



# BIBLICAL RECORDER

June 13, 2020 • VOLUME 186 NO. 12 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org)



## Annual meeting to focus on ‘God’s Great Hope’

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

In a year marked by a pandemic, racial tensions, political unrest and more, people are searching for hope, restoration and redemption. Against the backdrop of current world events, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) annual meeting this November will focus on “God’s Great Hope” based upon Romans 15:13.

“Based on everything going on in the world, ‘God’s Great Hope’ is a timely and appropriate theme for the coming year,” said Jeff Maynard, pastor of First Baptist Church of Brevard. “We serve a God who the Apostle Paul identifies as a God of hope. Our desire is to communicate that hope to others.”

Maynard serves as the chairman of the state convention’s Committee on Convention Meetings, which selects the annual meeting theme and helps set the agenda and schedule.

This year’s annual meeting is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 9-10, at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C.

Highlights of this year’s meeting include messages by longtime missionary Sam James, BSC President Steve Scoggins and BSC Executive Director-Treasurer Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

James, who served more than 50 years as a missionary with the International Mission Board, will deliver the annual convention sermon on Tuesday evening, Nov. 10. James served in Southeast Asia, East Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Along with his wife, Rachel, and their children, James served in Vietnam from the early 1960s until the fall of Saigon in 1975. He also

See Meeting page 4

## SBC churches engage communities amid protests



Faith leaders organized a peaceful protest in Charlotte, N.C., on May 31. Pastors and members of churches in the Metrolina Baptist Association participated. (Submitted photo)

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Assistant Editor

As protests over issues of police brutality and unequal justice continue across the United States and extend to other countries, Southern Baptist congregations are responding in various ways.

“I am heartbroken at what happened in Minneapolis to George Floyd,” said Robert Hefner, pastor of Pleasant Garden Baptist Church. “I’m heartbroken by the tension and the violent destruction that’s come as a result of that.”

Hefner, along with other Pleasant Garden staff and members, helped business owners in Greensboro, N.C., clean up damage on Sunday from the previous night’s looting and vandalism.

*The Greensboro News & Record* reported individuals began throwing rocks at police cars and storefronts after two separate peaceful protests on

Saturday. A Pleasant Garden member’s relative owned one of the vandalized shops.

Hefner said there was a diverse group of volunteers and bystanders present, some of whom Pleasant Garden members talked to.

He said they “had a chance to shine a light on Jesus’ love and goodness” and sensed a spirit of “love for our city, love for the people of our city.”

He said he hopes the church “can be a sliver” of helping people see that “the only fix is Jesus.”

The same day, Metrolina Baptist Association executive director Bob Lowman marched with several other Metrolina pastors and church members in a protest organized by Charlotte faith leaders.

“I’d never been to a rally or protest like that before, but I believed it was time to do that,” he said, after an African-American pastor asked him

See Protests page 6

## Southern Baptists experience historic drop in membership

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

A growing number of Southern Baptist churches are home to a shrinking number of Southern Baptists.

Total membership in the Southern Baptist Convention fell almost 2% to 14,525,579 from 2018 to 2019, according to the Annual Church Profile compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in coop-

eration with Baptist state conventions. The decline of 287,655 members is the largest single year drop in more than 100 years.

The number of churches grew slightly to 47,530, an increase of 74 from 2018. However, the number of church-type missions fell by 477 to bring the overall number of SBC congregations down to 51,138 in 2019.

See Drop page 8

## WHAT’S INSIDE

Darrick Smith: How the church can fight for unity that honors God .....	2
Milton Hollifield: Pray, lament, listen and act for racial justice .....	3
NOBTS president reflects on first year, opportunities .....	4



# Look for the leaders

I have watched more online videos than I can count in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. Pain, grief, anger and fear are washing over our society, creating waves of unrest that flood our city streets.

The prevalence of smartphones has given us innumerable first-hand accounts in high-definition video, including the one capturing Floyd's last moments on earth.

But there's one theme among the myriad of images that has gripped my heart. It's the strength displayed by many leaders in the African-American Christian community.

I hear impassioned pleas for justice, emotional laments for lost lives and convictional calls for unity. And

those displays of courage and compassion are not new.

