

BIBLICAL RECORDER

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SBC leaders call off annual meeting

Biblical Recorder

The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) officers, executive committee members and leaders of its boards and institutions decided March 24 to cancel the 2020 annual meeting, citing concerns about the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), according to a Baptist Press report.

The event was expected to draw upwards of 10,000 people June 9-10 to the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla.

"In one sense, this was a difficult decision for us," said SBC President J.D. Greear. "Gathering regularly to hear about the great things God is doing in the present and to seek his face together for the future is an essential part of who we are as a convention, and we will be saddened to forego this opportunity in June.

"But in another sense, this decision was easy. Our purpose in coming together is to support one another in gospel mission and to better catalyze our collective mission efforts. This year, the best way to accomplish that purpose is by not meeting together."

This year's cancellation marks the first interruption in SBC annual meetings since 1945.

"While we will not physically be coming together in June in Orlando, we will be going together in unity as we minister to our churches, our missionaries, our church planters, our seminary students and our own communities," said Ronnie Floyd, president of the SBC Executive Committee.

SBC officers will remain in their roles until the
[See Meeting page 4](#)



Friendship Southern Baptist Church is serving nearby hospital staff by sending care packages with coffee, snacks and supplies. (Contributed photo)

By LIZ TABLAZON | *BR* Assistant Editor

Friendship Southern Baptist Church in Concord, N.C., is serving those on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 by sending care packages to emergency departments at four nearby hospitals where some of their own serve as nurses.

Because some medical centers do not allow drop-offs, nurses from Friendship plan to take the packages to work with them.

This allows hospital staff to have a point of contact with the church, Friendship's lead pastor Jesse Watkins told the *Biblical Recorder* in a phone interview March 20.

"Our purpose is to encourage people and to

serve people as the church," Watkins said. "But we do want to connect that with someone who is part of our church community that can be a source of spiritual encouragement to the rest of the people there."

Watkins, whose wife and sister are nurses, said he was especially sensitive to the challenges health care providers are facing.

Since posting on Facebook asking medical personnel about their most urgent needs, the church has received donations from members and non-members alike.

The funds allowed them to assemble packages
[See Nurses page 12](#)

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BSC leaders offer guidance on coronavirus relief bill

BSC Communications

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) and convention legal counsel will offer guidance and assistance to N.C. Baptist pastors and church leaders in the coming days regarding the impact on churches and other non-profits by the federal coronavirus relief package that has been passed by Congress.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic

Security Act – also known as the CARES Act – is a \$2.2 trillion aid package that provides economic relief to many different groups in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Groups that will receive aid from the legislation include individuals, corporations, small businesses, the health care industry, and state and local governments.

A significant portion of the legislation will fund
[See Bill page 7](#)

God is moving in the midst of crisis

Throughout the centuries, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ has flourished despite challenge, opposition and persecution. We see this in the biblical accounts of the early church in the Book of Acts. Whenever followers of Christ were persecuted and scattered, the church grew. Even in modern times, the church has grown faster in parts of the world where our brothers and sisters in Christ often risk their very lives to worship Jesus.

While I don't want to make direct comparisons between the persecuted church and the coronavirus pandemic, our world is currently enduring, there is no doubt that we are living and ministering in an extraordinary, unprecedented and challenging time in history.

In the midst of the upheaval and adjustments we are being forced to make in our lives, I have been encouraged by reports from pastors and churches across our state about how God is moving and at work in the

midst of this global crisis.

As pastors and churches made difficult decisions about modifying or canceling their worship gatherings in the early days of COVID-19's impact on our state, many took their services or sermons online by way of livestream or video recording. For some, this was the very first time they had shared their messages in this manner. Pastors have shared with me that they have seen strong engagement from people accessing messages online.

One pastor in western North Carolina whose church typically draws about 200 for worship reported that some 2,000 people accessed a recent Sunday service via Facebook Live. Another pastor told me they had 10,000 people watching their service via the internet.

I have also heard reports from pastors of people coming to know Christ and making other spiritual decisions during home worship with family as a result of these livestreamed mes-

sages. To God be the glory! This serves as a reminder that people are looking for hope and assurance in these uncertain times.

May we look for ways that we can love and serve our neighbors in these days and be ready to share the hope that we have in Christ with them.

In these days where "social distancing" has become part of our conversation and practice, Sunday School classes, small groups and others are utilizing cell phones and other technology sources to meet together virtually for prayer and encouragement. Families are using these days to start or expand worship together in the home.

I am thankful for all of our pastors, church staff and associational leaders across our state who continue to minister and lead their congregations in these recent days. I want you to know that the staff and elected leaders of the Baptist State Convention are continually praying for you. We are also trying to reach out to every pastor of a North Carolina Baptist

IN FOCUS
A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

church by phone to encourage you and see if there are any needs that the state convention could possibly assist you with.

Additionally, we have developed a special web page of resources related to the coronavirus, which is available at ncbaptist.org/covid19. New content and resources will be added to this page as they become available.

Finally, may we continue to take comfort in the fact that the God we serve is in control of this world and none of what we are facing took Him by surprise. Along with you, I rejoice that we know Christ as our Savior, and we can find comfort in the fact that God is with us. He will comfort and encourage us and give us His peace during these difficult days if we look to Him.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" – Psalm 46:1 (NKJV). 

How to preach to an empty room

Baptist Press

I have been pastoring and preaching for 28 years, and I've spent more than 20 years as a preaching professor. Until very recently, I've never really given any thought about how to preach to an empty room. My goal has always been that the church would be as full as we can get it when it comes time to preach! But in light of the coronavirus and the reality of providing online Sunday services, I've been asked by a few leaders, "What are some tips for preaching to an empty room?"

Here are some thoughts that I'm

keeping in mind as I preach for video. I hope they'll be of help to other preachers:

1. Make your delivery as personal as you can.

The camera never blinks and exaggerates how you communicate nonverbally. You will connect better with your listeners by doing the things that make for effective one-on-one communication.

- Smile.
- Maximize your eye contact with the camera.
- Use minimal notes, if any at all.

- Aim for a delivery style that is less oratorical and more conversational.

2. Keep in mind how people will be watching you.

Preaching for video is different from preaching to a live congregation in that it is not really public communication. Instead, it is more intimate and interpersonal. Many of your people will be watching you by themselves on a computer or handheld device. Some may watch with their families or a very small group.



STEPHEN RUMMAGE
Guest Column

When making your video, I'd caution against pretending you are preaching to a congregation. Walking around on the platform or being behind a pulpit will seem artificial. Instead, imagine that you are talking to one person. Use second-person singular language – say "you" and "your" – and make application of your message to individuals.

