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BIBLICAL RECORDER

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New initiative helps churches rethink ministry in ‘post-pandemic world’

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Executive Editor

The global crisis created by a new coronavirus has left many churches wondering how to continue their ministries while navigating ever-changing medical guidelines and government restrictions. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) launched a new initiative amid the pandemic to help churches go “back to the basics” and chart a path forward.



SANDY MARKS

“What if this crisis is a means by which Jesus unites the church around a singular mission for the glory of the Father?” Sandy Marks asked in a webinar May 7.

Marks leads the BSC Church Health & Revitalization Team. He co-hosted a slate of webinars called “How to be the church in a post-pandemic world” with Brian Upshaw, BSC Disciple-Making Team leader. The initiative drew 500 registrants across three online meetings May 6-7.

The teaching sessions were focused on helping churches rethink their current mission strategies. Attendees were encouraged to join cohorts of up to 10 other church leaders to meet for six weeks in a peer learning environment.

“We have to work together to share ideas and

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COVID-19 survivor to come home to new ramp

By **CAROL LAYTON** | NCBAM

May 1 began with a steady rain as the ramp-building team arrived at Mary Scudillo’s home in Rockwell, N.C.

“I offered them a big umbrella, but they were so dedicated, they just started working in the rain,” she said. Scudillo was excited to see work begin on the wheelchair ramp, but her voice still had an edge of unease to it – unease she has been living with for months.

Her mother, Barbara Thomas, who needs the ramp, is 77 years old and a resident at Citadel Salisbury, home to the state’s worst nursing home

[See Ramp page 11](#)



Mary Scudillo’s son, Patrick, is excited about his grandmother coming home. Ramp builders used safe practices to build a quality ramp to welcome Barbara Thomas home. From left to right, Robert Leonard (NCBAM, Glorieta Baptist Church); David Tate (Parkwood Baptist Church); Austin Arnder (Hopewell Baptist Church); Ralph Belk and Jim Sherrill (Parkwood Baptist Church). (Submitted photos)

Lunsford’s call to prayer garners national attention

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Executive Editor

Two years ago Fred Lunsford had a unique experience in prayer. The 95-year-old World War II veteran and longtime North Carolina pastor said God gave him a “tremendous burden” to call others to pray for spiritual awakening in America. That call to prayer became a nationally recognized event on May 5.

Lunsford recounted his experience in a video

produced by Mud Creek Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C.

Lunsford often goes to a prayer garden near his home in Marble, N.C., to spend time with God. On a summer day two years ago, Lunsford said he looked in the direction of nearby Buckhorn Gap and had an unusual experience.

“I saw Jesus standing in that gap,” he said. “Just then I saw a thundercloud come up behind Him

[See Prayer page 7](#)

Rest in God's peace during trying times

BSC Communications

Late one recent night, I turned on the light at the front door of my home to look outside because it was storming with lots of rain and wind. Just inside the ceiling ledge of the roof that is above my front porch, I saw a tiny bird cuddled in a corner with its head tucked under its wing.

The little bird appeared to know it was safe because it was sleeping comfortably even as the rain fell and the wind blew just a few feet away. The next morning after the rain and wind had stopped, that little bird flew off to begin a new day and find some food.

In Matthew 6:26, Jesus reminds us that our Father in heaven takes care of the birds in nature, provides them with a place to stay and feeds them. Then He asks, “*Are you not worth more than they?*” The answer to that rhetorical question is a resounding “Yes!” We are important to God. We can rest in peace because we trust in Jesus who promises in Philippians 4:19 to provide for our every need.

The coronavirus pandemic that we are living in continues to make life anxious and stressful for all

of us. Many people have lost their job and income. Teenagers have been forced to miss milestone events and celebrations like graduations and proms.

There is still uncertainty about how long these times will last. If we do not make an effort to avoid it, discouragement and even fear can slip into our mind and cause us to worry about having enough money or food to make it through this storm in life.

Maybe you can resonate with King David when he wrote “*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord*” (Psalm 27:13).

Everyone living on planet earth lives under the authority of the one true God who created everything. Even the devil and powers of darkness are subject to Him. God is still on His throne, and He is in control.

This pandemic will fade away and end when God decrees that it has been long enough. The pandemic may end by Him working through medical science or He may do it in a way that medical science cannot explain.

Either way, Acts 17:28 reminds us “*for in Him we live and move and have our being ...*”



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer


IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

If we will allow God to teach us, there are things we can learn in the midst of difficulty that we will not learn any other way.

Rest assured, even if some people do not believe that God exists, He does and He is at work during this storm. I resonate with what one person said, “I know God is alive. I talked with Him this morning.”

God is doing His work in the lives of those who turn to Him. His peace is always available to us when we access it from Him. You can know God's peace in greater proportion when you spend unhurried time alone with Him telling Him what you love about Him and how you appreciate all He does for you. If you will not be in a hurry when you are alone with God and take time to linger and praise Him, God can make His presence known to you and it will bring great peace to your heart.

“*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let now your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” – John 14:27 (NKJV). 

How do we calculate church attendance on social media?

LifeWay Christian Resources

Social media gets a bad rap most of the time as the stage for much of the division in our society. As ingrained as social media has become in many of our lives, I hear more people complain about its negative effects than praising it for any benefit it may provide.

But during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is safe to say pastors and churches are more grateful for social media than they have ever been.

Countless churches are using platforms like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to deliver Sunday morning services, stay connected with their members and provide other helpful ministry resources for a body of

Christ that is dispersed and lonely.

But this also raises a question for pastors, “How do I calculate church attendance?” “Video views” are not a good measure of church attendance. “People reached” is even less accurate than video views when it comes to church attendance.

So what do we do?

First, let's define some terms. On YouTube, one “video view” means that someone has: 1) clicked play on your video and 2) has watched for 30 seconds. On Facebook, one “video view” means that someone watched a video (that could have started automati-

cally) for just three seconds. From my observation, most churches are using Facebook for sermons, not YouTube, so let's focus on Facebook.

If your Sunday sermon has 3,000 views on Facebook, that does not mean 3,000 people “came to church.”

It simply means that your video played for three seconds 3,000 times.

If Facebook says your Sunday service reached 8,000 people, that just means it appeared in 8,000 timelines. It doesn't mean 8,000 people watched your sermon, and it definitely doesn't mean 8,000 people came to church. It just means

8,000 people had the opportunity to scroll past your video, of which a smaller group may have stopped to watch.

So then, how can we calculate the number of people who consumed the Sunday service video in its entirety, like they were sitting in church on Sunday morning? You need three numbers: 1) the total watch time of your Sunday service (available on Facebook's video stats), 2) the length of your video, and 3) the average number of people per household in your church or state. The following calculation isn't perfect, but it is probably about as accurate as we can get right now.

