer areas."

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Huffman writes for the *Salisbury Post*.)

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Staff Changes

CHRISTOPHER C.F. CHAPMAN has been called as pastor of Raleigh First Baptist Church. He previously was pastor at Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem (11 years).

Southside Baptist Church, Lincoln-ton, has called **DOUGLAS MCCLAIN** as pastor, from his associate pastor position.

RONNIE ALDRIDGE has been called as pastor at First Baptist Church, Bertrand, Mo. He has been pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Pittsboro, for 15 years.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Stony Point, has called **MARK ROBINETTE** as pastor. He had been working with Cascade Baptist Church, Mooresville.

STELLA PERRIN has been called as minister of spiritual formation, children and families at North Wilkesboro First Baptist Church. She was the minister of education and children at New Hope Baptist Church, Hickory.

Swansboro First Baptist Church has called **KELLEY MAROULES** as children's ministry director. Maroules was a member of Emerald Isle Baptist Church, Emerald Isle.

MITCH SMITH has been called as pastor at Cedar Fork Baptist Church, Beulaville. A student at Liberty University, this is Smith's first pastorate. He was a member and deacon at Kellum Baptist Church, Jacksonville.



Obituaries

JOHN WINBORNE PRIOVOTT, 82, died April 29 in Rocky Mount after a lengthy illness.

A veteran of World War II, Privott served in the Army in the Pacific Theater until his honorable discharge as a staff sergeant. He was educated at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with graduate work at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He was an ordained Baptist minister and served pastorates in Texas and North Carolina.

Privott served as associational missionary in the Atlantic Baptist Association in Havelock and as director of missions in the North Roanoke Baptist Association in Rocky Mount. He served on the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, as a special worker in its Sunday School Department and on a number of other committees. He also served as an instructor for the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Caswell.

Privott retired from the North Roanoke Baptist Association in 1991 after 31 years of service.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Clara Cameron Privott; sons Cameron Privott of Rocky Mount, Robert Privott of Sanford, and Warren Privott of Boone; and seven grandchildren.

Memorials to: Baptist Retirement Homes of North Carolina, 1199 Hayes Forest Drive, Winston Salem, NC 27106, or to the Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina, P.O. Box 18309, Raleigh, NC 27619.

Around the state



Contributed photo

► **WHEELS AND HOOVES** — Motorcycles and horses found common ground among 800 excited children and leaders at two spring events at Camp Mundo Vista. Cowboy church planter Jeff Smith (above center), JD Tew, a missions and evangelism pastor of Freedom Biker Church, shared their perspectives about a "different kind of church." Children learned about sharing the gospel and praying for missionaries and people around them. A similar camp will be held at Mundo Vista Oct. 17



Opportunity Corner

Winston-Salem church hosts Salt of the Earth

"Salt of the Earth: Leaders Advancing the Kingdom of God" is scheduled May 30 at Crestwood Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

Leaders are encouraged to attend to gain new insights and strategies to help focus on ministry essentials.

Special topics include: pastors, effective leadership in the church, tools

for an essential church and transformational discipleship. Another conference is planned Oct. 10 at Corinth Baptist Church in Elizabeth City.

The cost (\$45) includes lunch and conference notebook.

Contact J. Edward Richardson at (800) 395-5102 ext. 5642 or jrichardson@ncbaptist.org.

Volunteers about to cap Vt. project

When the N.C. Baptist partnership with Vermont's Green Mountain Baptist Association began in 2005, one of the first projects was to renovate "The Old Stone Church."

Following four years of intense, dedicated work by volunteers, the building will be dedicated May 23. But in many ways, the work of Capstone Baptist Church has just begun.

Built in 1834, the historic church in North Bennington had fallen into disrepair. After receiving a promise to renovate the facility, owners deeded the building to the association.

Thus began a five-year project under the direction of two dedicated couples — Bobby and Stella Austin of Alabama and Ed and Helen Helms of Lincoln-ton. Dozens of work teams, primarily from those two states, completely overhauled the building — after first removing tons of pigeon droppings from the attic.

Grueling work was required on the foundation and front portico, both constructed of huge granite stones. Volunteers converted the basement, into a modern, functional ministry area with meeting space, kitchen, bathrooms and shower facilities.

Later teams began giving the beautiful old sanctuary area a much-needed face lift. Original tin ceiling tiles and the railing surrounding the pulpit area were painstakingly refinished. The church steeple was also rebuilt.

The adjacent parsonage was renovated, an important move because as the church building came back to life, there also began a new birth of the church. Having a place for a new church planter



Contributed photo

Ed and Helen Helms

and his family to live was important.

Once a church planter was in place, Bible study efforts began in various places in town. Eventually a core group began meeting regularly at the Grace Christian School (which also served as housing and shower facility for most of the volunteer teams). Both church and building began to round into shape. Starting with a congregation of zero in 2005, the church, now known as Capstone Baptist, has more than 50 members.

Work on the building was sufficiently completed to allow occupancy in the late fall 2008. In one of the first services, led by current pastor Phil Steadman, the church was one person shy of its 110-capacity sanctuary.

Partnership director Mark Abernathy encourages N.C. Baptists to continue praying for the ministry of this congregation as they endeavor to reach out into the surrounding community.

To be involved in Vermont or other partnership ministries contact the partnership office at (800) 395-5102 x 5607 or by e-mail at mabernathy@ncbaptist.org.

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Baptist institutions honor 17 with Heritage Awards

North Carolina Baptist agencies and institutions honored 17 for outstanding service during the annual Baptist Heritage Awards dinner April 28 at the Grandover Resort in Greensboro.

Each year participating organizations honor an individual or couple who has served with exemplary vigor.

The event is sponsored by the North Carolina Baptist Foundation and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

BSC President Rick Speas made reference to sports halls of fame, and said those being honored represented the North Carolina Baptist "hall of living faith."

He recognized that the honorees' humility prompts them to say, "Anyone could do what I've done."

"But they didn't," said Speas, "and you did."

"Your contributions are making a significant impact on God's kingdom," he said.

Honorees:

- Jacque Goodwin Burgess, by Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). BCH President Michael Blackwell lauded Burgess' enthusiasm as a trustee and said she attacks every task with "gusto, gumption and gratitude." A career day care consultant she has taught 4-year-old Sunday School for 53 years.

- Lee and Carroll Flowe, by the Baptist State Convention. The Flowes, married 59 years, traveled the country helping to build churches and lead Vacation Bible Schools. They coordinated the State Fair ministry for 17 years.

- Kenneth Locklear, by *Biblical Recorder*. Locklear, a doctor in Red Springs, led a medical missions team from Burnt Swamp Association to the Philippines and arranged a life changing surgical operation for a child there.

- Carlton and Lynell Martin, by Campbell University. The largest beef producers in North Carolina through Martins Abattoir and Wholesale Meats, the Campbell trustees are stalwarts in industry, the Clement community and Clement Baptist Church.

- Bruce and Esther Whitaker by Chowan University. Bruce, who could not attend for health reasons, was president of Chowan for 32 years, lifting its profile and building into a significant institution in northeastern North Carolina.



Contributed photos

RECOGNITION — Honorees of the annual Baptist Heritage Awards include: top row, from left — Jacque Goodwin Burgess, Carroll and Lee Flowe, Kenneth Locklear, and Lynell and Carlton Martin; center row, from left — Bruce and Esther Whitaker, Kenneth Ridings, John and Linda Godbold, and Lucille Yancey; bottom row, from left — Harold Newman, Robert Howard, J. Dewey Hobbs, Jim Burchette, and Don and Anita Taft.

Esther was a popular faculty member and first lady.

- Kenneth Ridings, by Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute. Ridings, who retired Dec. 31, taught homiletics at Fruitland for more than 40 years and was president the last 11.

- John and Linda Godbold, by Gardner-Webb University. Gifts from Godbolds established the Godbold School of Business at Gardner-Webb, where business will be taught with commitment to Christian ethics.

- Harold Newman, by Mars Hill College. During a distinguished medical career during which Newman was chief of surgery and chief of staff at both Cape Fear Valley Medical Center and

Highsmith-Rainey Memorial Hospital he has made 22 international medical mission trips, primarily as a relief surgeon.

- Robert Howard, by the North Carolina Baptist Foundation. Howard researches property gifts to the Baptist Foundation and was the guiding force behind the Foundation's new church loan service.

- J. Dewey Hobbs, by North Carolina Baptist Hospital. A high profile pastor for decades, Hobbs led Baptist Hospital's pastoral care ministry. He was one of three co-founders of the Center for Congregational Health in 1992 to help churches manage conflict.

- Jim Burchette, by N.C. Baptist

Men. Burchette has volunteered with N.C. Baptist Men for more than 40 years, including fulltime since 2000. He has coordinated projects in Israel, Gaza, Latvia, Ukraine, Armenia and others.

- Don and Anita Taft by Wingate University. For 45 years members of Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte, the Tafts have led church renewal efforts in more than 100 churches from Alaska to Vermont.

- Lucille Yancey, by Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of North Carolina. Since she was a member of the Girls' Auxiliary as a child, Yancey has been involved in WMU, serving in every leadership capacity imaginable on the church, associational and state level.

SBC missions giving up; members, baptisms down

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptists gave 2.3 percent more to missions last year despite the economic downturn, but nationally they lost members and baptized the fewest number of people since 1987, according to the denomination's Annual Church Profile, the yearly statistical report compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in conjunction with 42 state conventions.

Total giving to missions reached \$1.36 billion in 2008. Through the denomination's Cooperative Program and special mission offerings, local

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"Southern Baptists are among the most generous and mission-minded people in the world. They will give even when they're hurting"

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The number of baptisms is regarded as a key measurement of the SBC's overall effectiveness in evangelism.

Total SBC membership fell by 38,482, or 0.2 percent last year, to 16.23

million. Sunday School enrollment dropped 123,817, or 1.6 percent, to 7.75 million.

The total number of churches increased by 152 to 44,848, for a .34 percent gain. Primary worship attendance rose 35,449 to 6.18 million, an increase of .58 percent.

Rainer pointed out that numeric/percent changes for certain categories could not be accurately figured for the 2008 compilation. Some state conventions did not ask for certain items to be reported, or asked in a way that yielded results not comparable to totals reported in 2007.

Those categories and their 2008 totals include:

- Discipleship training enrollment: 1.8 million

- Total tithes, offerings and special gifts: \$11.1 billion

- Music ministry enrollment / participation: 1.42 million

- WMU enrollment: 795,379

- Men / boys mission education enrollment: 403,575

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Baptist institutions honor 18 with Heritage Awards

North Carolina Baptist agencies and institutions honored 18 for outstanding service during the annual Baptist Heritage Awards dinner April 28 at the Grandover Resort in Greensboro.

Each year participating organizations honor an individual or couple who has served with exemplary vigor.

The event is sponsored by the North Carolina Baptist Foundation and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

BSC President Rick Speas made reference to sports halls of fame, and said those being honored represented the North Carolina Baptist “hall of living faith.”

He recognized that the honorees’ humility prompts them to say, “Anyone could do what I’ve done.”