"We rejoice in our sufferings," the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:4, "knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope."

Centuries of unjust and unfair treatment have broken down Black Christian churches in America, but God has built them up. He is working among them, producing perseverance, integrity and a deep dependence on God. Those are the character qualities we need from our leaders. Those are the virtues that will help our churches proclaim the whole counsel of God and take a stand as bold witnesses in the face of injustice.



**SETH BROWN**  
BR Executive Editor

If we are sincere about shoring up racial equity among Southern Baptists, we need more non-white leaders. I'm not advocating for tokenism or a superficial form of affirmative action. I'm calling for a recognition of authentic leadership, the kind that leads to a diverse and unified convention.

Look around. Times of difficulty bring out the best in good leaders, and I see courage, character and competence on display.

Southern Baptists, if we want to see change happen in our society, we must start within our own ranks. Our churches and communities need the God-wrought convictions and gifts demonstrated among non-white leaders.

As you watch these events unfold, do you see what I see? Diverse leadership is an important step forward.

## How the church can fight for unity that honors God

BSC Communications

*"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." – John 17:20-23 (NIV)*

It is no question that the past few weeks have brought much sorrow, anger, confusion and even division amongst Christians as we have watched the death of two African Americans caught on video – the video that captured Ahmaud Arbery's death while jogging in Georgia and the video that captured the death of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.

During the week that the video was released of George Floyd's death, another video surfaced – the Amy Cooper video. Amy Cooper was caught on video in Central Park telling an African-American man that she was going to call the cops on him and tell them that an African-American man was harassing her. She proceeds, and then the video ends.

These three incidents within a month's timespan may seem like three isolated events having nothing to do with one another. But what if we paused for a moment and asked ourselves this – "What if God is using the racial injustices and deep rooted racism of our country to get the church's attention? What if God is using the events in the world to wake up the church and help them see that they have a problem?"

Could it be that God is cleansing and healing the church through the events taking place in our country? There is no denying that these events have brought many controversial conversations and much division in the body of Christ.

The past month has been one of the most emotionally draining and frustrating months I've had in a while as I've had to have many conversations on these issues. From text messages and Zoom calls to socially distant conversations and phone calls.

They have not been easy, as everyone has had their own opinions. Each person is approaching the conversation with their personal experiences, fears, hurt and a variety of worldviews, which makes the conversations frustrating, challenging, painful and even hopeless. Can we ever attain unity in the body if we never see things the same way?

Satan seeks to thwart the plans of God and divide the church (John 10:10, 1 Peter 5:8) but Christ died on the cross to defeat Satan's power and authority in our lives and to unite us as one. Jesus prayed for that oneness (John 17:13-23), Christ died for that oneness (Ephesians 2:14-18) and Paul reminds us of our oneness – one body; one Spirit; one hope, Lord, faith, baptism; and one God and Father of all, over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:5-6). At the foot of the cross we all stand as guilty, condemned sinners but at the foot of that same

See Unity page 9



**DARRICK SMITH**  
Guest Column



**BIBLICAL  
RECORDER**

(ISSN 0279-8182)

Volume 186 No. 12

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

[BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org)

**Seth Brown**, Executive Editor  
[editor@brnow.org](mailto:editor@brnow.org)

**Dianna L. Cagle**, Assistant Editor  
(919) 459-5698; [dianna@brnow.org](mailto:dianna@brnow.org)

**Liz Tablazon**, Assistant Editor  
(919) 459-5697; [liz@brnow.org](mailto:liz@brnow.org)

**Alison McKinney**, Business and Advertising Manager  
(919) 459-5691; [alison@brnow.org](mailto:alison@brnow.org)

**Carly Conley**, Freelance Graphic Designer

News Journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina  
Founded 1833 by Thomas Meredith

**Dee Dee Vogt**  
Editorial Aide  
**Grace Stallings**  
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. Callhoun; 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

### Subscriptions

• Individual subscriptions, \$19.99 (one year) or \$2 per month

• Group (5+) \$14.99

• Bulk (10+) \$12.99

• Digital rates: \$7.99 (one year).

Payable in advance. N.C. sales tax will be added.