Here is the equation we will use:

See Media page 9



CHRIS MARTIN
Guest Column



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(919) 847-2127; Fax (919) 467-6180

BRnow.org

Seth Brown, Executive Editor
editor@brnow.org

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

Liz Tablazon, Assistant Editor
(919) 459-5697; liz@brnow.org

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

Carly Conley, Freelance Graphic Designer

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Dee Dee Vogt
Editorial Aide
Grace Beacham
Administrative Assistant

Board of Directors: Nate Jones, chair; Chris Hefner, vice chair; Cindy D. Jennings, secretary; Tony Honeycutt, treasurer; Kevin Atchley; Kelly Bullard; Joan T. Calhoun; Marty K. Childers; Ron Davis; Lesley Hildreth; Amy T. Lunceford; Dan Meyer; Frank Norwood; Jim Pennington Jr.; Donna A. Robinson; Donnie Seagle; Meredith Snoddy; Sonny W. Sweatman Jr.; Larry Whichard; and Bartley Wooten

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Cedarville places president on leave, announces investigation

Baptist Press & Biblical Recorder

Cedarville University trustees placed school president Thomas White on administrative leave May 1 amid controversy over his hiring and firing of a faculty member accused of criminal sexual misconduct.

The trustees also announced independent investigations into both the hiring of former theology professor Anthony Moore and Moore's conduct while employed at the independent Baptist school.

White's actions came under scrutiny last month when blogger Todd Wilhelm and independent journalist Julie Roys began publishing new information about Moore's hiring and past actions.

In January 2017, while Moore was pastor of the Fort Worth campus of The Village Church, he was accused of secretly recording videos of another staff member as he showered. Voyeurism is a criminal offense under Texas state law.

Although the church fired Moore and pronounced him "unfit for ministry," he was hired at Cedarville in August 2017 in what White described as a five-year "restoration plan."

White fired Moore April 23, saying he had learned that Moore's alleged transgressions were more extensive than he'd known.

In a statement released May 1 by the school, Cedarville's 28-member board of trustees described themselves as "incredibly grieved over this new information and the questions it raises."

Cedarville's trustees currently include two Southern Baptist leaders: Danny Akin, president of South-

eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Jason Duesing, provost at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Akin and Paige Patterson, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, served as Cedarville trustees when Moore was hired in 2017. Patterson resigned the trustee position in 2018 after being terminated from Southwestern Seminary.

The trustees said they would hire an independent firm to investigate Moore's conduct while employed at Cedarville "to ensure nothing inappropriate involving Dr. Moore took place on our campus or with any of our students elsewhere." The trustees said the findings would be reported to the public.

A separate independent investigation would cover "the entire process surrounding the hiring of Dr. Moore," the trustees said, including "a thorough review of all relevant communication involving Dr. White and Dr. Moore, the trustees, The Village Church, employment references" and other related matters. The trustees said those findings would be reported to the board of trustees.

In a 2017 email White sent to trustees that was obtained by Roys, White described Moore's alleged voyeurism as acting "in perversion technologically with another person."

The trustees' statement said White "has pledged his full support" of the investigations.

The controversy has sparked recent debate over White's future,

including competing online petitions. One petition called for White's dismissal. But another petition expressed appreciation of and support for White, who was hired in 2013 as the school's president.

In a video message addressed to the "Cedarville family" and posted on the school's website April 27, White apologized for hiring Moore. He said he was "motivated by the love of

others, desire to radically live out the gospel in my own life, and a prayer to see James 5:19 happen" – referring to helping turn a believer who "strays from the truth" back to God.

"I'm sorry that I brought Anthony Moore to Cedarville University. I did not know all the information at first," White said. "When we learned the new information, we took the action needed."

Moore, a husband and father of three sons, has been unavailable for comment to media outlets.

The Village Church removed Moore as a campus pastor and elder in January 2017, saying he had committed "grievous immoral actions against another adult member that disqualify him as an elder and staff member based on the biblical text in 1 Timothy and Titus 1."

The church gave no details of the disqualifying actions, but senior pastor Matt Chandler told the congregation Moore "acknowledged his sin" and that church leaders believed Moore was "unfit for ministry at this time, including speaking engagements and conferences for other churches."

The alleged victim, who was a youth pastor at The Village Church, filed a report in October 2018 with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office. He told the *Dayton Daily News* he made the report "in case there were other victims."

But he did not press charges; the case was classified as "suspended/inactive pending contact from complainant."

In a blog posted April 24, White wrote that Moore initially confessed his misconduct to him during a telephone conversation in January 2017. They had known each other since White was on staff at Southwestern, where Moore had been a student and then an employee. White also described Moore as a

friend who was "repentant, sobbing and crushed."

"I was heartbroken for my friend, his family, and all parties involved," White wrote, adding that months later Moore approached him about working at Cedarville under a restoration plan.

Cedarville trustees agreed to a five-year process in which Moore was to begin in a staff position instead of a faculty post, undergo counseling with any associated costs paid by the school, maintain membership at a specified church, and only have contact with students after building "a track record of continued faithfulness."


Moore progressed to a position in Cedarville's school of biblical and theological studies, and also had a role as a volunteer assistant coach for Cedarville's men's basketball team. In January 2019, he was appointed by White as special advisor to the president for Kingdom Diversity.

But White wrote in the April 24 blog post that he fired Moore after learning that instead of two videos of the alleged victim in January 2017, Moore had recorded at least five videos over a period of "at least five months."

"If I had known these items at the beginning," White wrote, "I would not have attempted the plan for restoration."

In a recent statement, officials of The Village Church said, "We did thoroughly inform Cedarville University about all of the known details of Anthony's offense and reiterated clearly that we did not believe he was fit for ministry of any kind."

White said in the April 27 video that while Moore was on staff, "no incidents were reported by students," but said he would recommend to the trustees that an independent investigation be conducted to "confirm that nothing inappropriate occurred on our campus." The board of trustees authorized that investigation May 1 as well as the second independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Moore's hiring.

"As our Cedarville University community processes this situation, we pray we would do so with humility, grace, mercy, integrity, civility and respect," trustees said in the statement. "Above all, we pray God would be honored by our deliberations and actions." 



THOMAS WHITE

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LifeWay creates church assistance package

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

As churches adjust to ministry in a post-COVID-19 world, LifeWay has developed a collection of resources to help them.

The new Church Assistance Package from LifeWay is available for any congregation around the world.

“LifeWay wants to do everything we can to help churches sustain their vital ministries during this time,” said Ben Mandrell, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources.

“Because of this, we have been working on solutions for supporting local churches as they seek to grow together as disciples during this season and walk with them as they begin rebounding.”

Mandrell said Michael Kelley, senior vice president of church ministries, and others developed the Church Assistance Package as one of those solutions.

For Kelley, the package is an extension of LifeWay’s reason for existence – to serve the church.

“We want to have something real, a tangible benefit for all types of churches as a way of coming alongside them and helping bear the burden of this crisis,” he said.

The Church Assistance Package includes:

- A \$100 credit applied to new and existing Life-



Way church billing accounts

- A \$100 credit toward resources from LifeWay Worship
- Free access to the Generosity by LifeWay digital giving platform and discounts on related resources
- Free access to select Bible study teaching videos for small groups
- A 50% off promotional code for a future Broadman Church Supplies order for churches ordering Broadman supplies from lifeway.com for the first time in 12 months
- Free digital access to summer ongoing curriculum for churches when they purchase ongoing curriculum for their groups
- Free eBook access and special bulk pricing for

select B&H book titles

Kelley said the items included in the package were aimed at helping congregations meet basic ministry needs as they start gathering again.


“We hope that as churches are evaluating their budgets and expenditures that many of these offers will be helpful to do the things the church must continue to do,” he said, “things like teaching the Bible to children, taking the Lord’s Supper together and singing congregationally.”