“But they didn’t,” said Speas, “and you did.”

“Your contributions are making a significant impact on God’s kingdom,” he said.

- Honorees:
- Jacque Goodwin Burgess, by Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH). BCH President Michael Blackwell lauded Burgess’ enthusiasm as a trustee and said she attacks every task with “gusto, gumption and gratitude.” A career day care consultant she has taught 4-year-old Sunday School for 53 years.
 - Lee and Carroll Flowe, by the Baptist State Convention. The Flowes, married 59 years, traveled the country helping to build churches and lead Vacation Bible Schools. They coordinated the State Fair ministry for 17 years.
 - Kenneth Locklear, by *Biblical Recorder*. Locklear, a doctor in Red Springs, led a medical missions team from Burnt Swamp Association to the Philippines and arranged a life changing surgical operation for a child there.
 - Carlton and Lynell Martin, by Campbell University. The largest beef producers in North Carolina through Martins Abattoir and Wholesale Meats, the Campbell trustees are stalwarts in industry, the Clement community and Clement Baptist Church.
 - Bruce and Esther Whitaker by Chowan University. Bruce, who could not attend for health reasons, was president of Chowan for 32 years, lifting its profile and building into a significant institution in northeastern North Carolina.



RECOGNITION — Honorees of the annual Baptist Heritage Awards include: top row, from left — Jacque Goodwin Burgess, Carroll and Lee Flowe, Kenneth Locklear, and Lynell and Carlton Martin; center row, from left — Bruce and Esther Whitaker, Kenneth Ridings, John and Linda Godbold, and Lucille Yancey; bottom row, from left — Harold Newman, Robert Howard, J. Dewey Hobbs, Jim Burchette, and Don and Anita Taft.

Esther was a popular faculty member and first lady.

- Kenneth Ridings, by Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute. Ridings, who retired Dec. 31, taught homiletics at Fruitland for more than 40 years and was president the last 11.
- John and Linda Godbold, by Gardner-Webb University. Gifts from Godbolds established the Godbold School of Business at Gardner-Webb, where business will be taught with commitment to Christian ethics.
- Harold Newman, by Mars Hill College. During a distinguished medical career during which Newman was chief of surgery and chief of staff at both Cape Fear Valley Medical Center and

Highsmith-Rainey Memorial Hospital he has made 22 international medical mission trips, primarily as a relief surgeon.

- Robert Howard, by the North Carolina Baptist Foundation. Howard researches property gifts to the Baptist Foundation and was the guiding force behind the Foundation’s new church loan service.
- J. Dewey Hobbs, by North Carolina Baptist Hospital. A high profile pastor for decades, Hobbs led Baptist Hospital’s pastoral care ministry. He was one of three co-founders of the Center for Congregational Health in 1992 to help churches manage conflict.
- Jim Burchette, by N.C. Baptist

Men. Burchette has volunteered with N.C. Baptist Men for more than 40 years, including fulltime since 2000. He has coordinated projects in Israel, Gaza, Latvia, Ukraine, Armenia and others.

- Don and Anita Taft by Wingate University. For 45 years members of Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte, the Tafts have led church renewal efforts in more than 100 churches from Alaska to Vermont.
- Lucille Yancey, by Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) of North Carolina. Since she was a member of the Girls’ Auxiliary as a child, Yancey has been involved in WMU, serving in every leadership capacity imaginable on the church, associational and state level.

SBC missions giving up; members, baptisms down

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BSC assesses candidates to determine support

By Steve DeVane
BR Managing Editor

If you're feeling called to be a church planter, you should have vision and be able to convince people to buy into it, according to an assessment used by the Baptist State Convention (BSC) when considering whether to support a potential planter.

Sixteen categories in the assessment help BSC officials determine the candidate's likelihood of success.

The BSC also gives the assessment to the wives of potential church planters.

Visioning capacity determines if the candidate can think about the future, develop a plan of action and carry it out.

Church planters should also be able to create ownership of ministry, according to the assessment.

BSC leaders try "to determine if the potential leader has a strong desire to include others in ministry activity and has the ability to get people to buy into his vision," the assessment says.

Ken Tilley, church planter and pastor of CrossLink Community in Mebane, (see p. 7) calls that the WOO factor, the ability to "win others over." The document also says the church planter needs to be "intrinsically motivated."

BSC officials seek to find out if he is committed to excellence and an ability to persist despite adversity.

They also try to measure the candidate's energy and stamina.

Church planting is not a task for someone not willing to "work hard and

smart," according to Tilley, who went through the evaluation process and now leads a church of more than 400.

"You have to be driven. You really have to be a go getter.

"If you're looking for an easy road, this is not it; you probably ought to go sell vacuum cleaners."

Other categories in the assessment are:

- Relating to the unchurched.

BSC leaders want to know if the potential church planter can connect with people who do not attend church and if making such connections is a part of his ministry plan.

They also look to see if the person knows people outside the faith and seeks to "restore them to a right relationship with God."

- A cooperative and supportive spouse.

- Building relationships; can you connect with people and be vulnerable with them?

- Is the candidate committed to church health and does he believe church growth is a theological principle?

- Responsive to community.

The potential church planter should be able to identify and assess the needs of the community.

- Using the gifts of others.

BSC leaders try to determine if the candidate can assess someone's giftedness and develop a plan based on matching those gifts with ministry needs and opportunities.

- Flexible and adaptable.

The church planter has to be able to adapt and handle change and make tough decisions.

- Building a cohesive group.

The candidate should be able to bring people together and get them involved in meaningful ministry.

- Resilience.

BSC officials want to know if the potential church planter can go through setbacks without feeling defeated.

They also look at how he handled previous disappointments.

- Exercising faith.

BSC leaders talk to the candidate about his calling and how it relates to church planting. They also discuss waiting on God on specific prayer requests.

- Adapting to other cultures.

- Financial responsibility.

How does the potential church planter manage resources and does he have a healthy, biblical view of stewardship?

- Team player.

The candidate should be able to work in an environment that values team work, share responsibility and empower others to serve.

'New Wineskins' helps church planters make disciples

By Steve DeVane
BR Managing Editor

The Baptist State Convention (BSC) has launched an effort to help church planters make disciples.

The endeavor, called "New Wineskins," started in August 2008. It includes a web site, a monthly e-mail magazine, podcasts and conference calls. BSC officials say on the web site that while "church plants can have varied theology and methodology," discipleship remains vital in all.

Rick Hughes, senior consultant for discipleship, helps church planters as they try to be disciples and to make disciples.

"Jesus said, 'Come follow me,'" Hughes said. "We talk about what that looks like."

New Wineskins events often feature former successful church planters who continue to work with new churches across the nation.

These interviews give church planters the opportunity for feedback and extended discussion.

Hughes said in a BSC news release that New Wineskins tries to assist church planters by providing them resources which will help them love God and one another while their churches are young.

"Rather than providing these pastors with gimmicks or tricks, we sought to provide them with sound reading and opportunities to interact with one another in ways that would deeply root them in the Bible's requirements for them as pastors and for their churches," he said.

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10

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New Life at center of church planting movement

By Steve DeVane
BR Managing Editor

When Steve Harris started New Life Community Church in Asheville, he envisioned a congregation that would be a “headquarters” to start other new churches.

As the church gets ready to celebrate its 12th anniversary, it has helped launch more than 100 others through pastoral training, financial support, prayer and encouragement.

“We decided that we were going to set that as a core value at New Life,” he said.

Harris became interested in church planting while working on a doctor of ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

His “entrepreneur spirit” was captured by stories about how newer churches were growing, but his calling became clear when he heard church growth professor C. Peter Wagner talking about starting churches.

Wagner said church planting is the most effective form of evangelism, that new churches baptize more people per capita than existing churches and that new churches serve as a “warm incubator” for new believers.

“When he said that I knew,” Harris said. “I said, ‘I have to do this.’”

Harris believes he was called to help start a “church planting movement.” To be credible as the leader of such an effort, he had to start a church.

When New Life began, it included an initiative called “Mission 20:20,” based on Acts 20:20, where Paul tells church leaders at Ephesus that he did not shrink from helping them, but taught them



Contributed photo

MULTIPLYING — Steve Harris, right, meets with Sabas and Mely Amador. Harris, pastor of New Life Community Church in Asheville, is helping Amador with a new Hispanic church. The church was recently helped to start by New Life. Harris meets with the couple Mondays to mentor them with the church plant. The new start is averaging between 45-50 in attendance on Sunday evenings.

publicly and from house to house.

Harris was still training to be a church planter and New Life was still meeting in a school when Harris met the first church planter he’d help. He and Mike Madding met during a “church planter boot camp” and became friends.

New Life’s offer of support helped convince Madding that God wanted him to start a church.

“They became the first church to say, ‘We’ll support what you’re doing,’”

Madding said.

The congregation Madding started, The Cove Church in Mooresville near Lake Norman, now has an average attendance of about 3,400 each Sunday, including about 400 at a satellite location in Statesville.

Based on Acts 1:8, New Life seeks to help new churches in its area and across the state, nation and world.

Currently, Harris is mentoring a Hispanic pastor who is starting a church in New Life’s building.

New Life is also helping church planters in Asheville, Hendersonville, Mooresville, India, Uganda, Ukraine and Honduras.

Harris often serves as mentor for the church planters.

He also trains pastors who are involved in other church planting movements.

Harris also leads the church planting team in Buncombe Baptist Association, which is currently starting eight new churches.

Craig Bailey, Buncombe Association director of missions, appreciates Harris’ work. It is important “to have guys on the cutting edge” to reach the “strange mix of people in Asheville,” Bailey said.

To have a leader like Harris helping is “invaluable.”

Because Asheville is an attractive city, Bailey fields inquiries every week from men interested in planting a church there.

“The first thing I try to do is discourage them,” Bailey said. “If they’re serious, they won’t be deterred.”

Harris said one of the biggest factors in starting a church is whether the pastor is gifted and called.

With training, support and encouragement the church planter is free to do what God is calling him to do.

“We’re not into building buildings,” he said. “We’re into training pastors.”

Harris said that a conservative estimate of more than 10,000 people worship at churches helped to their start by New Life, which has 265 members and about 360 in attendance.

“From the beginning, we always said that our concern is not just addition, but multiplication,” he said.

CrossLink models method

By Norman Jameson
BR Editor

Ken Tilley had a “great situation in every imaginable way” and loved being associate pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Hillsborough.

Then God told him to start a new church.

About four years earlier, Ebenezer pastor Earl Echols Jr. had challenged the church to plant another. No one had come forward until Tilley realized he was supposed to lead the effort.

Today an obedient Tilley leads CrossLink, a three-year-old church meeting at Gravelly Middle School in Mebane. Baptist State Convention (BSC) church planting leadership points to Tilley, CrossLink and the nurture of Ebenezer as a church planting model.

In May 2005 Tilley told the Ebenezer congregation of his new church vision. Eventually 42 persons, including children, joined hands to create CrossLink Community Church, where the goal is to win people to faith in Jesus and to link them to God, people and service.