3. Acknowledge the current situation, but don't dwell on it exclusively. No doubt, we need to continue to pray for God's intervention in the coronavirus pandemic every week as our churches gather online. Pastors

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This is not the crisis, but it is coming

By ED STETZER with JOSH LAXTON | The Exchange

On March 23 the Surgeon General said, “This week it’s going to get bad.”

On March 22 at church I said, “THIS is not the crisis.” And it is not. This is the calm before the storm, and we pastors and church leaders need a change in mentality. We need to start framing this in ways people can understand, so I tweeted what is increasingly becoming clear:

“This week, someone you know will probably be diagnosed with Coronavirus. Next month, someone you know will probably die from it. [Tomorrow], I am going to talk about why that needs to change our ministry conversation, starting this week.”

Yes, COVID-19 has completely interrupted the rhythms of our normal, everyday life.

Over the coming days and weeks, the crisis will seemingly get worse. However, some people still do not understand that the coronavirus crisis will be the most significant historical event of our lifetime. It will be bigger than 9/11.

Therefore, it will indeed be a dark hour for many we lead and for many who live in our cities and communities. As a leader, during this crisis, it’s important to follow Mordecai’s advice to Esther: “*And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*” In other words, look at your current position as God’s sovereign placement for you to courageously lead those God has placed in your care.

To help you lead well over the coming weeks and months, I want to go over four phases that you (and your team) will have to navigate in this crisis.

Phase 1: Pause and innovate – We are actually in this phase right now. Over the last week and a half, there’s been a barrage of information regarding COVID-19. As a result, our national and state leaders – through the advice of health and medical professionals – have constantly updated the public on measures they are taking and that we can take to help “flatten the curve.”

The significant move taken to flatten the curve hasn’t been the recommendation of “social distancing” but of public gatherings. This recommendation has disrupted in-person education, sporting events, recitals, bars and restaurants and corporate worship gatherings.

As of the time of this writing, President Donald Trump has recommended the cancellation of gatherings of 10 or more. In addition, governors like Gov. J.B. Pritzker (of Illinois) have issued a “shelter in place” order for their states.

These recommendations should be and have been (for the most part) taken seriously in the faith community (although there are outliers that continue to meet in almost prideful defiance). As such, church leaders have had to pause, pivot and innovate in ways that are different than their normal patterns.

Many church leaders are learning how to do “online” ministry for the very first time.

In this phase, with all the changes, recommendations and cancellations, churches must hit the

pause button on what they are doing and start making lists of what changes and innovations have to be made immediately. I’ve heard of one church in the Chicagoland area using their project management software (*monday.com*) to create a running list of ways they can innovate during the coronavirus.

Phase 2: Prepare and plan – According to many medical experts, and unless something changes, the United States is about 2-3 weeks from what we are seeing in Italy. In other words, the coronavirus wave has just begun. With more testing becoming available, experts expect we will see a significant rise in those infected by the virus as well as deaths from the virus. Here at the Billy Graham Center, our normal activity has ceased. We are now taking things on a month-by-month basis. In other words, we are preparing for what is being projected by canceling all of our April in-person meetings and moving our staff to working remotely. In a few weeks, we will be assessing our May calendar in light of the national and state recommendations and planning accordingly.

For church leaders, it’s important that you begin making a list of how you and your church will be prepared for the eye of the crisis. For instance, if you live in an area that experiences hurricanes, and the meteorologist tells you when you can expect the eye of the storm to come upon you, you begin making preparations to your house in an effort to weather the storm.

The same principle applies here. The eye of the coronavirus is coming. Given the nature of this virus, it is impossible to predict when the eye will hit and how long it will endure.

In light of what is coming, church leaders will need to make preparations for how they will: maximize communication to staff, leadership bodies and congregants; pivot staff roles and responsibilities; plan for generosity (and giving); follow up with online visitors and new believers; weather a financial crunch; care for their neighbors; serve the sick, hurting and shut-ins; conduct counseling to those with mental illness, addictions, etc.; launch virtual small groups; minister to families (including children and students); love their community and city well; and seek the peace and prosperity of their community and city.

Phase 3: Engage and execute – Phase 3 is all about execution, management and flexibility. Think of it this way: preparation is the vision whereas engagement is the execution. You can prepare all day long and have an incredible vision for how you will lead your people through the crisis. But if you don’t do the hard work of execution, you will notice it when the eye of the crisis hits.

There are four elements to engage and execute. They are communication, delegation, management and flexibility.

First, you need to have effective communication between all parties. In the case of churches, there needs to be solid communication between the staff and leadership bodies where everyone is on the same page with regards to the plan. In addition, there needs to be solid channels of communication

to the larger church body regarding the plan.

Second, delegation is a major key in the engage phase. A time of crisis is a time where all hands should be on deck. It’s easy for many main leaders to do all the work while other leaders sit in pause. In a crisis, leaders cannot allow people to live in pause, but rather must mobilize them to engage in the mission. With that said, their engagement in crisis might be different than their engagement in calm.

Third, you will need to implement a management system. Once you effectively communicate and delegate responsibilities for what you prepared and planned for, you will need to have good oversight to make things get done.

Last, and this cannot be overstated, you and your whole team will need to be flexible. You’ll have to be more flexible than Gumby. Why? Because what may be true (or work) today will not be true or work tomorrow. For instance, in a period of three days the recommendation of public gatherings went from 250, to 50, to less than ten. Even now, for a few states (and it will continue to trickle to other states), there is a “shelter in place” announcement for residents.


In short, leaders must be able to manage the whirlwind of crisis by being flexible. Let the following maxim guide your team in times of crisis: Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken.

Phase 4: Recover and re-emerge – Not all churches will survive this crisis. No, I’m not a pessimist. I’m a realist. We saw this in Katrina. That’s simply the reality of the effects of this kind of crisis. However, most will recover and re-emerge.

How they re-emerge will depend upon circumstances out of our control, but also largely on how leaders navigate this time of crisis. My prayer for every church in every place would be for them to rise up “*for such a time as this*” by sharing and showing the love of Christ.

That they would love well – both Christians and non-Christians alike. That pastors and church leaders would lead well. That they would lead with gentleness, wisdom, discernment and integrity. That they wouldn’t lead with a haughty or prideful spirit as if they know it all, or [even with] a rebellious spirit towards the recommendations given to U.S. citizens in this national crisis.

As I wrote in *USA Today*, my hope and prayer would be that we would be like the Christians Eusebius described from the fourth century. My prayer is that once this crisis has subsided (and it will), they will say of us (as Eusebius said of them), the Christians’ “deeds were on everyone’s lips, and they glorified the god of the Christians.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Ed Stetzer is executive director of the Billy Graham Center and a dean at Wheaton College. Josh Laxton, assistant director of the Billy Graham Center and assistant director of Lausanne North America at Wheaton College, contributed to this article. This article originally appeared on *The Exchange* with Ed Stetzer. Reprinted with permission.) 