### Publication

Published biweekly on Saturdays with the exception of no issue at the end of December, by the Biblical Recorder, 205 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511, as authorized by the Baptist State Convention in annual session at Winston-Salem, November 21-23, 1939. Periodicals postage paid at Raleigh, NC 27676.

### Postmaster

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

# Pray, lament, listen and act for racial justice

BSC Communications

Last month, two horrific videos surfaced that captured the tragic and senseless murders of two members of the African-American community here in America.

The first showed 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery being shot dead in the middle of the road on the outskirts of a south Georgia town. The second showed a police officer press his knee into the neck of 46-year-old George Floyd for nearly nine minutes while Floyd cried out for help with his face pinned to a Minneapolis street. Floyd was pronounced dead when he arrived at a local hospital, and his death was later ruled a homicide.

As I watched this sickening video, I felt such strong emotion, grief and sadness. I found myself saying out loud, “what is it going to take” to stop incidents like these from happening in our country?

I really believe that I, like many people, would have risked my own life to rush to George Floyd’s aid if those moments could be relived, but they are gone and cannot be recalled. However, we can make a positive difference in the future for all people living in America.

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee, called this incident in Minneapolis “another horrendous act of racial injustice.” He also reminded us that we as the people of God are called to respond and ask God to provide us with His path to healing in our nation.

The reality is that racial discrimination is still present among us, and racism is a gospel issue. Every human being is made in the image of God, and Christ came and died to reconcile all people to

Himself so that we might find unity in the gospel. In Ephesians 2, Paul discusses how Christ’s death broke down the walls of hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.  
BSC executive  
director-treasurer

How can Christ followers not apply this passage to our current times and work to tear down the cultural and racial walls that still divide us today?

These incidents have sent shock and outrage across our country. In the aftermath, there were many peaceful protests – which is a citizen’s legal right in this nation – by large numbers of both white and black people along with other ethnic groups calling for justice.

Unfortunately, and sadly, the misguided actions of a comparatively few protesters overshadowed what was intended to be calm, legal assemblies. It is wrong to accuse peaceful protesters for being responsible for the vandalism, destruction and robbery that has occurred by a small number of individuals, just as it is also wrong to hold all law enforcement officers responsible for the misguided actions of a few who are guilty of abuse.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8 that the entire creation is groaning as we await our ultimate redemption, which will occur at the end of the age. In the present, what can we do to combat the hideous sin of racism?

First, we must pray. Pray for justice to be served in these and other instances. Pray that systemic racism would be rooted out of our society. Pray for our government officials and law enforcement officers. Ask God to reveal any sense of pride or racism in our own lives so we can repent of it and abandon it.

Second, we should lament for people who are grieving for family and friends who have been and

## IN FOCUS A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

still are victims of senseless acts of racial prejudice. God’s Word calls us to “rejoice with those who rejoice” and “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

Third, we should listen to others. In recent days, I have been blessed to talk with some of my African-American colleagues in ministry and brothers in Christ. I have grieved with them and listened as they shared their concern for people they love and shepherd.

These brothers have been champions for peace in working with other pastors as they have been leading and pleading with community residents to protest peacefully and abstain from violent and destructive behavior even though they are sometimes sinned against and mistreated as if they are not equal as American citizens and members of the household of Christ.

Finally, we should take action. We should all work to love and value those who are marginalized by combating racism and opposing abuses of power that allow it to continue. I challenge you to take a stand and speak up against these ungodly attitudes and sinful behaviors.

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” – Micah 6:8 (NKJV).

(EDITOR’S NOTE: Milton A. Hollifield Jr. was among the Southern Baptist Convention leaders and state convention executives who signed a statement grieving the death of George Floyd and calling for the end of “racial inequity in the distribution of justice in our country.”)

## SBC Advance highlights racial healing, missions and cooperative giving

By DIANA CHANDLER | Baptist Press

Amid unprecedented challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as racial unrest and tumult after the recent death of an African American man in police custody, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) offered a healing balm June 2 with SBC Advance.

The two-hour online event was not intended to replace the 2020 SBC Annual Meeting (originally scheduled June 9-10 in Orlando, but canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic), but instead to provide Southern Baptists the opportunity to hear how God has continued to work through the SBC.