Although three “preview” services were held earlier, the church started meeting regularly in April 2006 with 173 people at its first service. Today more than 400 worship regularly, a number that swelled to 618 on Easter.

The middle school offers space for a café and coffee shop on Sunday mornings. Church members are active with the school, helping to landscape it using equipment they volunteered, and by proctoring students.

Hanging out

CrossLink “believes in linking people to the cross through authentic relationships,” Tilley said during

an interview in one of four office spaces the church rents in a renovated sock mill in Mebane. In one of the spaces, the staff works out physically together every day, helping them stay fit for ministry.

Because Tilley believes all ministry is about relationships, he nurtures them, bringing study materials to hang out daily at the local McDonald’s and other places, and he works hard to memorize names.

While Mebane on paper is a “very religious place,” Tilley said many residents there “have religion but no relationship with Jesus.”

Trying to break through cultural religion is “in some ways harder than reaching a hard core person who knows he’s lost,” Tilley said.

Reaching those people is what new churches do best and is why it is so important to plant them, even if it seems there is a church on every corner and a new work encroaches on an existing church’s “territory.”

Tilley’s own reception by established churches in Mebane was “not very good,” he said.

He received only one response to his letter offering to meet with and buy lunch for each of the approximately 100 pastors in the area to share his vision and heart for a new work.

Tilley believes in change. “We’re always going to preach God’s word because that’s all we have, but we do believe the methodology at times must change,” he said.

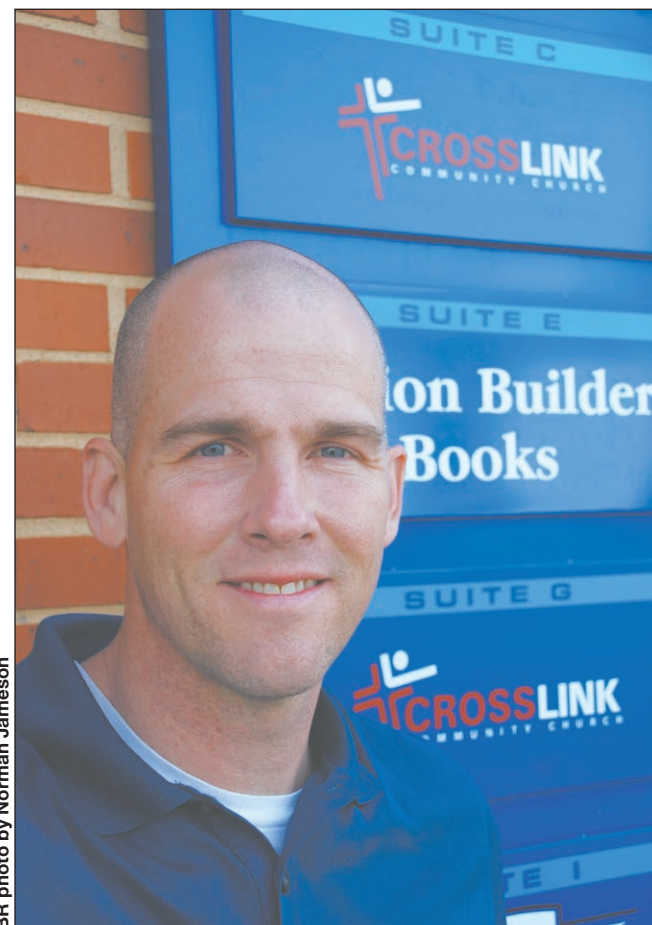
CrossLink style

Tilley, 39, understands that statistically a pastor attracts persons who basically are 10 years either side of his age. CrossLink skews toward the younger side.

Typical members are college grads who dropped out of church until about age 30 when they realized they need a church community for their spiritual de-

“We’re always going to preach God’s word because that’s all we have, but we do believe the methodology at times must change.”

— Ken Tilley



BR photo by Norman Jameson

SHARING — Ken Tilley, pastor of CrossLink Community Church, was called out of his associate pastor role at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Hillsborough to start a new church.

velopment and in which to raise children.

The style is contemporary, with a full band. Volunteers meet early before the two services to set up preschool and children’s ministries areas, the café, InfoLink, and the band.

The church is actively looking for property to expand its vision and ideally would like 50 acres on

(See CrossLink Page 10)

Convention throws weight behind church planting

(Continued from Page 1)

virally. Geographic associations of Baptist churches will be important partners in the strategy.

“Our desire is to partner with associations,” Gray said, “to work hard with associations to where they’re open to a church planter.”

Historically, churches within associations could prod associational leadership to veto BSC funding for a new church within the association.

“That model is shifting,” Gray said, as the Convention begins to work also with other networks, some that are not geographically based, such as Acts 29 and the Church Planting Network, made up of aggressive church planting BSC pastors.

“The younger generation of Christ followers really has passion for church planting,” Register said. “They will form networks on their own.”

“There is a great openness to contemplate the possibility in partnering with church plants now,” Gray said. “Education precedes support and we’ve worked diligently to educate pastors and directors of missions in the state about different people groups. There was some sense in the past of ownership of a geographical area. But we’re helping people understand that in an area there might be 15 people groups” unreached by current churches.

Ethnic church plants

BSC ethnic church planting consultants Santos and Garay are “exceptional,” Register said. Santos was instrumental in starting 26 churches in 2008.

With 180 identifiable language groups in North Carolina, ethnic starts are “vitally important” to reaching the state, Register said.

Last year the BSC started 27 Anglo churches, 27 Hispanic churches and 17 Asian churches.

Language churches face a host of unique difficulties. One group from a former communist area was meeting regularly together but was reluctant to become a church, Gray said, because members did not want to attract attention.

“We have to be sensitive to their cultural issues,” he said.

Newcomers are more open to the gospel before they become westernized and more self sufficient, Register said.

“Self sufficiency is anathema to the gospel,” he said. “A self-sufficient



BR photo by Norman Jameson

LEADING — Chuck Register, right, is executive leader for church planting and missions development at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Mark Gray is team leader for church planting.



person is less willing to bow the knee to the lordship of Christ.”

As churches mature in awareness, more ethnic churches are taking responsibility to plant churches in their people groups, rather than leaving that to Anglo churches, Gray said.

Convention helps

The Convention is focusing resources on church planting and “brings a lot to the table” Register said.

According to Hollifield, “The entire Baptist State Convention staff realizes that church planting is not only the task of the church planting consultants, but that each member of our staff has a contribution to make towards church planting efforts.” Each program area resources new churches for growth and development.

BSC staff also is vitally interested in the spiritual health of existing churches, which are the “key to forming and sustaining a church planting culture,” he said.

“We are finding that more North Carolina Baptist associations and their churches are catching a fresh vision of the necessity to start new churches to reach more lost people and more of them are open to helping plant new churches as they see their participation

in this process as a critical component to the advance of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,” Hollifield said.

Anyone interested in Convention assistance in church planting goes through an assessment process. Those who pass are invited to a week-long basic training that builds a foundation. Planters receive coaching and certain funds.

The BSC will give a maximum \$14,400 annually toward support initially, if the church planter raises matching funds of twice that amount. Some church planting enthusiasts criticize the BSC contribution as far too small.

Gray said, however, “Studies show that church planters involved in raising their own funds are more effective than those who are fully funded.” Fully funding a new church start “creates dependency,” he said.

“As a church planter you have to be able to sell your vision to individuals,” Register said. Church planter Ken Tilley (story, p. 7) calls that the WOO factor, “win others over” (story, p. 6) that is an essential ingredient in church planting success.

His plant in Mebane was funded by BSC and by \$80,000 annually for two years by his sponsoring church, Ebenezer Baptist. Early funding of more significant amounts enables a church to start with multiple staff members.

About half of church planters each year work another job. The BSC is currently funding 59 fulltime and 44 part-time planters. Church planters that do not request funds from the BSC still

receive all the training and coaching the BSC offers.

Finding fertile soil

One strategy to open eyes to people groups in an area and the potential need for more churches is what Gray calls Operation Reach. Consultants will spend a day with a pastor, a staff member and a lay leader to reconnoiter their area. After a morning of learning, they will travel in a van and identify people groups that would not be likely to attend their church.

Those rides illustrate the need for new churches to reach those people. “That creates buy-in,” Gray said. “It’s not the state convention or director of missions that is saying, ‘You need a new church here, it’s themselves.’”

Gray really pushes “cluster partners” for a new church plant. That would include the planter, a primary sponsoring church, several other sponsoring churches or an association to pledge support in money, resources or special events and the Convention.

The BSC process has been phenomenally successful, with a 96 percent success rate of new plants operating two years after their launch, according to Gray.

Part of that success is attributable to the assessment of potential church planters before they are ever brought on board, and then the basic training of those who are embraced.

During a weeklong basic training, planters are not told what their new church should look like. “We help them identify the vision God has given them and develop a strategy to carry it out,” Gray said, recognizing that each new church is unique. Like medical doctors, Convention staff tries to inject each new church with a church planting gene in their DNA.

Register is “convinced God’s heart and passion is to reach and congregationalize this state.”

“We have to decide if we are going to be obedient to that heart, to that calling,” he said. “When God speaks, when He gives us a vision, are we going to be obedient to that?”

With about 4,100 churches now and about 100 new churches being sown each year, how many churches will it take to win North Carolina to Christ?

“More than we have now,” Register said. “We’re committed to planting churches until this entire state is won to the Lord.”

NAMB’s village web site gets makeover

By Mickey Noah
Baptist Press

It takes a “village” to plant a church. And the “village” has just undergone an extreme makeover.

Although it’s been around for a decade, the North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) Church Planting Village web site (www.churchplantingvillage.net) has been streamlined, updated and more user-friendly.

“The Church Planting Village is one of the largest web sites dedicated to church planting in the nation,” said Greg Penna, church planting consultant for NAMB and site editor. “It’s a real treasure for church planters in the U.S. and even around the world.”

Penna estimates the site generates 1 million page views per year. The new site, which went live in mid-January, is optimized for information-searching using Google. Another key change: church planters no longer need to know English to enter the site. It now is readable and navigable in eight additional languages: Spanish, Korean, French, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Russian and Vietnamese.

CHURCH PLANTING VILLAGE

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German and Portuguese will be added soon. The site now is organized into three distinct areas, depending on the user:

- church planters.
- church partners — churches considering a church plant, launching a plant or sponsoring a new plant.
- field partners — directors of mission or local association employees, a church planting strategist or a state convention partner.

Penna said information on people groups “has always been at least half of the site’s content, but it was interspersed in different places. Now the information

is all in one place. We added a people group library so now if you search Hispanics, there will be more detailed information, say on Argentineans. It’s now very easy to find information on all people groups.”

Regardless of the site user’s area of interest, the web site includes a resource library with 22 different church planting-related topics, such as administration, assessment, church plant models, fundamentals, communications/marketing, doctrine/theology, finances/stewardship and a list of vendors for needs like web sites, buying equipment and hiring consultants.