Right now, churches have significant and wide-ranging needs, but Kelley and others at LifeWay believe the Church Assistance Package can be helpful.

“We wouldn’t presume this package is all a struggling church needs, but hopefully it can be of some help to bridge the gap between a time of quarantine and when congregations begin meeting together.

“Through the Church Assistance Package and in other ways, we hope to demonstrate LifeWay’s commitment to walk together with churches and continue to be a strong partner in ministry.”

Mandrell said, “We know the church will get through this season, but until it does, the Church Assistance Package is part of LifeWay’s attempt to make life a little easier for local churches.”

For more information or to access the Church Assistance Package, visit lifeway.com/churchassistance. 

LifeWay announces budget cuts, staff reductions, end of WorldChangers

By CAROL PIPES | LifeWay Christian Resources

LifeWay Christian Resources is implementing a series of budgetary freezes, cutbacks and staff reductions in response to the economic crisis resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

LifeWay CEO Ben Mandrell cited a steep and steady decline of sales since mid-March, as well as uncertainty in the ability to host camps and events this summer as reasons for the actions LifeWay is taking.

“LifeWay stands to lose tens of millions of dollars of revenue that the organization would normally generate over the summer months from camps, events, VBS and ongoing curriculum sales,” Mandrell said. “LifeWay is mitigating these losses as much as possible through various expense reduction plans, including staff reductions and cuts in non-employee expenses. Additionally, LifeWay will likely have to use money from its reserves to cover a portion of the lost revenue.”

LifeWay will reduce staff, freeze all hiring and discretionary spending, and suspend salary increases



For 30 years World Changers has provided meaningful missions experiences for more than 400,000 students and adults. (LifeWay photo)

and matching 401K contributions for all employees. In addition to these measures, the members of the executive leadership team will give up one month’s salary beginning in May.

These temporary expense reductions went into effect May 1. LifeWay is expecting to cut \$25-\$30 million of

recurring expenses from its operating budget. In March 2019, LifeWay announced the closing of its retail chain due to nearly \$50 million of losses from 2014-2019. While LifeWay closed its last store in November 2019, the company is still working to settle more than 30 leases.

Mandrell said LifeWay leaders have been working for months, even prior to the pandemic, to replenish reserves and free up capital to invest in strategic areas of focus.

In August 2019, LifeWay sold its distribution center in Lebanon, Tenn., for \$20.1 million and is leasing back the warehouse and distribution space. LifeWay will also begin a feasibility study of its corporate office building in downtown Nashville, which the staff moved into in November 2017.

LifeWay sold its former campus and property for \$125 million and spent approximately \$100 million for land, construction, furnishings and relocating to the new campus.

LifeWay also announced the cancellation of World Changers mission projects for the summer and closing all future operations.

“We are sad about the closing of World Changers, but we know now is the time to make this decision based on more than 10 years of decline in participants and the current financial impact related to the coronavirus pandemic,” said Ben Trueblood, director of Student Ministry at LifeWay.

Full stories at BRnow.org. 

BSC webmaster: Church sites a ‘tool for evangelism’

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Assistant Editor

A well-maintained church website is a “tool for evangelism” and vital to community presence, says Lai Salmonson, webmaster for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC).

“Probably less than half actually have a website that’s managed,” Salmonson said about North Carolina Baptist churches in an interview with the *Biblical Recorder* April 23.

“The biggest part of a church website is to have community presence. Show that ‘Hey, we’re here for you guys.’ ... It’s a tool for reaching those who’ve never been to a church. It’s really a tool for evangelism as well.

“If you place a short video presentation of the gospel on the homepage, you never know who you might impact.”

Salmonson began offering work-

shops on creating and maintaining church websites in 2012 and has since assisted about 80 churches every year.

About eight times a year, the BSC Information Technology & Services team hosts Wix training in the BSC building in Cary. No classes are currently offered due to social distancing restrictions brought on by COVID-19, but a do-it-yourself manual is available for download (ncbaptist.org/website-development/).

Salmonson said in-person classes are based on the manual, so church leaders or staff who are interested would be able to access the same information. He can also remotely connect to participants’ computers for further assistance.

The online manual is a helpful tool “especially for beginners.” It explains technical terms and domain names and offers tips on graphic design. Salmonson would normally demon-

strate the entire process of creating a website and offer hands-on guidance in class, but in the meantime, he said the online manual is “basic enough” to follow, even without prior web management experience.

Salmonson sees websites as a “reach tool” primarily for a church’s surrounding community and then for its members.

Basic features should include a photo of the building or pastor so visitors can easily recognize the facility and leaders.


“I find that most folks that look at church websites are transplants. ... One of the most important parts of having a small church website is that you are found on Google by those searching for a new church home that have moved into your community,” he said.

Churches that are creating new websites with limited time and

resources should also include, at minimum, a calendar. It can act as a weekly digital “bulletin,” he said. Salmonson recommended utilizing Google calendar, as it is automatically updated.

“They don’t even have to touch the website. It becomes more of an informational platform,” he said. Any changes made to the Google calendar will be reflected on the website as they are added.

When asked about specific web needs in light of the coronavirus pandemic, Salmonson pointed to the BSC’s COVID-19 resource page, which covers live streaming, virtual small group meetings and online giving, among other essential features.

Social media engagement, like streaming worship services on Facebook Live, is especially important in reaching the community at this time, he added. 

Former Southern Baptist pastor Darrin Patrick, 49, commits suicide

By JONATHAN HOWE | Baptist Press

Prominent pastor and former Southern Baptist church planter Darrin Patrick died May 7 after an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Patrick, 49, was on staff as teaching pastor at Seacoast Church in the Carolinas. He also routinely provided pulpit supply at Southern Baptist churches across the country and was scheduled to preach May 17 at Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tenn.

“Darrin was a good friend who spurred me on to be a better pastor and husband,” Robby Gallaty, pastor at Long Hollow, said in a statement.

“He used past experiences from burn-out to put safeguards in place to keep the same from happening in my life. I’m am still stunned by the news.”

Seacoast announced the news of the tragedy May 8 on its website, saying:

“We are saddened to announce the sudden passing of Pastor Darrin Patrick. Darrin was a loved member of the Seacoast family, the teaching team, and pastoral staff and we are mourning his loss. Darrin had a gift for teaching the Word and a heart for encouraging other pastors. God allowed Seacoast to be a part of Darrin’s story in a time when he needed a family. He was a gift to us and we are

thankful for the time the Lord gave him to us. His influence and impact cannot be measured. We are surrounding the Patrick family with our prayers and support during this time.”