Church, family resources made available in response to COVID-19

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Assistant Editor

In response to social distancing restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Southern Baptist and other Christian organizations are offering free resources to help individuals, families and churches remain connected to the Word and to each other.

LifeWay Christian Resources is offering “LifeWay Kids at Home” to temporarily supplement Sunday School from home.

LifeWay Leadership also developed a free training course to assist pastors and church leaders, available at ministrygrid.com/coronavirus.

Both are included in a full page of resources at lifeway.com/coronavirus, in addition to a prayer guide and list of relevant articles and reading recommendations.

LifeWay Women also compiled a list of Bible reading plans and online Bible studies at lifewaywomen.com.

Generosity by LifeWay opened its digital giving platform to all churches with no set up or monthly subscription fees, and LifeWay Worship is offering free licensing to churches for its more than 300,000 audio tracks.

O.S. Hawkins, president and CEO of GuideStone, announced GuideStone is giving all participants in a U.S.-based Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield plan access to Teladoc at no co-pay through June 14.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) published a similar page of resources and articles



(erlc.com/covid19) covering topics such as the U.S. government’s response to COVID-19, how to talk to children about the coronavirus and prayer for the crisis.

ERLC President Russell Moore started posting daily “Reading in Exile” videos on IGTV, in which he walks through books of different genres as a way of helping viewers engage reading material and each other from home.

The North American Mission Board’s Send Network hosted a free webinar March 18 on how to live stream sermons.

The recorded webinar is available for viewing at any time at namb.net/video/how-to-live-stream-your-sermon/.

SmallGroups.com hosted a free



An N.C. Baptist church that has a long-standing partnership with a church in East Asia received a donated shipment of medical face masks. Leaders from the East Asian church said they were praying for their North Carolina partners and decided they could help by providing the masks, due to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the United States. “The church in East Asia has heard the gospel,” said an N.C. church leader. “They have heard our words through multiple trainings. Now they are acting upon what they have heard. ... The church in East Asia is alive and growing, and ministering to the church in the U.S.” *Names omitted for security purposes (Contributed photos)

webinar March 19 for small group leaders, ministry leaders and pastors on discipleship in a time of social distancing.

RightNow Media published tutorials on how to upload videos, as well as an introduction to RightNow’s app. The organization is also offering free access to a library of select content for a limited time.

In North Carolina, the Baptist Ag-

ing Ministry created extra resources for Hope Line staff and volunteers to serve the elderly in a time of increased isolation.

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina developed a webpage of resources for pastors, churches and ministry leaders on ministering to members and their communities. Go to ncbaptist.org/covid19.

Find more at BRnow.org. 

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next annual meeting, which is scheduled for June 15-16, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn.

All ancillary meetings that are usually held in conjunction with the annual meeting, including the SBC Pastors’ Conference, have been cancelled as well.

Mike Stone, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Ga., said while the decision involved consideration of legal, financial and constitutional factors, he viewed the decision “as a pastor, not a board chairman.” He added that the fact it was the first cancellation in 75 years

“proves this is not a decision that is made lightly.”

“While the constitutional process of voting to cancel is a simple one that involves around 100 leaders,” Stone said, “the information needed to actually make the wisest decision is quite involved. The EC staff, officers and legal counsel worked diligently to consider the various results of cancellation.”

Greear said even without an annual meeting in 2020, the mission of Southern Baptists “will go on,” and urged Southern Baptists to find encouragement in focusing on ministry until the 2021 Annual Meeting. 

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Four Campbell students test ‘presumptive positive’ for COVID-19

Campbell University & *Biblical Recorder* staff

Four Campbell University students tested “presumptive positive” for COVID-19, university officials confirmed.

A student first tested presumptive positive March 16. That student presented symptoms of the virus at the University Health Center on March 11.

The student was tested for the coronavirus and asked to remain in self-quarantine.

All four of the students who tested presumptive positive remained quarantined, recovered and have been released with the stipulation of maintaining local, state and national guidelines.

Of the 16 students tested, nine tested negative and three tests are pending results.

Three employees, two employee family members and a community member were tested as well. Three of those tests were negative; and authorities are waiting on four results.

Other people who were in close contact with the students had been



Campbell University photo

contacted and asked to self-quarantine while they got tested.

Haven Hottel, assistant vice president of communications and marketing for Campbell, told the *Biblical Re-*

corder March 20 there had been two negative test results, and there are six additional tests awaiting results.

On March 16, Campbell took measures to limit additional exposure of the virus to other students and faculty and staff by transitioning all face-to-face classes to online and remote learning.

On March 19, the University announced the transition to online would remain through the entire spring semester.

Harnett County Health Department released a statement March 19 indicated there were six confirmed cases.

Health officials have begun reaching out to those who may have been in close contact with the students who tested positive to evaluate whether any further steps such as assessment, self-quarantine or testing may be necessary.

“The county’s public health team encourages residents to protect yourself from COVID-19 and any other flu-like illness,” said an official Harnett County Health Department press release.

The department was contacting anyone who had been in contact with

the people who have been exposed. Health officials encouraged people to take general precautions such as washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; not touching eyes, nose or mouth; staying away from sick people; cleaning and disinfecting surfaces; covering coughs and sneezes with tissue, immediately throwing tissue away and washing hands; and staying home if you’re sick and keeping your children home if they are sick.

The names of the students will not be released by Campbell University.

“While instruction and housing may look a little different for the rest of this semester, the rest of the operations of Campbell University will go on, and the campus will remain open,” said President Brad Creed in a statement released March 19.

“We ask that those who work on campus continue to follow proper health guidelines related to COVID-19.”

Campbell has canceled all calendar events, and graduation has been postponed, but Hottel confirmed March 20 that degrees will be conferred when assignments are complete and grades are tabulated. 

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Biblical Recorder

The *Biblical Recorder* news team has launched a brand new way to catch the news in Baptist life. *BR* Connect is a subscription text messaging service that enables you to receive daily updates and real-time alerts on your phone.

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Drive-in worship services lead to new opportunities



By TOBIN PERRY | Baptist Press

Facing the inability to gather for worship, Southern Baptist churches got creative March 22. One young couple in Arkansas is heaven-bound thanks to that creativity.

A mom helped lead her son and his girlfriend to faith in Christ as they sat in her car, listening to Jason Goad, the pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Harrisburg, Ark., share the gospel during a “drive-in” worship service.

Goad said the mom’s ability to talk with the couple during the service and answer questions helped facilitate their decisions. It’s something he doesn’t believe could have happened in a typical service where talking could distract other worshippers.