“The new site also allows us to include audio files such as podcasts, videos and other kinds of resources,” said Penna, who worked six months on the web site renovation with a team of six members on NAMB’s church planting resource development and delivery team. “We’re also excited about new capabilities, such as webinars.”

Penna said individuals in church planting can get a free subscription to the bimonthly electronic church planting newsletter, “Planter Update.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE — Noah is a writer for NAMB.)

Looking to God's Grace

(Continued from Page 1)

North Carolina. They've been called the "Wal-Mart church," because they send a gift card to first-time guests or the "hot chocolate church," because they've given refreshments to people during the Christmas parade the past two years.

Last summer, the church held three backyard Bible clubs in multi-unit housing communities.

"We want to show the love of Jesus in order to build bridges to people during the Christmas parade," Blue said.

Growing church

"We're a growing church," Blue said. "I think we're growing the right way."

That way includes a clear vision, focused on reaching the unchurched.

"I know our focus is right," said Pam Roeben, music coordinator, who has five children between the ages of 7 and 19. "We want to please God."

Started with a group of five families, Grace currently averages close to 80. They've used their flexible space for a variety of outreach activities: coffee houses, Mexican Fiesta Game Night, showing the movie Fireproof, etc.

Almost half the members are high school age and younger and they have active roles in the services, which encourages their involvement. On one February Wednesday night, they visited local businesses distributing candy and sharing the gospel.

Wendy Hamilton's four children began attending Grace last summer and she said they "come home with so much knowledge." She admired how Grace got them involved in an apartment complex ministry across from the church as well as distributing food to public servants at Christmas. She praised Grace attendees as "selfless."

Grace's non-traditional service also drew Alan Barnhill, a volunteer firefighter. As a drummer and former band member, Barnhill's musical preference leaned toward rock n' roll and hard rock. Now he plays in the church band, and loves the contemporary and praise music.

Grace stresses missions and half the church last year ministered in Brazil, Uganda, Germany or Greensboro. This summer, groups will minister in Charleston, S.C., and again in Brazil. The church is decorated with flags from the countries in which they minister.

Obstacles

With all of Grace's successes, Blue said church plants face some steep problems.

"There really hasn't been a truly healthy Southern Baptist church plant in Scotland County in 20 or 30 years," he said.

Laurinburg has high unemployment and teen pregnancy rates and a low education level.

"We've had at least four events that could have killed most church plants," Blue said. "We've also made plenty of mistakes. We're thankful that God got us through them."

When Grace first started, Blue said he received nasty e-mails and was accosted about infringing on other's territory.

"We experienced some persecution right off the bat," he said, but "we want to work with other churches to reach people in Laurinburg."

A self-described Type A personality, Blue and Grace's other leaders feel they are flying by the seat of their pants sometimes. They meet monthly to try to stay ahead of constant change.

Atmosphere

"We want to be very progressive ... as long as it doesn't conflict with scripture," Blue said. "We're very conservative in our theology and our Baptist identity."

The building has three rooms for children and nursery, a small kitchen, and fellowship area that bleeds into the worship area. On the outer edges of the main room is a foosball and ping-pong table. Now, they are praying for a pool table.

"We let people be themselves," Blue said.

Describing Grace as missional, Blue said they are "trying to apply the same concepts as missionaries in their context."

Blue also is a visiting lecturer of religion at University of North Carolina-Pembroke, where he teaches Introduction to Religion and Introduction to New Testament.

In the beginning

Grace, which baptized 12 last year, started in November 2007, and Stewartsville gave \$10,000 seed money. Current Stewartsville pastor Eddy Simmons, a former International Mission Board missionary, said Blue has a "great vision."

Stewartsville committed to help Grace financially for three years, and the churches have partnered on mission trips.

"I think the Lord blesses churches that start other churches," Simmons said.

Grace sets aside two percent of gifts in a special fund to plant a church later.

Blue hopes by year three Grace will be able to help plant another church. Members need to pray "a lot" and consider dedicating a year of their lives to seek God's will about using them in a church plant.

"You also need a kingdom mentality," Simmons said.

A church doesn't have to be big to plant another.



DOUBLE TIME — Pam Roeben, center, observes some of the artistic skills of the children at Grace Baptist Church in Laurinburg. Roeben, who is also music coordinator at the church, led the music before coming in to teach the lesson. She also had to duck out to play the closing music.

Stewartsville averages 400 on Sunday.

"It has to be a kingdom thing," Simmons said.

"You multiply better that way. The newer churches are reaching people."

Seeking assistance

Still a young congregation, Grace needs help with children, the nursery, their 412 Student Ministries (after 1 Tim. 4:12: "no one should despise your youth"), and community outreach.

Call the church at (910) 276-6203; e-mail contact@graceinlaurinburg.org or visit www.graceinlaurinburg.org.



PRAISING — Younger people share their talents during the worship service at Grace Baptist Church.

Church planters help each other

By Steve DeVane
BR Managing Editor

Church planters often have questions that can best be answered only by other church planters.

An informal network is meeting that need for about 40 church planters who gather each month at Pine Ridge Church in Graham to discuss the unique issues related to planting, nurturing and growing a new congregation.

"I think the only people who understand church planters are church planters," said Tadd Grandstaff, a leader of the network and pastor at Pine Ridge, one of the new churches started the week of the Southern Baptist Convention's 2006 meeting in Greensboro.

Grandstaff, who had been involved in a similar network in Atlanta, said the group started about eight months ago when about 10 church planters met for lunch.

The group grew as those attending invited

friends who are starting churches.

"It's a time to connect and form relationships," said Grandstaff.

Church planters register to attend the meeting on the Pine Ridge web site. Registration includes an opportunity to post questions for discussion. Each month, participants discuss about 10 of the questions on topics ranging from how to form a core team to how best to follow up with visitors.

The network might become more formal, and the church planters are even talking about working together to start more churches, Grandstaff said.

While the Raleigh and Greensboro areas are most represented in the group, others have come from the coastal region, Kentucky and Virginia.

Many of the church planters are associated with the Baptist State Convention, but others are affiliated with other groups.

"You get different perspectives from different churches," Grandstaff said.



Grandstaff

Tarheels in Montana



Contributed photos

GROWING — At left, William Johnson and his family (right: Teresa; Quinton, 7, and Corban, 4) were recognized at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in San Antonio in 2007 for their church plant in Manhattan, Mont. Above, Gallatin Valley Baptist Fellowship is averaging in the 80s for regular attendance on Sunday mornings. The church first met in a senior center, then in an aerobics studio at an athletic club and is now meeting in a 6,000-square-foot building that used to house a trailer sales business.

Wedding trip shows couple need for new churches

By Steve DeVane
BR Managing Editor

William and Teresa Johnson's 6,000-mile, 16-state honeymoon trip about 10 years ago included a stop in Montana on a Sunday. When they couldn't find a church to attend, William jokingly told Teresa that if they ran out of things to do, they could always come to Montana and start a church.

Now they're North American missionaries, planting a church about 25 miles from where their honeymoon trip took them.

"God must have a sense of humor," William Johnson said.

The Johnsons grew up in McDowell County in western North Carolina. William was raised in Marion; Teresa in Old Fort. They consider Burkemont Baptist Church in Morganton their home church.

The couple attended Wake Crossroads Baptist Church in Raleigh while William attended Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary from 2002-2004. They now live in Manhattan, Mont., with their two sons, Quinton, 7, and Corban, 4.

The Johnsons moved to Montana in October 2004, living and working in the community 17 months before holding their first public worship for the new church.



BR file photo by Dianna L. Cagle

TEACHING — William Johnson leads a breakout session at the 2008 Trail to Adventure conference held at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest.

"It was very important to not just say, 'Come and go to church,' but to serve as Christ did," William said. "That just opened doors to show genuine love."

The strategy told locals they are important and that the Johnsons were there to stay.

William said he has tried to live by some great advice from Bill Brown, a

former professor at Southeastern, who told him to focus on being pastor of the community, not just of the church.

"A lot of people refer me as pastor even though they've never come to the church," he said.

The church held its first service in March 2006. The congregation first met in a senior center, then in an aerobics

studio at an athletic club and is now meeting in a 6,000-square-foot building that once housed a trailer sales business.

The church was to vote May 3 on a lease to purchase option on the building, which has a 4,000-square-foot, high-ceiling room in the back and four rooms for offices in the front.

Average attendance is about 85, but more than 100 have come several times.

The Johnsons also lead a worship service at an assisted living facility each Sunday.

Small groups meet during the week, with some gathering at the church building and others in homes.

Backyard Bible clubs, Bible studies and community projects help the Johnsons and other members connect with area residents. They have painted the fire hall and local houses, cleaned yards and redesigned the community gazebo.

"We've done a lot of little things to build relationships," Johnson said.

An outdoor ministry has helped reach men not in church or those who go to church but aren't very involved, Johnson said.

The group meets monthly to hunt, fish or hold a rally.

Men attending the rallies watch videos, hang out, and have a 10- to 15-minute spiritual challenge usually related to the outdoors, he said.

"We hunt all day and fish or whatever, but we have Bible studies at night," he said. "Everything has a purpose."

CrossLink models method

(Continued from Page 7)

which to build what could become a Mebane area missions hub, with a skate park, recreation fields and a coffee shop.

CrossLink makes liberal use of yard signs pointing to "life groups" in Mebane, Graham, Hillsboro and Durham.

"It gives the impression that CrossLink is everywhere," Tilley said.

Part of the goal is to get people to the www.lifeat-thelink.org web site which is attractive enough to draw the curious.

Ebenezer provided \$80,000 annually for two years, and made available other resources like a van. The BSC provided church planting funds of \$14,400 the first year on a declining scale for two more years.

After three years the church budget is \$430,000 and growing.

The church gives \$45,000 to missions, including \$21,500 budgeted for Cooperative Program.

Church planting is in the church's own DNA and Tilley is talking with Echols about another church start in two years.

He also is active with the Church Planting Network, an informal group of BSC pastors who are committed to planting new works.

"We want to get to point where we are just spinning off new churches every couple of years," Tilley said. "I don't have any desire for CrossLink to become a mega mega mega church. In some ways that becomes more about an individual. I'm not that kind of leader."

Tilley earned an engineering degree from UNC-Charlotte and a master of divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1996.

He has been married to Stephanie for 17 years and they have three girls, Madison, 10, Laikyn, 7, and Emerson, 3.

While he is a "do it yesterday" person, "she is my balance," he said. "She is like a crock pot. It's got to cook a little while but once she gets on board, she's full throttle."

Why new churches?

— Because the church to population ration is declining rapidly.

- In 1900 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 Americans.

- In 1950 there were 17 churches for every 10,000 Americans

- In 1996 there were 11 churches for every 10,000 Americans.

Many people look at these numbers and question, "But hasn't the size of churches increased?" Unfortunately the answer is "no." The median size of the church has not changed for 100 years.

— Because new churches are much more effective at reaching the lost.

— The estimated non-Christian population of the United States is 200 million.

— Six million French Canadians make up the largest unreached people group in North America (1 in 200 is Christian).

— North America is the only continent where Christianity is not growing.