“When a personal tragedy like this occurs we not only grieve, but we also deal with so many other emotions,” said Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. “Once again, we realize that pastors are not any different from other people. We need relationships and friendships that help us walk through life and the

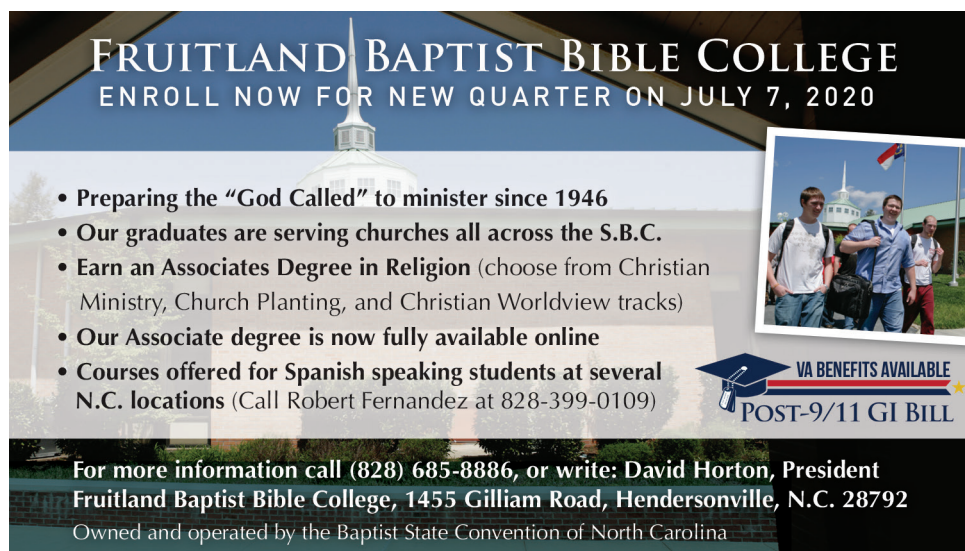
challenges of leadership. The stress of ministry mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually is ever-present.”

Patrick rose to prominence in the SBC in the mid-2000s after planting The Journey in St. Louis in 2002. The church plant grew quickly, running a reported 2,300 in weekly worship by 2008. A mentor to many church planters, Patrick wrote a book on the subject in 2010 and served as vice president for the Acts 29 Network, a global church planting organization.

Patrick’s time with both organizations ended in 2016 as he was removed by The Journey’s elders and the Acts 29 board for what was labeled “pastoral misconduct” and a “historical pattern of sin.” The Journey also claimed Patrick had violated the “high standard for elders in marriage through inappropriate meetings, conversations, and phone calls with two women.”



But 2017 saw Patrick reemerge at Seacoast Church through a restoration plan overseen by pastor Greg Surratt. Patrick joined the staff at Seacoast as a teaching pastor and had become a regular guest at Southern Baptist seminaries and on church leadership podcasts in recent years.

Patrick is survived by his wife Amie and four children: Glory, Grace, Drew and Delainey. 



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Darrin Patrick speaks in March 2019 during a chapel service at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. (SEBTS photo)

God takes care of woman through Mother's Day Offering

Wake Forest Baptist Health

Vicki Gruver has always counted on God to take care of her. Whether it was through decades as an overseas missionary with her husband, or as a mother of eight, or Thanksgiving 2018, when she learned she had uterine cancer.

A month later, surgeons at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center removed the cancer, performed a hysterectomy, and started her on a round of radiation.

Through it all, Vicki was at peace.

"I knew it was serious, but I wasn't scared or upset. I was like, OK God, what is this path? What do you have for me?"

God answered Vicki the way He always did: with sanctuary.

"We chose to be ministers all our lives," she explained. "We chose to believe God would take care of us."

God did: He used the Mother's Day Offering to help ease the burden of Vicki's medical bills.

"We didn't know where the



Vicki Gruver, left, believes God used North Carolina Baptists to take care of her needs through the Mother's Day Offering. (Screen capture from video)

money would come from, but we knew God knew," she said. "God moved God's people to meet our financial needs. When we got the letter, I thought, 'How did they get my name?' It was the biggest shock. We had never heard of the Mother's Day Offering.

"I laughed, and God was laughing with me. Here I am a mother of eight, getting ready for my 22nd grandchild to be born, so of all the blessings that were given, how

crazy that God gave me a Mother's Day Offering."

But then again, maybe it's not that crazy: Vicki and her husband are still missionaries – now in Hickory, ministering to 200-plus children in a school they run.

Vicki's family has walked through some serious events, and every time they have watched God take care of it all.

This time, God used mission-minded Baptists and the Mother's Day Offering.

"In heaven, I will know the people who gave and they will know me," she concludes. "I will give them a big hug and say thank you for loving me through God, and loving God through me. They've helped me and taken the worry off my back. That's what Christianity does."

Since 1924 North Carolina Baptists have given to the Mother's Day Offering. Gifts assist patients like Gruver in financial need at Wake Forest Baptist Health.

Visit mothersdayoffering.org. 

Divine intervention handled hospital bill

Wake Forest Baptist Health

Marie Brown believes God planted her in Greensboro for a reason ... even though her heart wasn't in it.

Retired in August 2018, she and her husband Bill had decided to move from Gastonia to Greensboro to be near grandchildren. Even though Marie changed her mind and wanted to stay in the town she loved, they followed through on the plan.

When she started feeling sick, she chalked it up to the stress of change.

Then one morning, she couldn't get out of bed. A diagnosis of leukemia led her to Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center.

"I prayed, 'God, if you really want me to move, I'll do it,' Marie said. "It turns out, it was the right thing to do. There was no question I was in the right place at the right time with this team of doctors."

The medical team came up with a treatment plan for Marie.

But what was not a part of her plan were the astronomical hospital bills ... right on top of bills from an earlier illness.

"I just thought, how would we ever get it all paid for?" she said.

"We were proud of ourselves for getting a handle on everything with the previous illness. Then this cancer happens, and you want to throw your hands up and say, 'I can't do this, I can't.'"

But Marie discovered she could, thanks to the generous gifts of North Carolina Baptists through the Mother's Day Offering.

"We called to get our balance," Marie explained.

"And the lady said, 'You don't owe anything.' Surprised, Bill said, 'You have the wrong person. We owe you money.'"

"She said, 'No, you don't!' Apparently, the letter had gotten lost in the mail. It was a true blessing.


"It paid off my whole balance."

Marie believes her prayers were answered



The Mother's Day Offering paid off Marie Brown's hospital bill. (Screen capture from video)

by divine intervention: God took care of her through N.C. Baptists.

"First Corinthians says love is patient and kind," she said. "That's how I feel about this gift. It is a gift of love from a wonderful group of people. Thank you for giving out of blind faith to somebody in need." 

Prayer Continued from page 1

and start rolling over the mountain. And then I heard thunder roll and lightning began to flash.”

Lunsford began praying. He referenced the fact that his wife, Gladys, died in 2014. “I think it’s just time to take me home,” he prayed. “I’m ready to go.”

God said “not yet,” according to Lunsford, but he didn’t know why. “I kept going back every day for maybe three weeks or a month before one day He answered me,” said Lunsford. “He said, ‘Not yet, because I’ve got some unfinished business that you need to take care of.’”

Lunsford said the task he believes God laid before him was to celebrate his 70-year anniversary in the ministry and call people to pray for spiritual awakening.

God told him, “I want to send renewal,” Lunsford said. “I want to send a new work among you.”

A group of North Carolina ministry leaders who visited Lunsford earlier this year were inspired to support the call to prayer. The group included Mud Creek’s pastor Greg Mathis, David Horton, president of Fruitland Baptist Bible College, and others.

Mathis said in a statement on Mud Creek’s website that the group prayed with Lunsford and had their own unique experience.

“Heaven came down and the area in which we were praying could barely contain us,” Mathis said.


That meeting led to an effort to gather 100 pastors – and then 200 – in an event called “Praying on the Mountain.” When it became clear that COVID-19 restrictions prevented the group from gathering in person, they shifted focus toward calling Christians to pray where they are.