“That would never have happened if we had a regular service,” Goad said. “She never would have gotten that chance. I thought to myself, ‘There are a lot of things that I need to rethink even after all of this gets back to normal.’ We may need to do some things similar to this. It was a different dynamic being able to sit and talk in the car like that as they listened. It allowed God to work in a way that couldn’t happen in a normal situation, even in a small group or Sunday School session.”

Those two were among six people who came to faith in Christ March 22 at Cornerstone Baptist.

As the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic prevented most congregations from meeting inside buildings with more than 10 people, many churches used various forms of technology to help them share the good news about Jesus. Many, like Cornerstone Baptist, used radio technology that drive-in movie theaters made popular more than half a century ago.

Goad said the idea to use radio

technology came to him the previous Sunday as it became clear the church wouldn’t be able to meet like normal in upcoming weeks. He heard that many movie theaters would be closing soon, as well as speculation that more people might flock to drive-in movie theaters. He remembered Christmas light shows and nativity scenes he had visited that used short-range radio transmitters to broadcast music or narration.

Goad researched what he would need to make it work in his setting. On March 17, he ordered the equipment on Amazon. The equipment was delivered March 19, and by Sun., March 22, Cornerstone was ready for a “drive-in church” experience.

The idea was relatively simple. When attendees parked, they turned their radio to a predetermined station where they listened to the service inside their cars. Goad said they may add worship music, but they wanted to keep it simple on their first try. Since the church didn’t open their restrooms, it was important to keep the service short. The church also live-streamed the service on Facebook so people could watch from home.

Goad said the service went smoothly. He estimated there were 250-300 people in attendance, which doubled his expectation. In addition to the six people who came to faith in Christ, Goad said dozens recommended their lives. He also noted that the church tripled its typical Sunday morning offering.

“I’m just embracing this,” he said. “It’s like, ‘God, you knew this was going to happen. Maybe you’re shaking the church up to get us out of our comfort zones and out of our complacency, and this will awaken us.’”

Taylor Quinley, who pastors Oolitic Baptist Church in Oolitic, Ind., started



At left, a couple who owns a drive-in movie theater let Calvary Baptist Church in Elizabethton, Tenn., use it for a Sunday morning worship service. Above, six people came to faith in Christ March 22 during the drive-in service at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Harrisburg, Ark. (Contributed photos)

looking earlier in the week for ways his church could gather despite being unable to use the building.

Because Oolitic Baptist, which usually averages 45-50 on Sunday mornings, is older, Quinley didn’t believe live-streaming the worship service on Facebook would be a great fit.

Like Goad, Quinley also remembered Christmas light shows where the narration or music is broadcast to car radios. At first, he bought a transmitter online and planned to use it on March 22, but then he asked a local radio station for advice. They offered to rent a transmitter to the church for \$35 a week and even offered to set it up for them.

Quinley said the effort was a significant success. The church’s worship leader led a few songs. Quinley preached and gave an invitation. The church also had a tithes and offering box set up where people could give as they left the parking lot. A total of 36 carloads of people attended the worship service, including many visitors. Quinley estimated that 50-60 people attended.

Though he doesn’t normally get feedback on services, Quinley noted many people texted him or rolled down their windows to tell him how much they enjoyed the service. For a few participants who had been traveling when the virus hit and had been in self-quarantine, this was the first time they had been able to leave the house since their return.

“I thought it was fantastic,” said church member Kelsey Colson, who attended with her husband. “I thought it was really good that we all got together to fellowship. We could wave

at each other with our windows down and still be able to be compliant with the social distancing.

We gathered to hear Taylor’s sermon and to hear a word from the Lord. That was really encouraging.”

Calvary Baptist Church in Elizabethton, Tenn., took another tactic with the drive-in approach. On March 19, church members who own a drive-in movie theater offered to let the church use their theater for services.

Jacob Guinn, the church’s pastor, said the church recorded a full worship service Saturday to broadcast on Facebook for people who couldn’t attend in person. They used the recorded worship music for the Sunday morning service at the drive-in theater. Approximately 250 people attended the worship service at the drive-in, 80% of whom aren’t connected to the church, Guinn said.

The church also offered a simple invitation and encouraged people who prayed to receive Christ to talk with Guinn at the drive-in or call or email the church to connect with him later. “We’re already looking forward to next Sunday and toward Palm Sunday and Easter,” Guinn said. “We’re talking about doing services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Easter.”

When asked on Facebook, a number of Southern Baptist pastors noted that they expected to utilize “drive-in church” technologies for Easter Sunday. “This is just an obstacle that we as Christians – that the whole world – is facing right now,” said Delbert Wray, the worship leader at Oolitic Baptist Church. “We have to overcome this and prove that God’s church is still vibrant. It’s still alive. It’s still forceful, and God is still in the business of saving souls, no matter what’s going on.” 

COVID-19: Baptists on Mission gearing up to help isolated, hungry

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | *BR* Assistant Editor

Richard Brunson and the North Carolina Baptists on Mission (NCBM) staff are meeting with public health and emergency management officials to plan for a response to the novel COVID-19 outbreak.

“This involves a lot of the same people that we know and work with during a natural disaster,” said Brunson, NCBM’s executive director. “We think that this disaster will be more of a local response and a neighbor-helping-neighbor response.”

“We want to help churches minister in their own communities, and we want to help them have resources and training they need to do this safely for the volunteers and for the people we are ministering to.”

NCBM launched a webpage where individuals who feel isolated due to social distancing restrictions can share prayer requests and other needs.

The site asks for a person’s location to better identify a local church that can help fulfill the needs.

The organization is also looking for churches and individuals who are willing to help within

their local communities, including churches with kitchens.

More than 370 churches have signed up to help.

“The greatest need may be to deliver groceries to elderly isolated people and without making personal contact with them to let them know that you care about them,” Brunson said. “We are trying to share resources with these churches and share ideas of things others are doing.”



RICHARD BRUNSON

Like many in North Carolina, Brunson said the NCBM staff are working remotely. They are staying in touch with daily conference calls and are contacting coordinators and volunteers.

“In some ways all disasters have a lot in common, and every disaster is also very different,” Brunson said.

“This COVID-19 one is very different in the kinds of needs people will have who are isolated (prayer, food or groceries left at the doorstep, there will be depression and issues that people have who are isolated). Many people need to know that they are not alone and that others (God and Christians) care about them.”

The COVID-19 outbreak has delayed much

of the Hurricane Florence recovery effort, “but God is still in control,” he said.

Currently, NCBM is only allowing small teams to volunteer for daylong projects in order to abide by the Center for Disease Control guidelines.

As of March 27, Brunson said NCBM has donated 30,000 N-95 masks to hospitals across the state.


“Medical personnel need them greatly right now,” said Brunson.

“Besides, they didn’t belong to us anyway, they belong to God! God just let us hold on to them for a little while until He could use them to bless others.”