Source: Church Planting Village.net

NCBAM awards first grant to Jacksonville church

By Blake Ragsdale
BCH Communications

JACKSONVILLE — The North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) has awarded its first grant to help Brookwood Baptist Church's expanding ministry to senior adults in Jacksonville.

Leadership of the recently established NCBAM considers it a priority to assist a church's efforts to develop new programs and outreach to the aging.

"We are excited about Brookwood Baptist Church's enthusiasm and focus to grow its ministry and provide new programs to the aging population," said Michael C. Blackwell, president of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, the umbrella organization for NCBAM.

"We want to be a part of their expansion efforts. The church's intentions are directly in-line with the mission of NCBAM," said Blackwell.

NCBAM grant recipients, such as churches and associations of churches, will help aging adults maintain their independence and quality of life.

The ministry focuses on providing information and referrals, on connecting the aging and their families with resources to meet needs, and on coordinating practical ministries.

A rigorous application and screening process is part of the grant process.

Brookwood Baptist, with a 15-year history of serving senior adults in Jacksonville, will use the \$10,000 grant to create outreach for senior adults through its new program named "Senior-versity."

Senior-versity will offer classes and service opportunities for aging adults across Onslow County.

Classes include short-term academic, crafts, gardening, biblical study, health and fitness and a variety of other activities. Through the new program, the church will partner with NCBAM and hopes to work in tandem with the New River Baptist Association in Jacksonville and other area churches to expand the outreach.

"We are very excited about the partnership with NCBAM," said Brookwood Baptist Church senior pastor David Gasperson.

"We wish to develop new programs that will address unmet needs of seniors, or readdress the way we currently meet needs, that exhibits God's love."

"Senior-versity is a concept that will allow us to accomplish these goals and provide partnership opportunities with other churches in our Baptist association as well as other organizations," Gasperson said.

This summer, the church is working with the music department at East Carolina University to conduct a 16-week research study. As many as 70 area seniors will study a musical instrument



BSC photo by K Brown

GIVING — Brookwood Baptist Church in Jacksonville received a \$10,000 grant from the North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry to aid in the church's expansion of its outreach to senior adults in the Onslow County area. The check was presented at the Baptist State Convention's building in Cary. Left to right: Roy Parker, Brookwood Baptist pastor to senior adults; David Gasperson, Brookwood Baptist pastor; Michael C. Blackwell, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina president; Milton A. Hollifield Jr., Baptist State Convention of North Carolina executive director-treasurer.

to research the effect of music training on the aging.

"The keys are addressing needs by implementing dynamic ideas and programs and then partnering with churches and organizations to undertake and enhance their own ministries," Blackwell said. "If NCBAM can undergird more churches, such as Brookwood Baptist, we can begin building a statewide network to support and meet the needs of the aging population."

NCBAM's leadership is focused on efforts to expand its network of ministry. The Baptist State Convention

of North Carolina's executive director-treasurer Milton A. Hollifield, Jr. believes Brookwood Baptist Church is the right place to begin.

"David Gasperson and the entire congregation possess a passion and resolve to serve senior adults in need," Hollifield said.

"This grant is a compassionate provision from the churches of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and is given in gratitude for all that this congregation has done and will do to advance senior adult ministry in the years to come."



Classified Advertisements

Pastor

Pastor. Hallsboro Baptist Church, Hallsboro, NC, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small, rural church with a diverse congregation. We support both CBF and SBC. Applicants should have a masters degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Please send resume and references to Search Committee, 3815 Sams Potts Hwy., Hallsboro, NC 28450.

Full-Time Pastor. Spray Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. We are an established church with an average attendance of 150 in worship. We are seeking a spiritually mature, Christ-led pastor. Interested candidates should submit a resume to Pastor Search Committee, Spray Baptist Church, 745 Church Street, Eden NC 27288, or e-mail laura@spraybaptistchurch.com.

Baldwin Baptist Church, a traditional, conservative Southern Baptist church, located near the beautiful NE Georgia mountains, is seeking a **full-time pastor** who has a heart for all people and will be a player/coach leader. Please send resumes to (Search Committee, P.O. Box 100, Clarksville, GA 30523) by May 30, 2009.

Senior Pastor being sought by Kilmarnock Baptist Church. We are a congregation of 100+ in attendance seeking a male or female pastor who possesses a blend of preaching, caring and leadership skills and who seeks to be loved by the congregation. The city of Kilmarnock is unique in that it possesses the charm of country life near the water while also incorporating the initiative of business leaders. The church is eager to move ahead in mission to our area. Please send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, Kilmarnock Baptist Church, P.O. Box 99, Kilmarnock, VA 22482.

Pastor. First Baptist Church Thomasville, NC, is seeking a full-time minister. We desire a pastor that has completed his Southern Baptist education from an accredited seminary with 5-7 years experience as a pastor. The church consists largely of mature members, but the pastor should be able to identify with and effectively reach out to young families. Interested parties should submit resumes to Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 8 Cramer St., Thomasville, NC 27360.

Gap Creek Missionary Baptist Church, a conservative member of the Cumberland Gap Baptist Association in Claiborne County, Tenn., is accepting applications for a **full-time pastor**. Experience is preferred. Gap Creek has an active membership of over 300 and is growing. If possible, send a CD or DVD of your sermon along with a resume. Send resume to: Gap Creek Baptist Church, Attn. Troy Poore, P.O. Box 177, Arthur, TN 37707. You may send your resume by e-mail to troypoore@hotmail.com.

Glasgow Baptist Church, Glasgow, VA, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church located in historic Rockbridge County, VA. We have an active membership of 150-200. Resumes may be sent to: Pastor Search Committee, c/o Bill Dill, Chairman, 34 Boulder Lane, Natural Bridge, VA. 24578 (e-mail address: bdpastorsearch6@gmail.com).

Church Staff

Worship Leader. First Baptist Church of Fernandina Beach, FL, is currently seeking a full-time worship leader. We are a growing, conservative church with a blended style of worship. Send resumes to FBC, 1600 S. 8th St. Fernandina Beach, FL 32034. Attn: Worship Leader Search Committee. Resumes received through May 31.

Azalea Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia, a moderate church affiliated with the BGAV and the CBF, seeks a full time **Director of Christian Ministries** to develop, implement, and oversee educational programs. For a detailed job description send resume including work history and official school transcripts to: Azalea Baptist Church, Search Committee, 3314 E. Little Creek Road, Norfolk, Virginia 23518; Attn. J. Francis.

Minister of Youth. Williamston Memorial Baptist Church, Williamston, NC. We are a growing and vibrant church of approx. 500 members who is affiliated with SBC, BSCNC & SRBA. We are seeking an energetic individual with a calling to disciple and reach out to students in grades 7-12. Please see the job description on our webpage, www.memchap.org under the staff section. Resumes may be submitted to dharell@memchap.org or contact Robbie Parker or Dean Harrell at 252-792-2865.

Part-time Minister of Music needed at Tuckasee Baptist Church, Mt. Holly, NC. Please send resume and references to: Sherry Ridlon, 111 Forestway Drive, Mt. Holly, NC 28120.

Seeking Music Worship Leader. First Baptist Church of Locust is searching for a part-time music worship leader. Send resume to Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 159, Locust, NC 28097.

Minister of Music and Senior Adults. FBC, Smithfield, NC. A vibrant and growing church with an average weekly attendance of 475. The church offers both a blended and traditional service weekly. Interested persons should be a graduate of a four year accredited college or university with a degree in music. Applicants should have experience in a variety of church music. Church desires an individual who works well with all ages and education levels. Send resumes to Personnel Committee, 202 S. 4th St., Smithfield, NC 27577. Resumes will be accepted through June 30, 2009.

Miscellaneous

Spray Baptist Church **seeks photographs** of former pastors T.M. Green (1914-1919) and J.M. Everett (1923-1925). If you have photographs or information please contact Spray Baptist Church, 745 Church Street, Eden, NC 27288, (336) 627-7205 or e-mail laura@spraybaptistchurch.com.

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Handling the Bible properly on culturally hot topics

By Ted D. Manby

Adamsville Baptist Church, Goldsboro

A few weeks ago a *Biblical Recorder* article (March 14) about a potential woman president raised at least three questions. I seek to answer those questions biblically without recreating “the theological wheel.” These questions are more thoroughly answered in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, eds. J. Piper and W. Grudem (Crossway, 1991); *Women in the Church*, eds. A. Kösetenbeger, T. Schreiner, and S. Baldwin (Baker, 1995); *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*, G. Fee and D. Stuart (Zondervan, 2003); and *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, J. R. McQuilkin (Moody, 1983).

The article headline asked, “Can a woman be president and not a pastor?” According to the Bible, the answer to this question is yes. When we go to the teaching portions of God’s word we have a directive from Paul, an apostle of Christ for the church.

He writes, “I am not permitting a woman to be teaching or to be exercising authority over adult males” (1 Tim. 2:11). We also see in 1 Cor. 14:34 a similar prescription given in the context of a New Testament church worship service. First Timothy was written by Paul at the end of his ministry to guide Timothy on how to return a church (that had strayed in doctrine and practice) back to God’s proper order (1 Tim. 3:15). The commands in this book have the utmost authority in the life of the church today and cannot be set aside by a historical passage of scripture.

In 1 Tim. 2:9–15 Paul limits a woman’s audience when she is teaching the Bible or theology. She may teach scripture and theology to women and children, but

not to adult males in the church. In fact, she is encouraged to teach women and children according to Titus 2:3–4. She may also teach adult males Spanish and geometry in a non-church setting, but she may not exercise authority over the adult males in the church (yet she can have authority over children and other women).

In Eph. 5:22, married women are responsible to be under their husband’s authority in the home. But, the Bible does not limit a woman’s role in the state; therefore, she is free to be a president, senator, or even prime minister (Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir). Church elder roles, however, are restricted to men, that is, the one-woman-man (1 Tim. 3:2). This topic should not be decided by emotions and requires some careful study and reading. Please see Piper, 179–193 and McQuilkin, 193–202 for more detailed explanations.

Can what the Bible describes, rescind what the Bible prescribes?

Hermeneutics is the science of studying the Bible, and according to every evangelical work on hermeneutics known to this author, the answer to this question is no. Unfortunately, even the historical examples (narratives) in the *Recorder* article had some rather serious problems. For example, Mary in Acts 12:12 allowed a group to occupy her son’s room. (Upper rooms were built on houses so that the son and his wife could live above his parents.)

Lydia invited a group of missionaries to have a meal and spend the night in her house (Acts 16:15). Likewise, Col. 4:15 has a textual variant where some manuscripts have *nympha* (female) and others have *nymphas* (male). All this text states is that this person was a believer in which a group of Christians met in their house (male

(See *Handling Page 14*)



Tar Heel Voices

Home school letter inaccurate

I am in my 10th year of home schooling my children, and there is nothing that gets my dander up quicker than judging all home school families by the very rare family that does not invest every ounce of their being into the education of their children.

All we need is for someone like your April 25 writer who has only heard of such a home school family to cry out for more rules and regulations.