As of May 1, about 3,300 individuals had signed up to represent more than 124,000 people from churches, Bible study groups, families, universities and businesses who planned to participate in the prayer emphasis, according to Mud Creek. The number of alleged pledges reached more than 260,000 by the time of the event.

Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee, hosted an online interview and prayer time with Lunsford, Mathis, Horton and others at 3 p.m. on May 5.

Chris Schofield, director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s office of prayer, coordinated an online prayer gathering as well, combining their weekly chapel service with emphases on “Praying on the Mountain” and “National Day of Prayer” events.

Tom Wagoner, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Dunn, N.C., told the *Biblical Recorder* his church leadership team spent the day in prayer at the historic Sandy Creek Baptist Church in Liberty, N.C., a key center of revival during the 18th century Great Awakening. Mathis told the *Recorder* that he has heard from churches in Kentucky, Texas, Florida and other states that planned similar outings or online events.

“It’s amazing, and I really thank God from the depths of my heart,” Lunsford told Baptist Press. “We know that we need spiritual awakening, we know we need the healing of our land. I am so in awe about it and at the same time, I’m thankful and grateful for all the people involved. It’s beyond my words to describe.” 



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WMU-NC business done virtually

Woman’s Missionary Union of North Carolina

On April 18, Woman’s Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) held a virtual meeting of the staff, executive board and new board member nominees to conduct business which would have been voted on during the annual meeting at Missions Extravaganza (ME).

Due to COVID-19, Missions Extravaganza, planned for April 24-25 at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte, was canceled.

In the called meeting, the 2020 budget of \$634,118, was approved so that financial operations may continue as necessary. Other recommendations presented to the board included an emergency plan for future crises and a change in the bylaw concerning a quorum for the annual meeting. These will be voted on at the next annual meeting or special called meeting of the WMU-NC delegation.

President Dee Dee Moody, a member of First Baptist Church in Salisbury, has served WMU-NC for the past five years.

Though the length of service for officers is four years, a vote at the 2019 annual meeting allowed Moody and the vice president, Deborah Taylor, to serve an additional year.

WMU-NC Executive Director-Treasurer Amy Boone presented gifts to Moody on behalf of the board. The new president Taylor, a member of Great Marsh Baptist Church in Saint Pauls.

Other officers include: Barbara Hill of Fairview Baptist Church in Statesville, vice president; Beth McDonald of McDonald Baptist Church in Rockingham, recording secretary; Allison Markwood of Mercy Hill Church in Greensboro, assistant recording secretary; and Kim Bounds of Pfafftown Baptist Church in Pfafftown, vice president of development.

New board members are: Becky McLawhorn of Eure Baptist Church in Eure, region 1; Nancy Scaff of Woodville Baptist Church of Hertford, region 1; Angie Dawson of Corinth Baptist Church of Elizabeth City, region 1; Yvonne Deatherage of Bethel Baptist Church of Jonestown, region 2; Suzanne Locklear, Island Grove Baptist Church of Pembroke, Region 3; Debra Worley, Carter’s Chapel Missionary Baptist Church of Selma, region 4; Terrie Powles of Lake Community Church in Salisbury, region 5; Patricia Gann of Beaver Island Baptist Church of Mayodan, region 5; Andrea Stewart of Embrace Church in High Point, region 5; Deborah Robson of Parkwood Baptist Church in Concord, region 6; Ann Thomas of New Home Baptist Church in Peachland, region 6; Vickie Parker of Baton Baptist Church in Hudson, region 7; and Pamela Surratt of First Baptist Church of Mount Holly, region 8.

These officers and board members will fill their terms until their election is ratified at the next annual meeting or special called meeting of the WMU-NC delegation.

After the officers and board members were approved by the executive board, the personnel committee brought a recommendation concerning the hiring of a part-time WMU-NC adult consultant.

Rebecca Lindhout, a member of Antioch Baptist Church of Mamers, was unanimously approved and began her position with WMU-NC effective immediately.

The next annual meeting and Missions Extravaganza is April 23-24, 2021, at Snyder Memorial Baptist Church in Fayetteville.

Because the breakout sessions are always a highlight of ME, some of the conferences which would have been offered will be posted online.

Visit wmunc.org. 

COVID-19 forces N.C. Baptist camps to make schedule changes

Biblical Recorder

While the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic forced many North Carolina Baptist camps to cancel programming through June, Truett Camp’s June schedule is on track.

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) youth ministry, BeDoTell, announced May 1 that it canceled June camps at Fort Caswell on Oak Island.

Deep Impact (DI), DI Kids, Caraway Conference Center and Truett Camp have

had to make scheduling adjustments as well.

Truett Camp

Truett Camp’s director Kenny Adcock told the *Biblical Recorder* that summer camps, even those in June, are still on track.

Adcock said, “All of our sanitation standards were already in place” before COVID-19. Camp staff wipe down beds and flip mattresses after each stay. “We do a deep

See Camps page 8

SBC officers call for ‘love of Christ’ in wake of Arbery shooting

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Executive Editor

The officers of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) are calling Southern Baptist leaders across the nation to demonstrate solidarity and support for racial minorities in the wake of news about the killing of a 25-year-old black man named Ahmaud Arbery.

The details of Arbery’s death sparked outrage after a graphic video of the shooting surfaced online and news reports indicated that no arrests were made in the months following the Feb. 23 incident.

Two white men – a father and son – were arrested May 7 in Georgia in connection with the shooting. Gregory McMichael, 64, and Travis McMichael, 34, face charges of murder and aggravated assault, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigations.

Reports indicate the McMichaels, carrying two firearms, chased Arbery in a pickup truck while he was out for a jog, believing he was to blame for a series of burglaries. Arbery was shot and killed after a physical altercation ensued.

In a letter to Baptist state convention executives obtained by the *Biblical Recorder*, SBC officers called the moment a “crucial opportu-

nity to share the love of Christ.” The letter was signed by SBC president J.D. Greear, first vice president Marshal Ausberry and second vice president Noe Garcia.

“One thing that some of our brothers and sisters of color find difficult is the feeling that they go through this alone – the feeling that their white brothers and sisters remain relatively unaffected by these injustices and mostly unengaged,” the letter said.

The group asked state leaders to reach out to black pastors in their conventions to “let them know you grieve with them, lament ongoing racial conflicts and disparities with them, and that you stand with them in this fight for justice and equity.”

Greear told the *Recorder* that all Christians should lament such tragedies while calling for justice.

“At the most basic level we grieve with those who grieve and we mourn the loss of life,” he said.

“And while we lean on due process, when we can look at something and see it doesn’t appear that every person in our society is being given the benefit of due process in the same way, it’s our duty to speak up.”

Greear acknowledged the investigation into


Arbery’s death is ongoing and encouraged church leaders to look for ways to express care for racial minorities in their communities during this time.

“The best ways to respond to this are not on social media,” he said. “They’re personal.”

Ausberry told the *Recorder*, “Leaders can guide their congregations to a season of prayerful lament. People need a positive way to express their anger, sadness and grief. We should not carry on business as usual pretending that nothing has happened. Leaders need to address the sinfulness of what has occurred, practice forgiveness, and pray for justice.”

Garcia said Christian leaders should respond with “biblical conviction.”