SBC Advance highlighted Southern Baptist achievements in the Great Commission, the Cooperative Program, religious liberty, seminary education, diversity, disaster relief and missions at home and abroad. Entity leaders, pastors, state convention and Woman’s Missionary Union executives joined to spotlight Southern Baptist work.

“Our goal with SBC Advance is to inform you of all that is happening in the SBC, and inspire you to continue to join us in this work,” said Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee. “When COVID-19 began to impact large gatherings across our country, the Executive Committee began the constitutional

process to cancel the 2020 Annual Meeting with the SBC officers and with the executive heads of the convention boards and institutions.”

In introductory remarks, Floyd addressed racism and the current unrest roiling the nation since the May 25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. He called it “another horrendous act of racial injustice.”

“To our African American pastors and churches across America: We stand with you, and we mourn with you,” Floyd said. “This is a moment when church after church and pastor after pastor must stand for righteousness and holiness. One church at a time, one town at a time, one city at a time, must look into the mirror and

see in complete reality where we are individually and collectively.

“We, the churches in America, are the ones that must be faithful to call upon God to come and to give us His guidance and provide His pathway to healing in our nation,” Floyd said. “We are the ones that must answer this moment.”

### SBC President Greear

SBC President J.D. Greear encouraged Southern Baptists to persevere during the national turbulence. He referenced God’s growth of the early Christian church, as recorded in the book of Acts, as evidence of God’s faithfulness.

See Advance page 5



# NOBTS president reflects on first year, opportunities, apologetics

By JOSHUA OWENS | Southern Baptist *TEXAN*

When Jamie Dew and his family arrived last summer in New Orleans to lead the Southern Baptist's seminary there, people told them, "If you love the city it will love you back." Following a busy first year full of both successes and challenges, Dew said that's true not only of his adopted city but the seminary as well.

Dew, 43, who on June 5 marked the 1-year anniversary of his election as the ninth president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), recently spoke with the *TEXAN* about the year behind and what lies ahead.

## 'If you can do ministry here, you can do it anywhere'

Situated amid the density and diversity of New Orleans, NOBTS and Leavell College offer students immediate practical application for their theological education, Dew said. "This city has brokenness," he said.

"It has opportunity. It has poverty. It has wealth. It has Southern Baptists. It has a lot of Catholics. It has a lot of Hindus – you fill in the blank. It's got culture, it's got music, it's got food."

Dew points to unity among local churches and the city's designation by the North American Mission Board as a Send City as two factors contributing to NOBTS' ability to prepare students for urban ministry. "There's so much of it that happens down here," he said. "There's just a lot of natural synergy there for the denomination between our entities."

With the seminary's historic role as "a very strong missions school" and the city's cultural diversity, Dew plans to make international missions another priority.

Dew, who came to NOBTS from Southeastern Seminary, recalled from his time there as professor and administrator "watching hundreds and hundreds of students come, prepare and go – and that's kind of in my DNA now." A philosopher by training, Dew credits a reemphasis in his own life from intellectual pursuits to missions "because of my time at Southeastern."

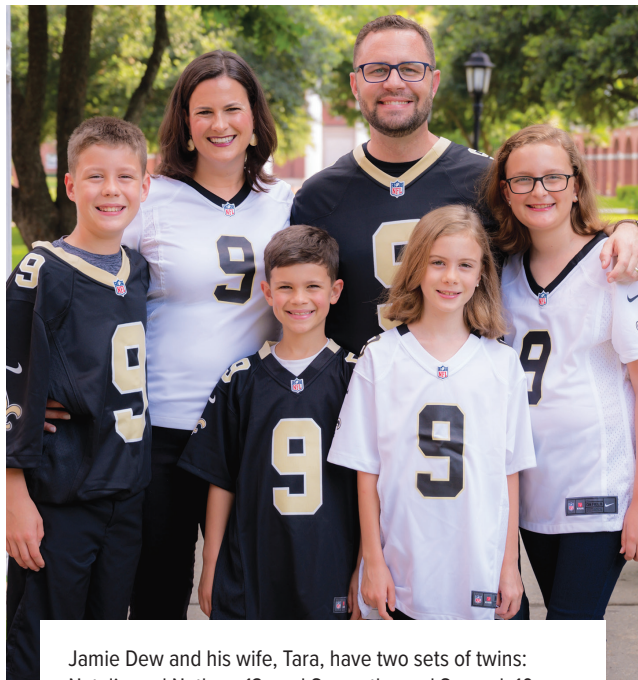
Noting "we've got to do our part" among the six Southern Baptist seminaries, Dew hopes to reemphasize missions at the institutional level by creatively thinking through ways to "incorporate it more strongly into the curriculum and life experiences of students," potentially through faculty hires and mission trips.