While it is true that a parent with a GED or high school diploma can operate a home school, that same parent is far more qualified than the most highly educated professional when it comes to their own children.

The writer states that testing is only required for the third, sixth, and ninth grades. In fact, North Carolina home school law requires a nationally standardized achievement test to be given every year, for children ages 7 to 16. While it is true that these tests can be given in the home by the parent, it is the home schooling parent’s desire to get an accurate picture of what their child has or has not learned.

This is a much more relaxed and accurate testing situation than the public school testing pressures, which are driven by pay ladder scales for teachers and annual growth percentages that determine each school’s funding for the next year.

It is very unfortunate that in home schooling, as with everything else in life, there are always a few who do not do what is right, and therefore spoil things for everybody else. The last thing home school families need is to all be categorized as a “serious problem in NC,” and have the home schooling rights of the family challenged.

Kathy Richards
Oxford

Raise your own children

My wife and I have home schooled our three children since the oldest was in the third grade.

Our children aged 15 and 17 now are in early college at Haywood Community College and make the dean’s list each semester.

At this point they have developed enough in their

walk with Christ to withstand the secular world.

They all have played on local sports teams with my son excelling in football and baseball. All three are active in their church youth group and are considered “leaders” in that group.

They have studied music and the arts and they have friends across the county. I would be glad to compare them to any public school students.

God gave my children to my wife and me. Not to anyone else, and especially not to the state. The government has no right over my children and some may want to relinquish their right (though usually, it is the responsibility they want to relinquish) but my wife and I will continue to “raise up our children in the way they should go.” Many say we should send our children into public school to be salt and light. But our children are not adults and for the most part our children enter into school as lost people.

Children in public schools spend more time learning the values of their teachers than of their parents. Baptists lose 70-80 percent of our children in church by their freshman year in college. Why would they believe church doctrine when they have spent 35 hours per week, 45 weeks a year being taught just the opposite of scripture? Why does that surprise us?

As Pastor Voddie Baucham once said, “If we send our children to Caesar for their education, do not be surprised when they come back as Romans.”

Alan Davis
Waynesville



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David Horton: A man of his word

By Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

BSC Executive Director-Treasurer

Ask anyone to name one of the hardest jobs in the workforce today and the presidency of any institution of higher education is sure to make the list. The pressure to raise money, recruit students, maintain programs, hire quality faculty, and run the day-to-day operations all at the same time can overwhelm anyone. Combine all these responsibilities with an obligation to remain accountable to local Baptist churches who expect a biblical worldview to be taught to students — especially those who are entering the ministry — and you now have the responsibility of the president of Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute (FBBI).



When Kenneth Ridings recently retired, we all knew that his successor would have big shoes to fill. Not only had Dr. Ridings ably led the institution through some uncertain times following the sudden death of FBBI President Randy Kilby, he continued to establish Fruitland as an invaluable partner with North Carolina Baptist churches. Today more than 800 North Carolina Baptist churches are led by Fruitland graduates.

I attended only the first meeting of the search committee appointed to replace Dr. Ridings.

I was quickly convinced that these men were a fair and capable group whose only agenda was to prayerfully search and determine the man God had selected and prepared to be the next president of FBBI. Dr. Brian Davis and I presented the committee with orientation material, prayed with them and challenged them to search far and wide for the person God might be bringing to lead this school into the future. After months of prayer, research and interviews, the search committee informed me that they had selected David Horton as their choice to be the 8th president of this institution and they asked me to conduct an interview with him.

David was no stranger to me, but this meeting revealed a side of David with which I was not familiar.

During our meeting, my appreciation for him grew as I caught a glimpse of the vision God has given him for the school. This is a man who possesses a preaching skill in the pulpit that is expository and evangelistic; a pastor’s heart for the spiritual growth of people to become better disciples of Jesus Christ; and a passionate ability to communicate a compelling vision with courage and skill. He is a man who believes that the best ministers of the gospel are those with minds filled with truth and hearts burning for souls.

The Bible is his guide and the passion of his life. His wife, Lisa, and his children are a testimony to his faithfulness as a devoted husband and father, and he is recognized by all North Carolina Baptists as a leader who can navigate the rapids of change which are ahead.

The final decision about David Horton’s appointment as FBBI’s president now rests with the Baptist State Convention’s Board of Directors.

As we look toward the future with the possibility of David Horton at Fruitland’s helm, I am certain that the school’s future is bright as this capable man of God leads the students of Fruitland to be mighty in the scriptures all for the glory of Christ and His church.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 2 Tim. 4:2

Feathering the empty nest

Are you or were you ready for breakfast the day after your youngest child left the house for college, work or the military and suddenly, you found yourself sitting across the table from a person you didn't recognize without the benefit of seeing him or her through the prism of your children?

You knew it was coming. You worked together to raise the kids to face the world on their own and you let your lives become background music. You unwittingly became a shuttle service because you let the children define their own needs and then you let those needs outweigh your own.

Today the startling realization that you've been married two decades to a person you no longer know is leading to a startling rise in divorces for people in long-term marriages.

According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics, the overall divorce rate has been declining for 20 years, but the divorce rate in marriages of 25 years or more is increasing dramatically.

Just recently, long-term high profile marriages made news for their breakups:

Montana Sen. Max Baucus and wife Wanda are divorcing after 25 years. Actor Mel Gibson and his wife Robyn Moore done after 28 years; golfer Greg Norman and wife Laura Andrassy quitting after 25 and there are many others.

But you're not a celebrity. You're simply a couple whose youngest child is about to leave and you're wondering if your marriage can stick together without the daily glue children provide.

You can't get "empty nest" insight from Bible passages because the only examples there are those in which adults beseech God to fill empty nests with children. Today parents often live to see their grandchildren become adults.

I just realized that if I live to match the age of my 87-year-old friend Cliff, that my grandsons will be older than my sons are now.

Such realizations should prompt a lot of "empty nest" preparation by all of you who still have children at home. How do you prepare?

1. Be sure your spouse is the No. 1 person in your life — ahead of the children.
2. Pick a date night and stick to it. Leave the children at home. Consider the cost of a babysitter an investment in your marriage. I'm amazed at the number of parents who both work who feel guilty about leaving the kids with a sitter.
3. Pursue a common interest not centered on your children's special activities.
4. Limit your children's special activities. You did not have children to turn into a shuttle service.
5. Don't talk to each other through your children. If you're aggravated that your wife is late, don't ask Junior to "Tell your mother she is late again." Or don't say, "Tell your father I have never liked to eat at Spuds R Us, and I don't want to go there for Mother's Day."

Continue to cultivate the special relationship you enjoyed early in your married life, so that when it is just the two of you again, you see it as the beginning of a new, wonderful and exciting time.

— NWJ



Convention committed to planting new churches

It's easy to start a new church.

It's hard to do it right.

North Carolina Baptists as a convention of churches, and many North Carolina Baptist churches on their own, are investing significant time, money, training, focus and efforts on starting new churches because there is a commitment to the idea that — per capita — new churches reach more people than do existing churches.

And there is a commitment to the idea that we'd better get busy about the business of reaching people because we're losing ground. If estimates are true that one half the population is lost that would mean North Carolina's lost population is larger than the total population of 85 nations. Of course, if half the population is lost, that means half is saved. And if the saved half each won one person to Christ...

Instead, our 4,100 North Carolina Baptist churches typically baptize 25,000 each year. And the population grew 196,000 in 2007. The faster we go, the behinder we get.

Existing churches, some in North Carolina more than 200 years old, and hundreds more than 100 years old, tend to grow a crust around them that becomes hard for new people to break through.

Think of the Sunday School classes in your church that are not really open to new members. There is no sign on the door that says "full" but it is easy for a visitor to pick up the vibe that he or she would never fit.

My wife and I had been visiting a class at a new church in a new town for months when one Sunday we were about the only ones who showed up. We learned later everyone else was at the annual camping trip. We never heard about it.

I once learned from a former staffer that during W.A. Criswell's tenure at First Baptist Church in Dallas each member of one men's class had his own recliner in the classroom.

Try breaking into that class as a new member!

Experts say that various people groups speak 180 languages in our state. Yet North Carolina Baptists are overwhelmingly English speaking Anglos.

Because Christians most often reach people that look and talk like ourselves, we must be very intentional about finding, training and supporting potential ministers who don't look like us, but who can reach members of those groups with which they have ethnic or language affinity.

Church planting is capturing the imagination of seminary students to the extent that in some classes,

EDITORIAL



Norman Jameson

when asked who was preparing to go into an established church, not a single hand goes up. Some directors of missions and other church planners have expressed concern that a shortage of pastors for established churches is looming in the next generation.

But young, fired up ministers would rather be with a church in the delivery room that carries some of their own DNA, than to wrestle in the emergency room with a patient that won't take the medicines he prescribes.

While a shortage of pastors would be tragic from our perspective today, in the context of the Church universal sometimes a seed must die so that a tree can grow. The *Biblical Recorder* ran a beautiful story in the previous issue about a dying Charlotte church that sold its facilities below market value to a growing black congregation. What was lost and what was gained?

We have in several areas many tiny churches established 100 to 150 years ago three to five miles apart, a good hour's walk. The same length of time today in a car will carry you past dozens of churches. If such churches continue as independent entities in the future they will find creative ways to share a pastor.

In the midst of a strong commitment to church planting, Baptist State Convention Executive Director-treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr. says the Convention remains vitally committed to the health of existing congregations. No existing church's needs will be lost in the emphasis on church planting.

Just as "grandparents" are said to be the biggest hindrance to young couples committing to overseas missions, it is a public secret that existing churches often resist new churches being planted "in their areas."

In truth there are living around many existing churches people groups that simply will not be interested in attending a church that is unlike themselves.

Craig Bailey, director of missions for Buncombe Association around Asheville, fields calls every week from people interested in starting a new church there. Ken Baker left Union Valley Baptist in Whiteville to start a church and wanted to go to the Myrtle Beach area.

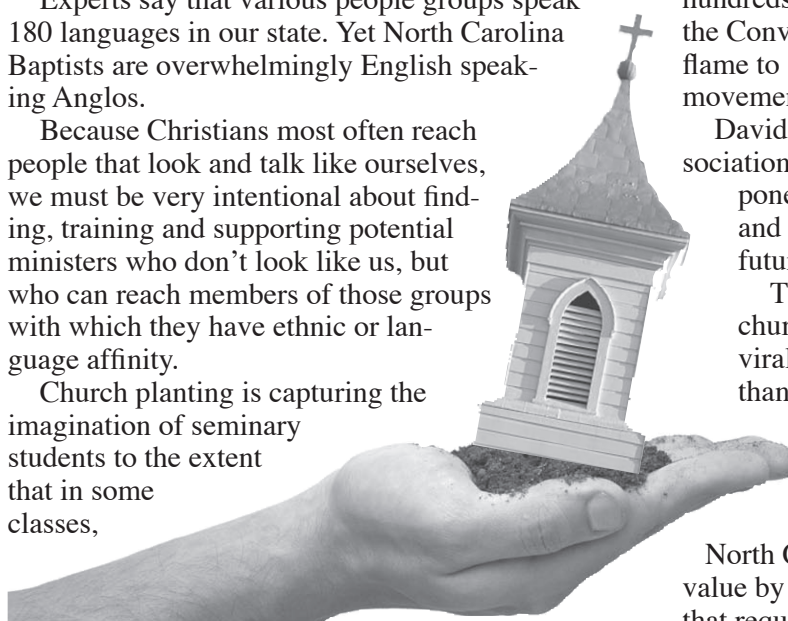
The director of missions there already had six plants getting started, so Ken went to Oak Island.