“We first and foremost need to be praying for Ahmaud Arbery’s family,” said Garcia. “The pain they are experiencing is not common to man. Secondly, we should be praying for justice. Pray that evilness no longer prevails and that justice is served.

“Lastly, speak up. You do not have to be the same race or creed to care about injustice. Do not stay silent because you are not directly affected. We should care because people made in the Image of God are being treated less than human.” 

Camps Continued from page 7

clean after each session,” he said, but the camp is adding more hand sanitizer stations at key locations entering and exiting buildings.

The camp is rescheduling the Western Happiness retreat that was originally scheduled at the end of May.

The camp has only canceled a mother-daughter retreat. The facilities are open to individuals or families as well, when space is available. Visit truettcamp.org.

BeDoTell

For BeDoTell, a five-week schedule will run from July 13 to August 13. Previously scheduled camps during those weeks will run an abbreviated agenda Monday through Thursday, making time available for additional weekend camp slots Friday through Sunday.

“Please understand that this decision was made to help as many groups as possible have a chance to attend camp and to make the camp

experience this summer more affordable for all groups,” said a statement on the BeDoTell website.

Visit bedotell.com.

Caraway

Caraway’s director Jimmy Huffman indicated that the site served its last group on March 14 before government restrictions forbid the serving of groups.

“April, which is usually the second busiest month of the year, was completely empty,” said Huffman in an email to the *Biblical Recorder*. “Between the conference center and both camps Caraway has lost over 150 guest groups and half million dollars in income, since March.”

Caraway’s staff continues to plan for this summer.

“We have not canceled our programs camps although they will look and feel a little different this year because of the new health guidelines that we will strictly follow,” he said.

“We anticipate gradually opening

for ministry in June serving what retreats groups that have not canceled and other smaller groups that would like to plan a summer event,” he said.

Visit caraway.org.

Deep Impact

In late April, N.C. Baptists on Mission (NCBM) announced Deep Impact (DI) and Deep Impact Kids options for June were canceled.

“We continue to monitor the situation, and we are hopeful that we can host camp in July and August,” said Jordan Caddell, the new NCBM student mobilization coordinator. “We are also working on some specific guidelines for groups to follow before they arrive at camp and during their week at camp to ensure everyone’s safety.”

An official statement said health and safety of all involved were the main consideration for making the tough decision to cancel its June offerings.

“We understand that in times like

these, sometimes the best way to love our neighbors is to take part in ensuring their health and safety,” the statement said. “One thing of which we are convinced is that our God is forever in control, and we can rest in his sovereignty.”

Caddell also mentioned DI as an alternative to World Changers for the summer.

LifeWay Christian Resources announced May 1 that World Changers would end immediately.

“We understand that many churches and student ministries are heavily impacted by this decision, and we are here to assist in any way that we can,” an official statement said.

“Deep Impact and World Changers have followed similar models for years, and for those who are now unable to serve as they’d planned to, we are here to support you through the transition to a new mission opportunity.”

Visit baptistsonmission.org/camps/deep-impact. 

N.C. communicators receive awards for 2019

Biblical Recorder

North Carolina Baptists displayed their talent and creativity in the recently announced Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) awards.

Representatives from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH), Credence Pictures, North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) and Gardner-Webb University (GWU) were among the winners (listed below) of the 56th annual Wilmer C. Fields award competition.

The meeting, which was originally scheduled for April 8-11 in New Orleans, was canceled due to coronavirus concerns.

BCA leaders released the winners via Facebook and its website, baptistcommunicators.org, the week after the scheduled meeting.

BCA's 2021 workshop has been scheduled for April 19-22, 2021 in New Orleans.

Gardner-Webb University

Two GWU students brought home awards. Lindy Lynch won first place for a single photo for "The Big Game," and Lisa Michelle Martinat placed second in a series for "Deaf or Hearing: A Child's Choice."

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry

Carol Layton won several awards for her NCBAM work, including one in the area of public relations, two in the audio-visual communications division and three overall publication awards.

She received two first place awards in the overall publication division. Her "Peace of Mind" flyer won for promotion or advertising print publication and her "Passport: Supporting Foster Families" won the another category with Jim Edminson and Blake Ragsdale from BCH.

She also received second place in overall publication for "The First Ten Years." Layton's "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet!" video promotion won a third place finish, and "Once There Was a Star" won second place in audio-visual communications. For "One Hope,"

Layton placed third for communications or marketing strategy for less than \$25,000 budget.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Rebecca Hankins won the grand prize award – Fon H. Scofield Award for Exceptional Achievement in Photography – for her feature series on the school's "Kentucky Mission Trip"

after winning first place for her photography series work. She also placed second in the same category for her "Oxford Study Tour" series.

Hankins placed second in studio portrait photography for "A moment with the Akins" and third place for a series of photographs at "9Marks at Southeastern."

Ryan Thomas won first place for his "Dad's Graduation" photograph for a single photo in event coverage. His photo also made him a finalist for the Scofield award.

Thomas also placed third for single feature photography for "Money to get Home."

Griffin Gullledge received first place in the interactive communications division for a single post on social media about Jen Wilkin's visit to the seminary, and Emily Flowers placed second in the publications division for "Joyful Collective" in the promotion and advertising area for a digital media template.

Baptist Children's Homes & Credence Pictures

Michael C. Blackwell received a first place feature writing award for his single blog entry "Transmitting values to children: Five tips for building relationship."

He also placed second and third in




audio-visual communications. "It's a family matter" came in second for a broadcast/podcast overall show, and "It's a family matter: Heart of a Cottage Parent (Sept. 2, 2019)" placed third for an individual episode of a broadcast/podcast.

In photography, Blake Ragsdale placed second and third in promotional or advertisement single photo; "Desperate Brothers" was second, and "Makala's Forever Family" was third.

Ragsdale and Credence Pictures won second place in audio-visual communications for video promotion of more than five minutes for "Hope and Future Offering."

He also placed third for "Hope and Future Logo" in the design print collateral category.

Upcoming event

Currently, BCA has a fall forum scheduled Sept. 11 (10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) at the North American Mission Board and via Zoom. RSVP to margaret.colson@bellsouth.net or visit the group's Facebook page during the time listed. 

Media Continued from page 2

Total Watch Time/Length of Video x Average Size of Household in Your State (or a number between 2-2.5) = Approximate Church Attendance via Facebook Video.

How does that equation actually work? Let's work through an example.

On Facebook, you can find the "total watch time" of any video you post – Google how to do it if you don't know how. Let's say the "total watch time" of your Sunday service was 6,400 minutes. That means an unknown number of people watched your video for a total of 6,400 minutes, which will be the first number in the equation above.

Then, let's say your Sunday service was 60 minutes long – that's the second number in your equation. Now, divide 6,400 minutes by 60 minutes, and you'll get about 107.

What does that number mean? It means that, as an approximation, about 107 "households," for lack of a better term, watched your video in its entirety. That doesn't mean 107 people attended church, because multiple people in a family could have watched via one screen. So, 6,400 total minutes

viewed divided by 60 minutes in length gives us approximately 107 households or screens "attended" a service in its entirety. But in order to get a more precise number for church attendance, you have to take into account multiple people in a household, like a family.

This is where the math starts to get sticky. If you happen to know the average size of a household in your church, you want to use that number next. But most churches probably don't calculate the average household size for their church, which is understandable.