## 'If you love the city, it will love you back'

Like so many far away places missionaries call home, New Orleans for all its rough edges is generous. Dew called it a "deep grace" for him and his family "to be here in this city with these people on this campus."

He and his wife, Tara, with their two sets of twins – Natalie and Nathan, 13; and Samantha and Samuel, 10 – have experienced what Dew called "a very natural somewhat instinctual affection and desire for these people."

"We threw ourselves into it," Dew said. When



Jamie Dew and his wife, Tara, have two sets of twins: Natalie and Nathan, 13; and Samantha and Samuel, 10. (NOBTS photo)

they first arrived, the Dews began visiting and networking with local churches. Their first month and a half in New Orleans the Dews "were on the road every single weekend at a new church" and one weekend the kids asked him, "Dad, seriously, can we go back to the same church at least twice?"

They hopped into life on campus and life in the city. "We did everything," Dew said, "basketball games and festivals, and we did 11 or 12 Mardi Gras

parades."

"We just jumped in and those folks were right – you love the city, it loves you back."

"The same has been true of this campus and these students and this faculty," Dew said. Along the way, they discovered "the best coffee in the city" – right on campus, at Café New Orleans.

Amid the fast-paced change that comes with the job, Dew said he guards family time in daily rhythms.

"Unless there is a crisis of some kind, when I go home I'm home," he said. "I'm not on my computer."

"I'm having dinner with my kids, I'm finding out about their day and [I] let them pepper me with questions about my day. We will go for a family walk, watch a movie or watch a little Dude Perfect on YouTube. We'll do something as a family and then when we put them to bed, Tara and I have some time together, and then I'll go to sleep and I'll come back and I'll work in the morning."

"My oldest twins are 13 and my youngest twins are 10," Dew said. "I've only got five more years with my oldest kids, and so when I go home I protect that time like sacred terrain."

But while the life of the president's family is busy with its own "joys" and "challenges," Dew added, "We all just look back, even our 10-year-olds, and just think, 'Wow, we're so glad we're here.'"

## 'If Christianity is true, then it's good'

Dew was elected to NOBTS last June with one

See NOBTS page 9

## Meeting Continued from page 1

served extensively in Vietnam from 1991-2017.

Scoggins, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville, will deliver the annual president's address on Tuesday morning, Nov. 10. Scoggins plans to share a message of hope from Romans 15:13, which is the meeting's theme verse. Romans 15:13 says, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (ESV).

In the opening session on Monday evening, Nov. 9, Hollifield will deliver his final address and report as executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Earlier this year, Hollifield announced his plans to retire effective Feb. 28, 2021. He has served as the state convention's top executive since 2006.


The meeting will also include business sessions, officer elections, exhibits, breakout sessions and more.

N.C. Baptists are also invited to join in a 30-day prayer emphasis during the month of October leading up to the annual meeting. Chris Schofield, director of the BSC's Office of Prayer for Evangelization and Spiritual Awakening, is developing a devotional prayer guide for individuals to use during



the prayer emphasis that aligns with the meeting theme. Prayer guides will be available by the early fall.

More information about this year's annual meeting, including hotel and travel information, is available online at [ncannualmeeting.org](http://ncannualmeeting.org).

The website will be updated with additional information such as the complete schedule, the proposed 2021 Cooperative Program budget, breakout session descriptions and more leading up to the annual meeting. 



# Advance

Continued from page 3

“What our enemy means for evil, God turns to good,” Greear said. “God is sovereignly using this moment for the advance of the mission.”