Bob Roberts of Northwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, leads a church that has helped to start hundreds of others, all over the world. He brought the Convention sermon in 2006 and fanned the flame to start not just churches, but a church planting movement.

David Phelps, director of missions in Atlantic Association, just returned from the international Exponential meeting of church planters in Florida and said he has never been so excited about the future of the Church.

The International Mission Board reports new churches in China are starting at a rate turning viral — thousands a year — and growing faster than leadership can be trained so new Christians are taking on the responsibility themselves.

Ironically, at a time when denominationalism is waning, the convention of North Carolina Baptists churches is proving its value by marshalling resources to accomplish a task that requires a cooperative effort.




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News Briefs

Presbyterians (U.S.A.) again uphold sexuality standard

WASHINGTON, D.C. — An attempt to delete the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s constitutional requirement that its officers practice "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness" has been defeated. As of April 27, 89 of the denomination's 173 local presbyteries had voted against the deletion, while only 69 had voted in favor.

The 2008 PCUSA General Assembly had proposed replacing the "fidelity and chastity" requirement with vaguer language lacking any standard for sexual behavior.

It would have opened the door for ordination of persons in homosexual and other non-marital relationships. The amendment would have gone into effect only if ratified by a majority vote of the presbyteries, which it failed to receive.

Alan Wisdom, the Institute on Religion and Democracy's vice president for research and programs said, "All traditional Christians can take encouragement that the Presbyterians have held the line on sexual morality."

"They have stood against the cultural pressure to legitimize any relationship between 'people who love one another.'"

Methodists' court rejects move to support gay marriage

(RNS) The United Methodist Church's highest court has ruled that clergy may not officiate at same-sex unions, even in states where such marriages are legal, and gave the final OK for the George W. Bush Library to be built at Southern Methodist University.

The church's nine-member Judicial Council rejected separate resolutions passed by the California-Nevada and California-Pacific Conferences that voiced support for clergy who officiate at such unions.

In a separate case, the court said it found no reason to halt construction of the planned George W. Bush Presidential Center at the church-owned school in Dallas.

Critics contend the library complex and affiliated policy center will promote policies that the United Methodist Church officially opposed, including the Iraq War. The former president and his wife, Laura, are both United Methodists.

Robertson leaves Regent post

(RNS) Pat Robertson will retire as president of Regent University, the Virginia school he founded, next year, the university announced April 28.

Robertson, 79, founded the school in Virginia Beach in 1978 and has been president since 2000. After his retirement on July 1, 2010, he will remain the university's chancellor and a member of its board of trustees.

Southeastern women's programs director appointed by NAMB

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — The North American Mission Board has appointed Alicia Wong as a national evangelism missionary.



Wong

She will be based in Georgia. Prior to her new post, Alicia had been serving as director of women's programs at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest. She also served as a missionary for the International Mission Board in Hong Kong.

Alicia earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish at Pepperdine University, Malibu, Calif.; a master's degree in intercultural studies at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.; and a master of divinity degree in women's studies and a doctorate in education degree at Southeastern. She is a member of North Wake Baptist Church in Wake Forest.

IMB restricts travel to Mexico

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — The International Mission Board (IMB) is suspending non-emergency travel by its personnel to Mexico in response to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to guard against the spread of the swine (H1N1) flu. The CDC is recommending U.S. citizens avoid all non-essential travel to Mexico.

In addition, IMB personnel in Mexico must obtain prior approval from their area leadership in consultation with the IMB's medical department in order to travel to the United States. If travel is approved, personnel must be self-quarantined in the U.S. for several days and remain symptom-free before engaging in further activity.

N.C. communicators win BCA awards

BR staff

Ten North Carolina Baptist communicators were recognized with 16 awards in national competition "recognizing the best image-makers and storytellers" in the Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) during the association's annual meeting April 17.

The *Biblical Recorder* received four writing awards; the Baptist State Convention (BSC) received eight awards for design and public relations and Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) earned three writing awards and a photography award.

BR Editor Norman Jameson received second place



awards for the editorial "Silence makes us irrelevant," for his Spoke'n column "Leading the pack" and the feature series "Inside Out" about BSC institutional leaders.

Recorder Managing Editor Steve DeVane earned honorable mention in news writing for his stories on a juvenile justice mediation program.

Baptist Children's Homes President Michael C. Blackwell won both first place and an honorable mention in editorial writing for his pieces "What's right with the church?" and "Accepting oneself is key."

BCH's *Charity and Children* Editor Jim Edminson earned honorable mention for his first person column "I think I can, I thought I could!"

BCH writer Blake Ragsdale won honorable mention for his photograph "Reunion."

BSC staff, which always make a strong showing among peers, won eight awards, including K Brown's second in photography for "Ukraine's gypsy church," and a second on promotional videos with his wife, Dana, for "Built from the garbage."

Lead graphic designer Kathryn Carson won seconds for a print ad "Revive us again," and in interactive media for the www.ncbaptist.org web site. She won honorable mention for her brochure for the new Embrace women's ministry.

Graphic designer Michael Forrest won first in promotional brochure for his piece for N.C. Baptists on world hunger. Leslie Crane won honorable mention in the same category for her Baptist Men's piece on "The power of one."

Mike Creswell, who leads the BSC stewardship and special offering efforts, won second place with the BSC creative team for their promotion of the 2008 North Carolina Missions Offering.

Handling the Bible properly on culturally hot topics

(Continued from Page 12)

or female). There is no indication of ruling, presiding, or preaching in any of these examples.

Better historic examples would have been Judges 4:4 and 1 Cor. 11:5. However, even these texts, which describe what was going on at one location in history, cannot be used to undo commands given to the church.

Southern Baptist church members should be encouraged to read a book like Fee's on proper Bible interpretation every few years. If this were done, any attempts to use historical citations to counter clear biblical commands would not be accepted in our publications because the editors could not handle the thunderstorm of complaints.

Consider an example of why biblical historical sections are not a primary guide for faith and practice. The Bible records in Judges 4:15-21 that Jael, hammered a tent peg through the head of Sisera, a Canaanite general, who attempted to eliminate the God-ordained Jewish rebellion.

Surely no one would say this description of an event was a prescription for every family or Boy Scout camping trip.

It is likewise improper to do this

with any other biblical historical record. (Please see Fee, 89-125, which explains this in detail.)

Learning how to handle a written document takes effort, but it is essential to properly understand the Bible, our sole authority for faith and practice (not voices, holy hunches, or feelings). To properly understand Gal. 3:28 see Piper, 154-164; and Kösetenbeger, 195-208. To intelligently understand Rom. 16:1-2, concerning Phoebe, as a servant, or as a deaconess of the church, see Piper, 68, 219-220, 353-354.

How does the Bible's record of events help us determine an ethical issue like slavery or develop a "just war" theory? The answer to this question is: very little. We need to focus on what the Bible prescribes or on historical examples that the Bible actually tells us are good models (See Heb. 11:1-38; *A Just Defense*, K. Payne (Multnomah, 1987); *Ethics for a Brave New World*, J. Feinberg (Crossway, 1993); and *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, J.R. McQuilkin (Tyndale, 1995). The teaching passages are paramount for forming biblical ethics.

Moreover, just because the Bible describes something does not mean that it endorses it for every age and time. For instance, even in the Ten Com-

mandments the practice of slavery is mentioned (Exod. 20:17). But it is not sanctioned nor is it recommended in this command against coveting. Likewise, when the Bible reader comes to the teaching in Philemon (also see 1 Cor. 7:21 and Gal. 5:1) as well as the many Old Testament restrictions on this institution (e.g. Exod. 21:2), he quickly learns that the Bible intended to change this culturally accepted practice in the teaching sections, while it simply recorded and even limited slavery in the legal and historical sections (Lev. 25:39-43; Deut. 23:15-16).

We also need to let the biblical paradoxes stand as they are without reinterpreting them based on descriptive texts. For instance, an individual Christian is not to retaliate against evil (Matt. 5:39; Rom. 12:14-21) while the state is directed by God to bring evil doers to justice, which includes death (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), according to God's economy and revelation.

These prescriptions for individuals and states are required by God simultaneously. Likewise, the individual must also balance the righteous person's responsibility to defend the defenseless (Prov. 31:89; Isa. 1:17), and thus, he must take defensive actions when he is with children or when he witnesses evil

men harming widows or orphans (the positive side of the command in Exodus 20:13 is: "You must preserve life").

I would not have a problem working side-by-side in a disaster relief project with the dear brother who wrote the *Recorder* article. But because of the way he approaches the scriptures and the conclusions he draws from them, I would be unable to serve on the same church staff with him. Disagreement on secondary level issues (e.g. women pastors) can allow us to have some levels of cooperation.

But the very method that he recommended for interpreting the Bible (which is a first level issue) breaks unity even more than the conclusions he draws from that methodology.

Departing from evangelical hermeneutics and ethics does not make it easier for conservatives to partner with those who are similar to us in third level theological issues (e.g. church government). The conclusions reached by these two dissimilar approaches to solving "hot topics" issues are vastly different, and that's why interpretation methodology is crucial and has very practical implications.

(EDITOR'S NOTE — *Manby* is associate pastor at Adamsville Baptist Church in Goldsboro.)

Lesson for May 17 Formations Lesson for May 24

Mordecai Intercedes

Focal Passage: Esther 4

“Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” — Mordecai to Esther (4:14).

A study I once read indicated that a significant number of preachers are the firstborn sons of willful mothers, thus high-achieving, more compliant than rebellious, and having a strong need for approval. I fit the profile (mostly). But does that mean the calling I felt as a college senior that led me into the ministry was not also the voice of God?

Events in the book of Esther are building. Queen Vashti is deposed; Esther is chosen.

The egotistical Haman is prime minister. Mordecai, Esther’s cousin and adoptive father, angers Haman by refusing to bow to him.

Haman retaliates by bribing the king to order all Jews exterminated. God’s people are in mourning.

But there is one person the king values above Haman: Esther. With nowhere else to go, Mordecai gets a message to her inside the palace, where she remains blissfully ignorant of Haman’s scheme. “You’ve got to help!” Mordecai says. “Besides, your life is in danger too, once the king learns who you are” (4:8, 13).

And then the most famous line from the book, the closest it comes to acknowledging the hand of God: “If you don’t do something, deliverance will come from somewhere else. But who knows? Maybe this is why you’re there

in the first place.”

God rarely appears to us in a burning bush or a blinding light on the road. If we’re going to find God where He is, we have to take Him as He comes, whether in a pagan king’s choice of a queen or a budding minister’s family of origin.