I would advise you to be conservative and use a number between 2 and 2.5 for the average household size of your church, since the average household size for the United States in 2019 was 2.52. For an even more accurate approximation, you can visit indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/all-states/average-household-size#map to find the average household size for your state. I live in Tennessee, so my church would use 2.53 as the household multiplier. Now that we have all of the variables, let's review our equation:

6,400 total minutes viewed / 60 minutes in length x 2.53 average household size = about 270 church attendees.

This equation isn't perfect, but it is probably about as accurate as you're going to get as you try to measure church attendance via Facebook. It is certainly more accurate than counting "views" or "reach" as attendees.

If Christians and church leaders are going to be people of integrity, as we are called to be, we must avoid the temptation to celebrate masses of people "hearing the gospel" who aren't doing anything but scrolling past a video of a church service.

The tools we have used to adapt to doing ministry amid isolation are wonderful, and they will change how many churches do ministry even once we're all able to gather together again. Let's be sure to understand these tools and interpret their statistics with integrity.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Chris Martin is a social media manager for LifeWay Christian Resources and is student ministry director at City Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn.) 

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Yield

May 24

Focal Passages: Philippians 2:1-5, 13-15

No one wants to feel like a doormat. Our egos can scarcely handle feeling cheated or left out. Being in last place is never our ideal. So when we hear words like humility, we might cringe. It might bring about fears of being lesser or being overlooked.

One inkling of being slighted by another person and we are already on the defense. But what if that's not really the definition of humility? What if the Bible paints another picture of humility entirely?

Philippians 2 tells us we should consider others better than ourselves. How do we do this? By putting their interests ahead of our own. This seems countercultural to us. We are so used to being told to look out for and care for ourselves. While

caring for ourselves is not wrong in itself, if we don't also look out for the needs of others, then we are not living as Christ did.

The truth is, no one was more humble than Jesus. While we were still sinners with no thought of trying to please God, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Scripture also says that we should do all things without grumbling and complaining. This has to do with our attitude toward others. Even if we do master the discipline of recognizing the needs of others, if we do it with a bad attitude then it's not worth much at all.

If Jesus can look out for the needs of the world by dying on the cross, then surely He will give us the grace to care for one another in humility.



ANTENESHIA SANDERS
member, The Summit Church, Durham

Focal Passages: Romans 14:1-4, 13-19

Social media has made having a platform accessible to anyone. We can now easily decipher people's opinions from social media posts.

Unfortunately, some people take a single post or comment and then look down upon or think differently of those who don't agree with us.

But there is a different way. While there is space to confront sin in a brother or sister, we do not have to reject people who disagree with us. In fact, scripture tells us to do the opposite. This is what makes the body of Christ so unique.

The church is composed of people from all different kinds of backgrounds, cultures and ethnici-

ties. There are bound to be different perspectives.

We do need to exercise caution, however. Though we have freedom, we do not want to cause another brother or sister in Christ to struggle in their faith. Many are still learning the ways of God and may have strong convictions. If, by speaking about or participating in activities that cause another believer to doubt or turn away from God, the wisest act would be to refrain. If we don't, we are being unloving.

Instead of focusing on petty differences, we are free to focus on what will strengthen another's faith in Christ. We have, by the Holy Spirit, righteousness, peace and joy. This is what the Kingdom of God is all about. With this, we can encourage one another so that we may all be strengthened to live lives that are pleasing to God.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Accepting

May 24

Focal passage: Romans 14:1-12

Imagine my mother's surprise when the grocery store cashier told her that she could not buy a pizza cutter! Mom was a bit confused until the cashier explained it was Sunday, and the blue laws in North Carolina at the time prohibited the sale of anything that might be considered a tool.

Mom could buy the pizza to feed us, just not the tool to cut it!

Some of you will remember the days of the blue laws. Similarly, in our church congregations, someone may question working on Sunday.

Paul's address of Christian liberty in Romans 14 focuses the reader on encouragement and acceptance of other believers in matters of practice. Specifically, he encourages us to stop judging (verses 1-4), honor God (verses 5-8) and remove obstacles

(verses 9-12).

Paul exhorts believers to show charity in matters of practice (this is different than doctrine), to instead focus on how they can honor God in their lives and to not be a stumbling block to others by understanding their personal convictions.

What might be a hang-up for some is not to others and as brothers and sisters we should accept and encourage others in order to facilitate unity. "So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another" (Romans 14:19).

Blue laws often proved to be an unnecessary burden on others, we should not be the same to our fellow believers. Die on the hill of doctrine, show charity in matters of practice.



WOODY WALLS
pastoral intern, Beach Road Baptist Church, Southport

Focal passages: Romans 15:14-21, 30-33

I sat on the edge of the bed in the summer of 1987, a nervous 16-year-old boy. My Bible was in my hand and my friend Gary sat beside me. On that night I shared with Gary the gospel that had changed my life. I had no training, no presentation that I had practiced, and looking back, I often think, I had no clue what I was doing. What I did have was a conviction that Gary was far from God, and I needed to do my best to show him his need.

So, with tears streaming down my face, I gave it my all. That is the first time I remember having any sense of a call to share the gospel with others.

Paul writes to the Roman believers

describing to them that he was seeking to fulfill his calling to the Gentiles and sharing how he saw them as an offering to God when they believed the message he delivered. We also have a calling to share the gospel with others (Matthew 28:19-20).

That night with Gary, I needed to make Jesus the hero of my story.

Gary did not accept Christ that night, and I often wonder what happened to him. I pray that someone else has taken the time to try to reach him. The longer we walk with Christ, the further we get from those for whom Jesus died. Think about that, every day we live as Christians, we are prone to wrap ourselves in a cocoon of other believers.

Let me encourage you, much like Paul desired for himself, to purposefully seek out the lost in your daily lives and partner with others to be more effective in that pursuit.

Reach

May 31

Helps

Continued from page 1

approaches,” Upshaw said.

Upshaw opened the webinars with teaching resources intended to help church leaders understand the current crisis and how it may impact their congregations.

He said there are three measurements that many churches rely on: buildings, bodies and budgets.

“Those three measurements have been knocked out from under us,” Upshaw said, referring to widespread restrictions on public activity and large gatherings implemented by state and local governments in the wake of COVID-19.

“This pandemic is blowing up the notion of a Sunday-only faith,” he said.

“We have to call people back to a purer form of what it means to be a follower of Christ.”

“We have to work together to share ideas and approaches. This pandemic is blowing up the notion of a Sunday-only faith. We have to call people back to a purer form of what it means to be a follower of Christ.”
— Brian Upshaw

Upshaw encouraged attendees to use the current disruption to reconsider how their church understands basic Christian principles such as discipleship and mission.

“Gather your people together, open the Word of God, and ask, ‘If we have blank slate, based on what


we see in the Bible, how should we do church?’”

Marks and Upshaw referred to 12 metrics used by the International Mission Board to determine the “health” of a local church.

They focused on four key areas: mission, leadership, fellowship and giving.

Upshaw urged church leaders to avoid “cookie cutter” ideas for how to move forward during the current crisis. “We need a sanctified imagination,” he said.

“The BSC staff wants to help churches take their next best step in making disciples,” Upshaw told the *Biblical Recorder* in an email. “That step will not necessarily be the same for each church, and that’s why these cohorts are so important.”