Paul Langston, NCBM missions mobilization consultant, has been recording daily video devotionals – Hope in Uncertain Times – to encourage people and offer hope.

Brunson said the organization hopes to have 30 videos recorded.

“We felt that there are many people who are isolated and lonely, and we wanted to let them know that they are not alone that God through Christ cares for them and Christians care about them,” he said.

For ideas about how churches can help, visit baptistsonmission.org/Coronavirus/Church/Help. 

Bill Continued from page 1

a paycheck protection program to support ongoing operations of small businesses. Under provisions of the act, churches and most other non-profit organizations may apply for payroll protection loans. The amounts of these loans backed by the Small Business Administration will depend upon the average monthly payroll of

the church during the prior year. Up to 100% of the loan may be reclassified as a grant based upon the percentage of the proceeds being used to keep employees on the payroll in the coming months.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the CARES Act on March 27, following its passage by the Senate


on March 25. Following congressional approval, the legislation was set to go before President Donald Trump to be signed into law.

When applying for the loans through local banks under Small Business Administration guidelines, North Carolina Baptist churches will likely need a letter from the state convention confirming that the church is affiliated with the convention and is included under the state convention’s group exemption ruling letter from the IRS. The church will likely also need to send a copy of the actual group exemption ruling letter to the convention. In a proactive measure following passage of the bill on Friday, state convention officials have begun the process of preparing to send the needed documents to its affiliated churches beginning the week of March 30. All of the approximately 4,300 N.C. Baptist churches will receive copies of these letters by mail. Those churches that have an email

address on file with the convention will also receive copies of these letters electronically. Churches that have requested and received a separate 501(c)(3) ruling letter from the IRS will be urged to simply destroy the documents received from the convention, as a church cannot be covered under a group exemption ruling letter if it has received its own ruling letter. This is the case for a small number of N.C. Baptist affiliated churches.

Convention officials request that pastors and church leaders be patient and refrain from calling or emailing the convention to request letters.

“We will be providing additional guidance as soon as the current legislation has been signed by the president and our legal counsel has reviewed the details to provide accurate information,” said John Butler, BSC’s executive leader for business services.

Additional updates from the BSC on the legislation will be posted on the convention website. 

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J.D. Payne: Churches must ‘write the story’ amid COVID-19 crisis

By SETH BROWN | *BR* Executive Editor

The global coronavirus pandemic left many Southern Baptist churches wondering where to turn as medical guidance and government restrictions nearly eliminated in-person meetings in recent weeks.

As churches plan for the coming months, they face significant logistical challenges.

Southern Baptist missiologist J.D. Payne told the *Biblical Recorder* that leaders must develop innovative new strategies for navigating the current crisis.

Most churches have shifted their efforts toward distributing and live-streaming resources online. Payne called that a “healthy reaction” but said it will not be enough in the long-term.

“Churches are going to have to figure out ways to still do ministry, outreach, and pastoral care in these days,” he said.

“Obviously, that is something that’s going to have to go beyond just a Sunday online presence.”

Payne encouraged church leaders to learn from other congregations, especially “cell churches” whose ministries are based on a network of small groups, but acknowledged there are no easy answers.

“The methods aren’t out there. They haven’t been developed,” he said.

“The solutions haven’t been put together. There are things we can learn, there are things we can



draw from ... but here’s a situation whereby church leadership is going to have to write the story. They can’t wait for the story to be told.”

Payne outlined two practices from small-group-based churches that could help others.

First, he said worship, teaching, fellowship, evangelism, member care and missions can all be rooted in small groups, calling them the “lifeblood” of the church.

He acknowledged that some COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings of 10 or more would prohibit most small groups from in-person meetings, but some ministry practices could continue.

Second, Payne encouraged churches to “keep things simple” by focusing on developing small group leaders who can help pastors “shoulder the load.”


“That doesn’t mean leaders have to be operating at the same ministry capacity as the pastor,” he said.

“If you can develop leaders that are only one step ahead of others in the church, they can lead them in that one step in the right direction.”

Referring to Acts 16, where the Apostle Paul’s ministry plans were redirected by the Spirit of God, Payne encouraged smaller churches to be innovative.

“I know there is this feeling that when the big challenges come we have to look to the more cutting-edge, methodologically progressive churches,” he said.

“And I would say, no, don’t exclusively do that. Yes, learn from others, but don’t feel like the Spirit can’t lead us to make adjustments. You have just as much of the Holy Spirit as other churches do. You may have to make some adjustments and write a story that’s never been written before.”

Find more resources from J.D. Payne on his blog, jdpayne.org, and podcast, “Striking the Match.” 

How to approach Easter amid COVID-19

Easter is the highlight of the Christian year – the culmination of the gospel story. Redemption. Resurrection. Eternal life. With churches not being able to celebrate Easter together due to social distancing and limits on public gatherings because of the coronavirus, what should the church do?

This year, Easter falls on Sun., April 12, but, as you know, the date for Easter varies each year.

Traditionally, Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or just after the spring equinox (the first day of spring).

So, this year, let’s take advantage of the moveable date.

I recently spent an hour on a conference call brainstorming with worship ministry colleagues from state conventions across the nation about what churches could do for their Easter celebrations this year. Many great ideas were expressed. Here are some recommendations based on that discussion.

• Plan to celebrate Easter the

third Sunday after resuming public gatherings.

It will be difficult to really capture the joy of Easter via livestreaming (more on that later).

Your church will be ready for a major celebration when it can gather once again.

Plus, those first few gatherings will be an adjustment. Following is a suggested pattern to consider that builds to an Easter celebration.

Your first Sunday back will be a mix of emotions and a time of healing in many ways.

While there will be a sense of joy for being able to gather again as a church body, many people may be hesitant or fearful to gather together following weeks full of fear, social distancing and isolation. Recognize the hard place your people are coming from, and minister to them through corporate worship.

Announce plans for an Easter

celebration that will be coming in two weeks, and encourage your people to begin inviting all of their neighbors, friends and others.

The second Sunday should be the start of Holy Week observance. Walking through the suffering and death of Christ will be a great experience for the church after all it has endured because of the coronavirus.

Observing Holy Week helps us emotionally move from death to life. Even if you have never emphasized Holy Week, this is a great time to have Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. Make much of this week’s journey.

Then, celebrate Easter in a major way on the third Sunday to let people know Christ is victorious over

death, as well as all of the troubles and sorrows that we have experienced in the previous weeks and months. Having the celebration on the third Sunday provides adequate

time to prepare for the service with rehearsals, media prep, publicity and more.

• Postpone all baptisms until you celebrate Easter.

Many churches have been encouraged to conduct baptisms on Easter Sunday this year. Baptisms during the COVID-19 period are risky for spreading infection. You could livestream a single baptism to your online church, but waiting until the Easter gathered celebration will make that day a greater celebration. Waiting also addresses the concern of the virus spreading through baptism.