Greear said distress has historically provided fertile ground for the gospel, as great uncertainty has led to unbelievable expansion in the life of the church.

“Anybody can be merciful and anybody can be generous when times are abundant, but it’s when mercy costs you something that we’re able to best put the gospel on display,” Greear said, “and that’s what kind of moment we are in.”

Greear delivered a full presidential address June 9 on Facebook Live.

## State conventions

The South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) showcased local and national missions fueled by the Cooperative Program as an example of gospel outreaches conducted by 41 Southern Baptist state conventions.

The SCBC helped various churches survive the economic downturn of COVID-19 and worked to rebuild communities damaged by tornadoes. Through financial gifts, the SCBS helped state conventions in New York and New England reach communities impacted by the coronavirus.

“Our ability to respond is proof that our way of doing ministry

through the Cooperative Program really works,” said Gary Hollingsworth, the SCBC’s executive director-treasurer.

“There are [40] other state conventions working together to reach their state, our nation and the world with the gospel.

“Our cooperation is driven by the 7 billion lost people around the world, with 2 billion of those having never heard the name of Jesus one time. More than 300 million Americans and 3.6 million South Carolinians are spiritually lost.”

## Entities, WMU

The SBC Advance included reports from International Mission Board President Paul Chitwood, North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell, GuideStone Financial Resources President O.S. Hawkins, LifeWay Christian Resources President Ben Mandrell and Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Russell D. Moore. Woman’s Missionary Union Executive Director/Treasurer Sandy Wisdom-Martin and President Linda Cooper also gave a report.

Presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries updated Southern Baptists on their work as well. Although the COVID-19 pandemic forced alterations, the consensus was

that the ongoing work of theological education has not been disrupted.

“Even in this moment of unprecedented challenges, God is still doing an extraordinary work at your Cooperative Program-funded seminary in Fort Worth, Texas,” said Adam W. Greenway, president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, expressing a sentiment that was echoed by his five peers.

## SBC EC diversity

In his first year as president of the SBC EC, Floyd tapped as leaders Willie McLaurin, SBC EC vice president for Great Commission relations and mobilization; Julio Arriola, SBC EC executive director of Hispanic relations and mobilization; and Peter Yanes, SBC EC executive director for Asian American relations and mobilization.

The three spoke of their passion to mobilize a diversity of Southern Baptists in fulfilling the Great Commission.

“The Southern Baptist Convention is the most racially and ethnically diverse convention of Great Commission people who have gathered together,” McLaurin said. Of about 47,500 Southern Baptist churches, he noted, “about 23% are racially and ethnically diverse.”

Serving a growing Hispanic population in the U.S., about 3,500 Southern Baptists churches have majority Hispanic congregations. Arriola encouraged Hispanic Southern Baptists in missions, church planting and gospel preaching.

“Our focus is to do this from the Hispanic community where we have the opportunity to present the need,” Arriola said, “and present the different options for them to get ready to reach every single person in America.”

Yanes has the opportunity to mobilize an Asian American population comprising 20 languages and currently served by eight Southern Baptist fellowships. Southern Baptist

Asian American congregations number about 2,000 and comprise about 170,000 members.

“We may be sharing similar cultures with diverse backgrounds, but it’s very challenging because coming together ... we need to speak in a common language, if you may, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ,” Yanes said. “We share the same purpose, we share our common goals and we share what we intend to do together and collectively, and that is being faithful to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.”

## Frank Williams interview

Floyd interviewed New York pastor Frank Williams, who shared the heartbreak of his wife, children and many congregational members contracting COVID-19.

Williams pastors Bronx Baptist Church and Wake Eden Community Baptist Church in the Bronx, which has suffered as a COVID-19 hotspot. Williams recounted the experience of pastoring his flocks as longtime deacon Jeremiah Simpson died from the illness.

“It has been very challenging, especially for Deacon Simpson’s home going service,” Williams said. “The emotions that I experienced were unlike any that I’ve experienced before. The same day that I conducted Deacon Simpson’s funeral was the same afternoon I had to take my wife to the emergency room. She was in so much pain, my wife, she was literally sitting in the car during the service in pain, because I had to get her to the emergency room right after the funeral service was done.”