Visit vimeo.com/416040918. 

Ramp

Continued from page 1

cluster of COVID-19 cases as of April 27, according to *The Charlotte Observer*.

“I’ve been trying for more than a year to bring her home. Her condition had finally improved enough to be released, but then like so many others there, she tested positive for COVID. She has recovered now and they told me she can be released May 11 if she has a wheelchair ramp in place,” Scudillo said.

Scudillo completed paperwork with the North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) in mid-February, which allowed the ministry to start looking for volunteer ramp builders.

“The Call Center overcame several challenges to meet this need, including funding for materials, the number of needs in the area, and then the pandemic,” says Melanie Beeson, NCBAM’s call center director.

“Many volunteers are at an at-risk age group and are self-isolating. We are careful not to ask individuals to put themselves or those they are serving at an increased risk.”

Robert Leonard, south central regional director for NCBAM, heard of Thomas’ need and thought he could safely and strategically put a building team together so that she could finally come home. Volunteers from Parkwood Baptist Church, Gorieta Baptist Church and Hopewell Baptist Church stepped up to help meet the need.

Although they started their work in the rain, the day soon gave way to blue skies and bright sunshine.

As the ramp began to take shape, Scudillo’s voice began to sound more hopeful.

“It’s so exciting to hear the saws and the hammering and to know it’s actually happening.”

She said May 11 “can’t come soon enough” for her or her mother. “When the pandemic began, visitors were not allowed and the past month has been terrible not being able to see each other. We are able to talk on the phone three or four times a day, but it’s not the same.”

With the ramp completed and the sun out, Scudillo’s spirits lifted even more.


“Oh, I am just so thankful for the people who do this and for the volunteers who made it possible for my mom to be able to leave the nursing home and to be at home. I know she’ll enjoy being out in the sunshine.”

During the pandemic, NCBAM has continued to adapt and improve its existing services, as well as create new ones.

The Call Center continues to receive calls and work with partners to meet needs.

The NCBAM Hope Line (866-578-4673), which opened last summer to help older adults experiencing social isolation and loneliness, now receives more than 100 calls every week. Recent Hope Line callers typically were experiencing anxiety about the pandemic and their sudden loss of social connections.

This “warm line” is manned by NCBAM staff and church volunteers trained in active listening and other evidence-based health coach techniques.

To learn more about NCBAM outreach, visit ncbam.org or call (877) 506-2226. 

CLASSIFIEDS

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Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: advertise@BRnow.org.
- Purchase ads at BRnow.org/Advertise.
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For more information, call the office at (919) 459-5691.

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

Pastor

First Baptist Church of China Grove, North Carolina, a Southern Baptist church with conservative values, is seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor**. With the local mission field being the 4,000 residents of China Grove, we are seeking a pastor to help disciple us in preparation for impacting our community. For additional information and to submit a résumé, please visit <https://www.chinagrovefbcc.com/job-opportunities>.

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.

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

IMB's 175th continues with prayer emphasis, virtual timeline

By ANN LOVELL | IMB

2020 has been a year like no other. COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, has taken lives across the globe and caused untold sickness and suffering. Closed borders limit international travel. “Shelter-in-place” orders are leading to massive unemployment in the U.S. as retail businesses, manufacturers and restaurants shutter their doors.

And yet, the International Mission Board (IMB) continues to see God at work around the world – work Southern Baptists have been privileged to join for 175 years.

As U.S. churches shift their ministries to online gatherings to comply with state directives and governments around the world adjust social distancing measures, IMB missionaries and their national partners also pursue creative ways to share with millions around the world the hope found in Jesus Christ alone.

In Spain, an IMB couple serened their seven-story apartment complex on Easter Sunday with a praise song to Jesus. In Peru, IMB missionaries worked with national partners to distribute food to those impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

In Taiwan, children of IMB workers shared their faith after participating in evangelism training with their parents.

175 days of prayer

May 10 marked the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the Foreign Mission Board, now International Mission Board. Throughout its history, Southern Baptists have maintained an uninterrupted witness among the nations, in spite of famine, war, civil unrest – and in 2020, pandemic.

It is no coincidence that the 175th anniversary of Southern Baptist mission work around the world includes a special emphasis on 175 days of prayer for the nations. The need for prayer in this time of global uncertainty is great, said Gordon Fort, IMB's ambassador to the president,



who leads IMB's prayer team. Southern Baptists are encouraged to join this concerted effort.

“Prayer isn't just important; it's essential,” Fort said. “Prayer is the most underutilized weapon in the Great Commission arsenal. It's the one thing every Christian can do to participate in helping advance the gospel among the nations.”

IMB's “175 days of prayer” began May 11 and will culminate with Southern Baptists' annual Week of Prayer for International Missions Nov. 29-Dec. 6. In preparation, IMB seeks to enlist prayer advocates who will commit to pray for specific IMB requests. Each day will feature one request sent as a push notification from the IMB Pray app, which can be accessed through the Pray Daily newsletter or IMB's social media channels. To register as a prayer advocate, visit imb.org/175pray.

175 years of history

IMB also launched an interactive timeline May 1, featuring missionary vignettes and short videos of IMB's work by decade, such as this video about the work of John Day, an African American appointed by the FMB in 1846 in what became the country of Liberia. The timeline provides a comprehensive view of IMB's history by layering missionary stories and videos with decade milestones in IMB's first-ever attempt to catalog its history in a user-friendly virtual

experience.

In addition, IMB has published a photo book to allow Southern Baptists to join in the celebration of God's faithfulness. This full-color, 200-page book, including photos and stories by IMB photographers and writers through the years, highlights God's movement among the nations and honors those who followed His call to pray, give and go.

Limited quantities of the book are available free of charge with a suggested donation to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Gifts for this purpose are an investment in IMB's continued mission to send missionaries to the nations for the next 175 years.

175 years of cooperation

In launching the campaign in early January, IMB President Paul Chitwood acknowledged the cooperative

effort required by Southern Baptists to focus on achieving the vision of Revelation 7:9 of a “vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language.”


“Since 1888, Southern Baptists have given approximately \$4.7 billion to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering,” Chitwood said.

“Since the introduction of the Cooperative Program in 1925, Southern Baptists have contributed almost \$3.6 billion to international missions through that initiative.”

As a result of this level of cooperative praying, giving, going and sending, Southern Baptists have sent almost 25,000 missionaries since 1845. These missionaries have served in 189 countries and represent 228,000 years of service.

“Each generation of Southern Baptists has answered the call to cooperative missions and given their prayers and support to their IMB missionaries,” Chitwood said.

“Today, those missionaries continue to journey into difficult and spiritually impoverished places on earth to sow seeds of love and truth and enable the lost to know the saving grace of Jesus.”

Chitwood added, “The stories of our past should propel us forward in our commitment to His work with a great sense of urgency. As we look back on 175 years of witness among the nations, may we be inspired and challenged like never before to pray, give, go and send.” 

Mission:Dignity Sunday moves to Aug. 30

GuideStone Financial Resources

Mission:Dignity® Sunday, set each year by the Southern Baptist Convention for the fourth Sunday in June, is moving for 2020 only to the last Sunday in August (Aug. 30) due

to lingering effects of COVID-19.

The emphasis allows churches to collect an offering that provides financial assistance to retired Southern Baptist ministers, workers and their widows near the poverty line.

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