• Promote the Easter celebration to come.

During your online service on Easter Sunday (April 12), let people know what will take place when the church resumes gathering together. Let the congregation know the Easter celebration to come will be a day unlike any other. Until your church resumes worship gathering, continue to promote the Easter celebration during your online services.

See Easter page 11



KENNY LAMM
Guest Column

North Carolina sees Hispanic church planting boom

By KEILA DIAZ | Baptist Press

In the last seven years North Carolina has been experiencing a Hispanic church plant boom, with 150 new Hispanic churches. And the growth shows no signs of stopping, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There has been a spiritual awakening that has led to planting of Hispanic churches across the state,” said William Ortega, consultant of Hispanic church planting for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Julio Arriola, executive director of Hispanic Relations and Mobilization for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, commends North Carolina as a model for other states.

“We applaud the hard work and vision of William and his team,” Arriola said. “The rapid growth of the Hispanic population in North Carolina and over all the United States tells us the need for leaders like him, willing to not only pray like it matters but also act like it matters.”

Following governmental social distancing guidelines, Ortega has canceled all in-person training and moved to online meetings through the online meeting platform Zoom.

“There will be changes, but not when it comes to mobilizing Hispanic church planters,” Ortega said.

Ortega, a native of Costa Rica, was a missionary with the International Mission Board in Mexico City before taking on the role at the North Caro-

lina convention. As part of his job, Ortega created a six-element Hispanic church planting strategy: working in teams, vision-casting, mobilization, spiritual formation/mentoring, church planter trainings and strategic prayer.

The first element creates teams of leaders at the state, regional and local levels who will coordinate and collaborate with pastors, local churches and associations.

“Working with teams will help us to measure the process we are doing in the area of church planting in each region and zone,” he said.

Through an annual church-planting conference, regional church-planting retreats and one-on-one meetings with pastors (which are now held online), Ortega and other leaders are casting the Hispanic church-planting vision. The responsibility of coaching and mentoring also falls to the state, regional and local leaders.

“[We want to] infuse and share the church-planting vision aggressively to local churches within the state,” he said, “... [to] cast God’s vision in a way that motivates, inspires, and encourages others to accomplish God’s purpose in the state for Hispanic work.”

There are currently 25 Hispanic church-planting centers spread across North Carolina. The courses offered are useful for church planters as well as those who are called to be part of a church plant team.

Ortega said the state has a strong mobilization culture among its Hispanic churches.

“We typically don’t bring planters from outside the state,” he said. “The planters rise up within the churches. When pastors catch the vision, they themselves give up names of men who they see as potential church planters. Also, during the conferences some men have felt the calling to plant.

“We know that without prayer we can do nothing. We can have the best plans and the best strategies but if it is not bathed in prayer it is in vain.”

To that end, Ortega has developed a 50-day intercessory prayer plan that starts off on Resurrection Day and ends on Pentecost. During that time, pastors, planters and churches engage in prayer walking and group prayers for their region and their state.

“This year, the 50-day prayer plan begins on April 12, and it could not come at a better time,” Ortega said. “We have sent out the prayer guides



William Ortega, a native of Costa Rica, has established a church-planting strategy among Hispanic Baptist churches in North Carolina. (Contributed photo)

and are encouraging our church planters to come together through Zoom meetings, phone conferences and the like. We are being bombarded with information that can be terrifying, and it is important for the planter to be a source of encouragement and hope.”

The COVID-19 crisis has also created an opportunity for planters to become familiar with streaming their services live through social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook.


“There was no program for church-planting training in Spanish and creating a process has made the difference,” Ortega said. “Churches have already planted into the fourth generation and that is what we call a mobilization of churches.”

Arriola agreed, stressing the importance of having a plan.

“We need to learn how to be strategic,” Arriola said. “Their strategy is changing their results. God is answering their extraordinary way of praying, but also God is honoring their hard work and commitment to the Great Commission.”

The challenge that remains is to reach the more than 1 million Hispanics in the state.

The rate of Hispanic population growth far outpaces the Hispanic church-planting rate. Still, Ortega is hopeful.

“We believe God is Lord of the harvest and we trust that He will make His Kingdom grow by raising up leaders and pastors.” 



CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

Praying Through the Crisis

For 175 years — through famine, war, global pandemics and civil unrest — Southern Baptist missionaries have maintained an uninterrupted witness among the nations. This could not have happened apart from the grace of God and the prayers of His people.

As all of us face the worldwide struggle caused by the COVID-19 virus, this generation of IMB missionaries asks for your prayers as they share the hope of Jesus Christ with those living in fear and despair.

Sharing the hope:

- ▶ Although face-to-face interactions are scarce as isolation grows, missionaries are noticing a greater openness to discuss spiritual matters.
- ▶ Using technology, believers are gathering virtually to worship and encourage one another.
- ▶ In one country, a church moved a previously scheduled baptism to a believer’s home and livestreamed it to the congregation.

Ways you can pray:

- ▶ Pray for believers around the world to stand firm in Christ during this tumultuous time.
- ▶ Pray for them to share the gospel and meet needs with more passion, fervor and creativity than ever before.
- ▶ Pray that IMB workers will walk each day without fear and with confidence that God has placed them in their locations for such a time as this.
- ▶ Pray that people around the world will respond positively to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ May His name be proclaimed among every nation, tribe, people and language today and for all eternity.

imb

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

The Truth of the Resurrection

April 12

Focal Passages: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

We live in an age in which we are bombarded by information. We have access to whatever we want to know in the palm of our hands. Sometimes, however, differentiating between fact and opinion can be a challenge. Biases eclipse what is true more often than we care to admit. Nevertheless, our need for validity is unchanged. Gratefully, the greatest truth ever told comes backed with eyewitness testimony.

First, we know Jesus was crucified. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) all record the details of this event. This is the very death that was supposed to be ours as a result of our sin. Jesus took that death in our place. Without resurrection, however, the truth of the gospel is incomplete. Jesus died, but Jesus also lives!

The idea that someone who was

once dead would come back to life can be hard to wrap our minds around. However, God, in His kindness, did not leave us without proof. After He rose, He appeared to several individuals and groups. He appeared to a group of 500 people and each of the apostles. He also appeared to Paul even though Paul's conversion happened later. Disputing the statements from over 500 people proves to be more difficult.

The resurrection actually happened! It is not just a rumor or a myth. It is not some symbolic story that leads us to overlook the miraculous. Jesus literally and physically rose from the dead ... and people saw Him! This should fill us with joy as we see that Christ has overcome our greatest enemy: death!