Williams also told of a church member who lost her husband and a brother, and of another who lost 11 relatives.

Floyd led Southern Baptists in praying for Williams and many other pastors across the nation impacted by the pandemic.

SBC Advance is available at [SBCAdvance.net](http://SBCAdvance.net). 

## Ridgecrest to host family getaways

By AARON WILSON | LifeWay Christian Resources


Families who have grown restless during nationwide shelter-at-home orders will have an opportunity to stretch their legs this summer by registering for a Family Getaway at Ridgecrest Conference Center and Summer Camps.

The Family Getaway experience replaces traditional Ridgecrest summer camp programming for individual campers. The all-inclusive Family Getaway experience will include activities such as horseback rides, a high-challenge course, mountain biking, canoeing, crafts and more.

“Once it became clear our traditional summer camp experience would not be possible [due to COVID-19 guidelines], our goal has been to provide an experience that allows as many families to be here as pos-

sible,” said Ron Springs, director of Ridgecrest Summer Camps.

While hosting families, Ridgecrest will follow all North Carolina and Buncombe County COVID-19 guidelines. There will be multiple cleanings of common areas each day along with regular cleaning of equipment used during camp activities. Additionally, Ridgecrest will observe a 24-hour waiting period after a family leaves a cabin or hotel room before it’s cleaned and ready to use.

Families can get more details and register at [RidgecrestConferenceCenter.com](http://RidgecrestConferenceCenter.com) for Family Getaway reservations beginning June 17 and extending through Aug. 2. There is a three-night minimum, but families can choose to stay for any additional number of days. Families who book for six nights will get the seventh night free. 



**65+? Lonely? Need to talk?**  
NCBAM's Hope Line is here for you!  
**866-578-4673**  
NORTH CAROLINA BAPTIST AGING MINISTRY



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



# AROUND THE STATE

## Obituary

**RAY KEITH HODGE**, 94, died May 5 at Wake Med Hospital in Raleigh.

After graduating from Kenly High School in 1944, Ray enlisted in the Army Air Corps, serving as a B-24 Armorer until his discharge on July 2, 1946.

He attended Mars Hill College (now university) on the GI Bill, and then transferred to Wake Forest College (now university), where he graduated in 1950 with a bachelor of science.

He earned his master of divinity (1955) and master of theology (1964) degrees from Southeastern Seminary.

He was a member of First Baptist Church, Smithfield, for 30 years.

Hodge was a minister for six decades.

While still in school, he was the pastor of Dexter Baptist Church, Oxford, N.C., and Poplar Creek Baptist, Henderson, N.C., and began serving Youngsville Baptist Church the next year, and continued to serve there for several years. From 1955-'58, he worked for Southeastern Seminary as the associate director of the extension department.

In full-time ministry, Ray served as pastor of Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh from 1958-'60, followed by Yates Baptist Church, Durham from 1960-'73. He then served at First Baptist Church, Kinston, from 1973-'90.

After retirement from full-time ministry, he served as interim pastor at nine Baptist churches in Ahoskie,

Morehead City, Cary, Farmville, Goldsboro and Wilson.

Hodge served in the armed forces for 33 years, achieving the rank of corporal during WWII. From 1955-'82, he served in the N.C. National Guard as a chaplain, serving his soldiers in many locations. During that time, he was selected as the first N.C. State Chaplain, serving in that position from 1976-'82.

From 1982-'86, he served in the U.S. Army Reserve as Deputy Staff Chaplain for Personnel, Forces Command. Ray completed Command and General Staff College, and he was a student in War College at the time of his retirement as a Colonel.

He served on the *Biblical Recorder* board of directors, wrote Sunday School commentaries for almost 20

years and was president of the Baptist State Convention of N.C. board.

He proposed the logo that the Southern Baptist Convention continues to use.

He served as a trustee at both Wake Forest University and Meredith College and on the board of ministers at Campbell University.

In retirement, Hodge moved back to Johnston County. He became involved in the community, teaching at Johnston Community College and serving as a hospice chaplain.