“If I perish, I perish.” — Esther to Mordecai (4:16).

Esther agrees to intercede, but there’s a problem. To protect the king, the Persian Secret Service forbids approaching him unsolicited.

The penalty is death. And the king hasn’t asked for Esther in a month (4:11).

Why does Esther agree to risk it? Despite Mordecai’s warning, nobody, not even Haman, suspects she is a Jew until she reveals it herself (7:4). She might have gotten away free.

Instead this seems like an act of courage, of determination, of taking her fate (and her people’s) into her own hands, of serving a higher cause and answering to a higher power, regardless of the cost. “If I perish, I perish” is not really that far removed from “Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done.” God’s activity often requires the cooperation of God’s servant, even to the point of sacrifice.

The Bible has only two books named after women. Esther is one of them. Surprised?



Ed Beddingfield
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Fayetteville

Esther Takes a Risk

Focal Passage: Esther 5:1-8; 7:1-8:2

Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all.

— Friedrich Von Logau (tr. Henry W. Longfellow)

An insomniac king with a beautiful love interest; palace intrigues, comic twists and dramatic reversals; a slapstick mixup of Shakespearean proportions; an arch-villain who gets his just desserts — it doesn’t get any better than this.

Esther melts Xerxes’ heart when she enters, unbidden, into his court. He knows her concern must be serious and offers whatever she asks, even half the kingdom. Instead she invites him to bring Haman to dinner, twice. She has a lot of buttering up to do. As for Haman, he’s overjoyed at his apparent good fortune (5:1-9).

But out in the street Mordecai again refuses to do obeisance. Haman is livid. Power, wealth, status — nothing matters as long as this Jew defies him. Egged on by his wife and friends, he constructs a gallows for Mordecai (5:9-14).

That night the king, unable to sleep, rereads the legal notices in the paper (better than counting sheep?). “Did we ever reward Mordecai for disrupting that assassination plot?” The answer is

no. When Haman comes to ask permission to carry out the hanging, Xerxes asks his question first: “How to honor a faithful subject?” Certain that it’s all about him, Haman suggests an over-the-top appreciation ceremony which the king orders him to carry out — for Mordecai (6:1-11). Irony, anyone?

Stung by the humiliation, Haman forgets all about the second banquet and must be collected by the king’s men. There Esther makes her startling pronouncement: Haman! He’s the villain who is threatening her and all her people (6:12-7:6).

The king storms out in a rage. Returning to find Haman literally flung across Esther begging for mercy, Xerxes mistakes it for an assault on his queen. A servant notices the new gallows outside. How convenient! “Hang him on that” (7:7-10).

Esther gets Haman’s house and Mordecai gets his job, symbolized by the king’s ring, formerly on Haman’s finger. Next to the king, two Jews are now the most powerful people in the land (8:1-2; remember Joseph and Daniel?).

It can seem like forever. The innocent suffer while the wicked go free. But sometimes — not always, but sometimes — the chickens come home to roost. The evil a person intends toward others becomes his own undoing, and justice prevails.

More than eight years have passed since Vashti was deposed (1:3, 2:16, 3:7). Meanwhile God, unnamed, stands patiently waiting, having placed the advancement of His divine purposes into the hands of two ordinary people. Imagine that.

Lesson for May 17 Bible Studies for Life Lesson for May 24

Abigail: Living with a Difficult Husband

Focal Passage: 1 Samuel 25:2-3, 18-19, 23-31, 36-38, 39b

Throughout history you can look to any person of great success and marvel at their accomplishments. It is always the most noted of persons, the one in the limelight that gets the credit, the fame, the fortune, and their name in the history books. Many events of the past have been attributed to great persons, but surely there were others in the background that had some role to play in the outcome.

On the grand stage of world affairs there are always persons that are working behind closed doors, or behind persons that are not seen, or even known. We have even heard the quote, “Behind every good man is a good woman.” In some cases it might be that behind even a bad man there is a good woman. In the scripture passage from 1 Samuel 25 Abigail is just such a dear wife. She is married to a husband that is very wealthy, but his character is called into question. Her husband’s name is Nabal, which literally means “fool,” and his actions seem to confirm the meaning.

David is in hiding in the wilderness from Saul, and it is felt that he had watched over Nabal’s men and kept them safe, and also Nabal’s vast holdings. David became aware that it was shearing time, which meant that Nabal would also be slaughtering some animals and there would be feasting. David chose 10 of his men to go and ask Nabal that he might share some meat with him and his men and he told them to speak kindly to Nabal.

Unfortunately, when David’s men

approached Nabal he was unaware of whom David was and asked, “Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give to men whose origin I do not know?” (v.11). With this response David’s men returned and David was angered and called his men to arms. Nabal was unaware of the protection that David had provided for him from marauders and thieves who would have stolen from his herds or done harm to his herders.

One of Nabal’s men spoke with Abigail about how well David and his men treated them and that David had sent messengers to ask for assistance and how rudely Nabal had responded. It was at this moment that she realized that it was up to her to act in the best interest of her husband and her home. She gathered a great deal of food and supplies and went out to meet David, paying homage to him. David had pity on her and spared Nabal.

She returned to find her husband drunk from feasting and said nothing to him until the next morning. At the news he was so shocked that he suffered a stroke and died ten days later. David offered to take Abigail as his wife.

We see in Abigail an example of faithfulness. She realized that it fell to her to right that which was made wrong by her husband. Sometimes in life it falls upon each of us to help and protect those that we love, and in some way we have to help them find a way to accept responsibility for their actions.



Kenny Byrd
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Sylva

Barnabas: The Man Who Encouraged Others

Focal Passage: Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-28; 11:19-26; 13:14-15, 42-43

My daughter Kenley is doing something for the first time, playing little league softball. One of the church members is coaching the team, and he asked her if she would like to play. Her initial response was one of enthusiasm, and we were glad to see her excited about something. The move to Sylva was difficult for our two oldest children in 2006. They left friends, a sense of comfort, and in their minds moved a long way from family. It has been especially hard on Kenley.

She has struggled with batting, and I have tried to be an encourager as I go to practices and tell her, “Good swing!” Unfortunately, that has been the main result because the bat hardly touched the ball until the last two games.

In her most recent game she got a hit three out of four at bats. And as I stood there at the fence clapping and shouting for her I could see her smile and her face gleaming as she ran to first base. She had wanted to quit, but we kept encouraging her not to give up.

In the Book of Acts we see a man named Barnabas whose name means “Son of Encouragement.”

He is an early benefactor of the church, selling land and giving the proceeds to the church in Acts 4 so that the money could be used to help those in need. He is later seen in Acts 9 reaching out to the Apostle Paul when the

disciples were skeptical about receiving him because of his past. Barnabas vouched for Paul and shared how Paul had proclaimed Christ in Damascus so that they would know he had been converted.

Barnabas reached out to Hellenistic Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene preaching in Antioch at the request of the Jerusalem church and worked with them for a year. He sought the assistance of Paul, and they saw great things happen for the sake of the Lord.

They realized that the gospel was open for all. It should be noted that in this section of Acts 11 in verse 24 Barnabas is described as “good” and he is the only person Luke describes as such.

And finally in Acts 13 as we see Paul and Barnabas outside of a synagogue in Antioch their final words to a group of believers are to continue in the grace of God.

They are left with words of encouragement so that these believers will go with the understanding to grow in their faith.

Barnabas is given his name for a reason, and that reason is evident.

I would not trade anything for that smile that I saw on Kenley’s face as she ran the bases at the ballgame, as she heard me yelling her name and telling her, “Way to go!” I could almost feel tears in my eyes after the first hit because her success was not just encouraging for her.

It gave me a sense of hope as well. We all need that sense from time to time. We all need encouragement. Find someone who needs encouragement and share it today, be a Barnabas.

Mother's Day Offering brings life-changing gratitude

North Carolina Baptist Hospital

“When I read the letter from Baptist Hospital I sat down and cried. The burdens we had carried were lifted and I felt such peace. My husband and I are so thankful to God and North Carolina Baptists for helping us through the Mother's Day Offering,” said Dana Hutson of Elkin.



“Touching Lives With Hope”

Offering total:
\$700,000

The Hutson's daughter, Clairra, was treated at Baptist Hospital for a severe abscess near her spine.

“She was so sick and we were very scared,” Dana said.

“At first she was paralyzed from the neck down. I sat by her bed and cried. I couldn't understand and said, ‘Why God?’ Then I just put her in God's hands.”

Physicians at Baptist were able to locate and remove the abscess.

Clairra's fever broke and soon she was on the way to recovery.

“We were so thankful and

relieved,” Dana said.

Soon after returning home, the Hutsons faced new fears.

“When the hospital bill came I was worried sick,” Dana said.

“We were both working hard but still falling behind. We had too much for Medicaid and were stuck. I worried all the time about how to pay the hospital bill on top of all the other bills.”

Paul Mullen, director of church and community relations at North Carolina Baptist Hospital, said the Mother's Day Offering is for families just like the Hutsons.

“They are responsible people caught in a painful bind of financial need,” Mullen said.

“They have too much to qualify for government assistance, but not enough to pay their hospital bills. Every dollar of every gift helps those who have nowhere to turn for assistance.”

The Hutson's received a letter saying, ‘Your daughter's hospital bill has been paid by compassionate and mission-minded North Carolina Baptists in the name of Jesus Christ and His love.’”

Mullen said, “Their gratitude has been life changing.”

“The Mother's Day Offering was an answer to our prayers,” Dana said.

“We are so thankful to God and everyone who helped us. I had felt far apart from God but now I know He's always been there. We see more clearly what really matters, and we've found our way back to church. We thank North Carolina Baptists with all our hearts.”

Leroy and Amy Starnes from Taylorsville felt similar gratitude for the Mother's Day Offering.

He nearly died in an accident and was rushed to Baptist Hospital. God's healing hand was at work and Starnes said, “I thank God every day for saving my life.

“I drive a truck for a living and haven't been able



Contributed photos



THANKFUL — Clairra Hutson, left, and her family, as well as Leroy and Amy Starnes, right, received funds from the North Carolina Baptist Hospital Mother's Day Offering to offset their hospital expenses.

to go back to work yet. The bills kept coming in and it really worried us. We didn't know how to pay the hospital bill.”

“When the hospital bill came I was worried sick. We were both working hard but still falling behind. We had too much for Medicaid and were stuck. I worried all the time about how to pay the hospital bill.”

— Dana Hutson

When they received help from the Mother's Day Offering, he said, “My wife and I can't say thank you enough to North Carolina Baptists. We can't describe the relief.”

Amy said through tears of gratitude, “We are so thankful to God and everyone who helped us.

“We didn't go to church much before the accident, but

now we've started. We are so grateful.”

They now attend Oxford Memorial Baptist Church. Their story can be seen on the Mother's Day Offering video and at www.mothersdayoffering.org.

Mother's Day Offering materials were mailed to N.C. Baptist churches.

Materials can be obtained by calling (336) 716-3027.



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