ANTENESHIA SANDERS
member, The Summit
Church, Durham

Why the Resurrection Matters

April 19

Focal Passages: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 54-58

In our last lesson, we focused on the truth of the resurrection. Establishing first that the resurrection actually happened is a necessary foundation leading us into why the resurrection matters. Paul writes to the Corinthians that we are to be pitied if Christ is not raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:19). Praise God this is not true for us! There are three reasons why Christ's resurrection matters to us as believers. First, because Jesus is alive, though we die, we will also experience resurrection. The scripture says that Jesus is the "first fruits" from those from among the dead. This implies that there will be more

to rise from the dead like He did; Christ's resurrection secures for us life after death. Those of us who die before Christ's return will experience a literal and physical resurrection just like His. This shows us that in Jesus, death doesn't have the final word for us.

Secondly, the resurrection also means that Jesus is Lord. This means that He has eternal reign over all things. "Every rule, authority, and power," the text says, will be no more. Because death is also subject to Him, it will also be destroyed in the end.

Our experience in this life is not always what we expect. It is not always pleasant. But thirdly, Jesus' resurrection matters because the scriptures tell us that nothing we do for Jesus is in vain. Christ's victory over death gives us victory now and forever!

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Raised!

April 12

Focal passage: Luke 24:1-12

On April 21, 1986, over 30 million people tuned in to watch Geraldo Rivera and an excavation team open the vault of the gangster Al Capone. Located in the Lexington Hotel in Chicago, the vault was assumed to be filled with cash, treasures or even skeletons of Capone's notorious past. Imagine the let down when on live TV the vault was opened, and nothing was there except dust and old bottles. The disappointment was evident on Rivera's face.

Our text tells of the tomb where Jesus' body was laid. When the women arrived with their spices, they too discovered an empty space, but their confusion quickly turned to astonishment as the angels declared Jesus was risen and alive just as He had said.

Peter ran to the tomb to find only

the linen cloths. Jesus' victory would later be confirmed as He appeared to Peter and others who also confirmed His bodily resurrection.

The empty tomb doesn't bring the Christian disappointment, it delivers victory!

Jesus' bodily resurrection sealed the victory over sin and death for the follower of Christ and brings salvation.

Unlike that fateful night in 1986 for Geraldo Rivera on live television, we look to an empty tomb with hope and confidence, not disappointment. Geraldo garnered an audience of thirty million, yet we can make a profound difference in the life of just one. Take time to share the gospel with at least one person this week. Share the victory that saved you. We serve a risen Savior. Rejoice!



WOODY WALLS
pastoral intern, Beach Road
Baptist Church, Southport

Secured

April 19

Focal passages: Romans 8:12-25

As I write these words the news of COVID-19 is dominating every information channel. Press conferences, email blasts, social media, every major news agency and anyone with an avenue to share has an opinion and the "latest" news to share. These are certainly unprecedented times, yet I sit here at the laptop with one word in my head: secured!

Paul, in our focal passage from Romans 8, reminds us we are secure in the promises of God. The security rests in the reality that all who have responded to the gospel by grace through faith have a sure hope of a future as children of God.

The reality we face today and the

truth that we can stand on is that through the gospel we move from certain death to eternal life (verses 12-13). As believers we are adopted into God's family and are coheirs with Christ (v. 17). As heirs we are guaranteed an eternal inheritance.

Death, sickness and despair in our world are all a result of the fall of man into sin. God created a perfect world declaring that it was good (Genesis 1-2), yet man introduced sin in his rebellion to God's plan (Genesis 3). God's creation awaits redemption from the effects of sin and God will restore it one day (vv. 19-22). Along with the restoration of creation, we will too be restored so that we can function as God's children as He has planned. No death, no disease, no distress, just security!

Rest in that truth today. As God's children, we are secure in Him despite the chaos around us.

Easter

Continued from page 8

• **Recognize Easter Sunday online and point to a future celebration.**

Recognize and celebrate Easter in your livestream service on April 12, but let people know this is not the only way your church will celebrate Easter this year.

Make Easter Sunday's online service a memorable one. If you are using live music, perhaps invite a special guest to your livestream to provide some great music. This can be done by prerecorded video, if needed, to include in your online service.

Realize that you will probably have more people watching your livestream on April 12 than any other Sunday. Cast vision about what things will look like when you gather once again in person. Invite online viewers to join you when you resume public gatherings.

There will be many seekers viewing your online service. People are more open to the gospel during times of suffering. Connect with them and urge them to join you in gathered worship when that day comes.

Recognize Easter on April 12, but don't try to make it look like an Easter service you do for a full congregation. Save that for the third Sunday of the return to gathering. Make that a day that will live forever in people's memories.

Granted, this is not the only way to approach Easter during these unusual times, but it does provide a helpful framework to consider.


Additional resources

For more worship resources during these trying

“With churches not being able to celebrate Easter together due to social distancing and limits on public gatherings ..., what should the church do?”

times, visit RenewingWorshipNC.org and ResourcingWorship.com. Both sites are working together to provide the resources you need to lead worship well as the church is scattered.

Watch for additional articles addressing the first three Sundays of worship gatherings on RenewingWorshipNC.org.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Kenny Lamm is senior consultant for *Renewing Worship* and the *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*.) 

Preach

Continued from page 2

need to bring a word that calls our people to trust God in the face of this crisis. At the same time, our people are being bombarded with messages about the coronavirus every way they turn.

When you speak, they need to hear a word from God that will strengthen their faith. Your listeners always will benefit spiritually from hearing expositional messages from the whole counsel of scripture, especially as the weeks wear on.

4. Preach live, if possible. While time or technological restraints may require you to pre-record your sermon, broadcasting the message in real time on Sunday morning is best.

After our first week of online-only worship, one couple contacted me to say that they had watched both our Sunday morning services, and they were surprised and thankful that I preached twice, rather than just replaying the first message in the second service.

There's a sense of immediacy when your people can tell you are actually preaching to them in the moment. And they can tell.

5. Relax. Speaking to a camera without an audience to support you and respond is hard. When you misspeak or mess up – don't worry, you will – shake it off and keep going just as you would in live sermon delivery in front of a congregation.

Your people are not expecting perfection. They do want to hear from and see their pastor and receive God's Word from you.

6. Present the gospel and give opportunities for people to respond. Joining your church's livestream service is a low-risk way for nonbelievers to listen to preaching. They don't have to come to church, they have relative anonymity, and they can turn you off whenever they want! As a result, you would be wise to assume that unsaved people are watching.


Make sure you proclaim the gospel clearly and provide a way for people to respond who make decisions or have questions or prayer needs. Simply listing an email address or a phone number to call can open doors for ministry.

We can thank God for the opportunity we have to preach to our people via video during the social distancing that the coronavirus requires right now.

To my fellow preachers who are preaching to empty rooms, I say:

Be biblical. Be faithful. Be relational. Be genuine. Be prayerful. Be vulnerable.

Be encouraging. And be encouraged. We know that God is using even this to accomplish something for His glory.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Stephen Rummage is the senior pastor of *Quail Springs Baptist Church* in *Oklahoma City*. He holds a Ph.D. in preaching from *New Orleans Baptist Seminary*.) 

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

Pastor

Highland Baptist Church of Hickory, NC (member of Southern Baptist Convention), is accepting résumés for a **full-time Senior Pastor** position. HBC has a rich, more than one hundred year history in teaching and preaching God's Word, and taking the Word to the lost of our community. We adhere to the 2000 Southern Baptist Faith and Message. We seek a candidate who is gifted in preaching God's Word, teaching, discipling, with a Shepherd's heart for reaching the lost. Minimum master's degree required. Résumés will be received but not reviewed until April 2020. Our website is hbchickory.org. Interested candidates should send résumé and cover letter to highlandbaptiststaff@gmail.com.

Church Staff

Flat Rock Baptist Church, Louisburg, NC, is seeking a **part-time Minister of Youth and Children**. This position requires a minimum of 15 hours a week. Must provide strong Christian leadership while leading our children and youth to come to know Christ. Email your résumé to frbcoffice@embarqmail.com.

Miscellaneous

Do you have staff changes at your church or association? Or special news you would like to share (significant church or church staff anniversaries or a mission effort to reach your community)? Call (919) 847-2127 or email editor@BRnow.org.

Nurses

Continued from page 1


that include snacks, coffee, toiletries and devotionals.

The church was also able to purchase about 200 N95 masks to donate. Watkins said nurses also asked for hand lotion because the increased hand washing and sanitizing have made their skin dry. Nurses told him that snacks were more helpful than gift cards because they don't have time to take lunch breaks or order food. Watkins told the *Recorder* he has focused not only on staying connected with church members but finding ways to reach others outside the church during a time of crisis.

"We also need to be thinking, 'How can we minister to those not in our church who are also fearful?'" he said.

"They don't have the hope we do. So our prayer is that people working in the ER or wherever will see that there's some people that love them and are praying for them."

Friendship also broadcasts daily children's devotions on Facebook.

"We want to engage the children on a daily basis," he said. The devotions are streamed online Monday to Friday at 1:30 p.m. 




Friendship Southern Baptist Church members prepare care packages for nurses and medical personnel working in nearby hospitals. (Contributed photo)

WMU-NC cancels Missions Extravaganza

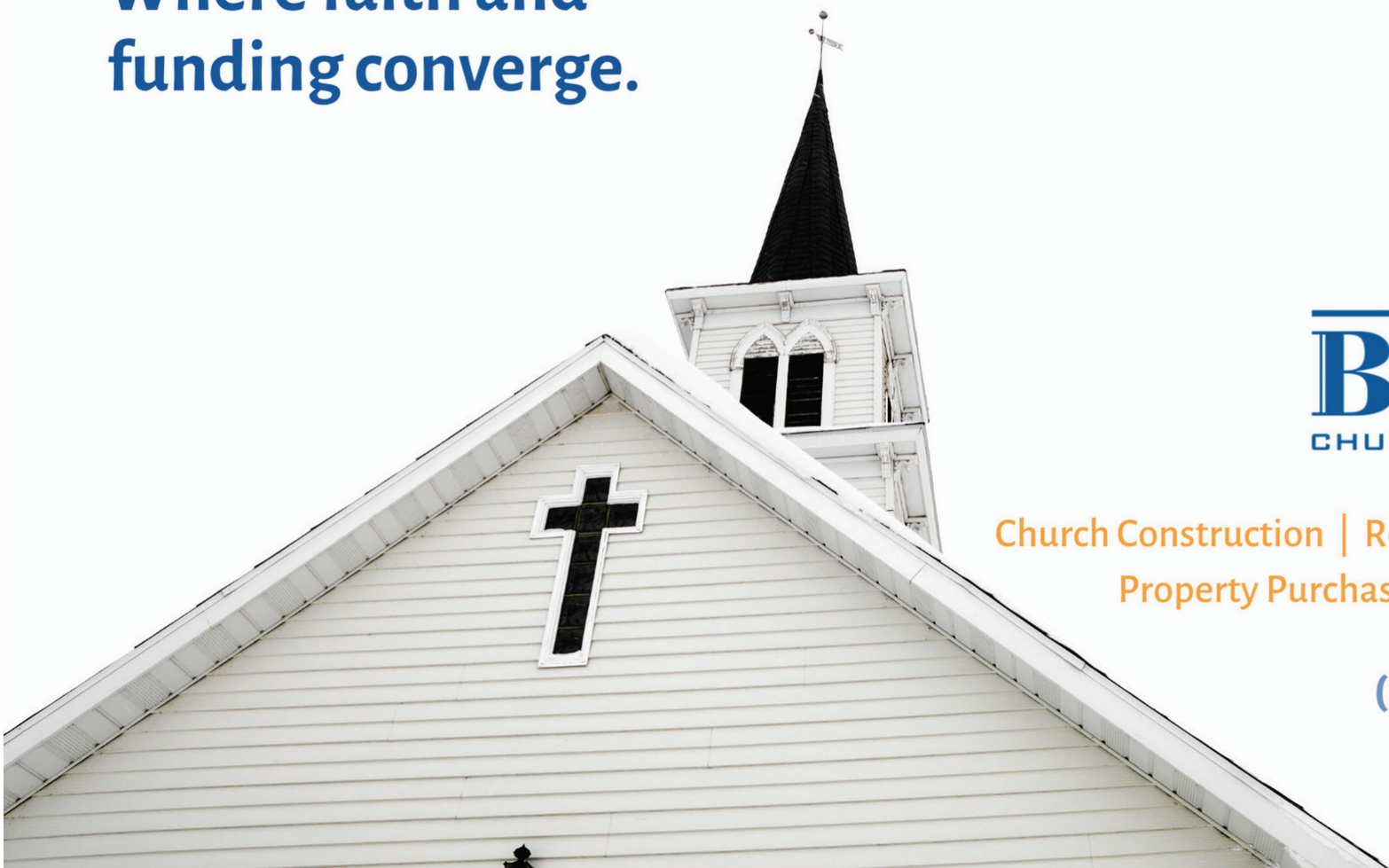
Biblical Recorder

Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) made the decision March 16 to cancel its annual meeting planned for April 24-25 at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte.

"Our staff has been working together to make the most informed decision possible," said Amy Boone, WMU-NC executive director-treasurer, in a statement. "The safety of our conference participants, leaders, staff, exhibitors, and all the volunteers are of extreme importance to us."

Refunds may be requested or the money can be used as a tax deductible gift. Contact Cheryl Daniel at cdaniel@wmunc.org or (866) 210-8602. 

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