He is survived by his two daughters and a son, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Memorials to: The "Ray and Joyce Hodge Scholarship," The Divinity School, Campbell University, PO Drawer 4050, Buies Creek, NC 27506.



Volunteers board up storefronts in downtown Greensboro, N.C., on May 31 after some individuals threw rocks and vandalized shops. (Submitted photo)

## Protests Continued from page 1

to participate. Lowman described the event as calm and peaceful and marked by songs, prayer and stories from pastors and speakers sharing their perspectives. It was repeated that the rally was a first step, and participants wanted to "continue to stay connected and stay active together, to encourage action, encourage justice."

On Wednesday, a weekly Zoom call with Metrolina pastors that started in March because of COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, had a different tone, Lowman said. "Today's was very different ... today's a listening day."

He hopes to facilitate similar conversations with more pastors on a regular basis. "For too long, I've glossed over that need. I've been more vocal on abortion, yes, but not on racial injustice. That's changing now," Lowman said. "My hope is that others will join me in that."

### New York

On June 2, James Roberson, lead pastor of Bridge Church NYC, organized a prayerful protest in Brooklyn with Justin Mattera, pastor of Zion Church.

Paul Manansala, church planter at Crossroad Community Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, joined the Brooklyn march after participating in another community-organized protest in Jersey City. He went with a group

**"It took this level of death and undeniable clarity of injustice for guys like me to go out and protest. There's a humility that's required by all Christians catching up."**  
— Paul Manansala


of friends – pastors from different ethnicities and denominations who wished to listen, support and be with their neighbors.


Manansala described the protest as organized, peaceful and prayerful, where the hurt and anger were clearly felt but "processed through the gospel."

Walking alongside African American brothers and sisters who have been crying for justice for decades will require endurance, not a seminar

or a class, he said, reflecting on the event.

"It took this level of death and undeniable clarity of injustice for guys like me to go out and protest. There's a humility that's required by all Christians catching up."


Manansala said he told his congregation, largely made up of non-black, multigenerational immigrant families, "We live in Jersey City. So if you want to love your neighbor, you need to feel what they feel." 




## FRUITLAND BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

ENROLL NOW FOR NEW QUARTER ON JULY 7, 2020

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



 **VA BENEFITS AVAILABLE**  
**POST-9/11 GI BILL**

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



# SBC trustee system stable in spite of annual meeting cancellation

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

If history is any indication, the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) trustee system will continue without a snag despite the cancellation of the 2020 annual meeting due to COVID-19. The last annual meeting cancellations, during World War II, were followed by a boom of evangelism and discipleship resourced by the convention’s entities.

Still, the unique circumstances this year create some potential challenges for a convention reliant on annual trustee elections.

Across the 12 SBC entities (including the Executive Committee), the terms of 129 trustees are scheduled to expire in 2020, according to last year’s SBC Annual.

Typically, the convention would elect Southern Baptists to fill those slots based on nominations from the SBC Committee on Nominations. This year, that isn’t possible. Until the convention can convene, how to handle the open trustee slots is defined by a combination of SBC governing documents, entity charters and state laws where each entity is headquartered.

“We have a rotating system” of entity trustees, SBC Recording Secretary John Yeats said. “As a result, missing a year of being able to elect brand new trustees as a convention shouldn’t hinder us.”

The *TEXAN* queried the trustee chairs of all SBC entities to see how each board is handling its vacancies created by members rotating off this year.

Based on applicable state laws and entity charter provisions, current trustees of 10 entities remain

in office until their successors are elected – even if their terms have expired. Some of those trustees are extending their first terms and likely will be elected to second terms at the 2021 SBC annual meeting in Nashville. Others already have completed two terms and will be replaced next year.

The other two entities – GuideStone Financial Resources and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary – have charters that require trustees to rotate off the board when their terms end, even if no successor has been elected.

Both entities’ board chairs said trustees plan to make interim appointments to fill vacant slots until the 2021 SBC annual meeting.

The charters of all but three entities – the Executive Committee (EC), the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board – permit interim trustee appointments by the board when a position is vacant. Those interim appointees serve until the next SBC annual meeting. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is the only entity to exercise that option so far, appointing Phil Hanberry of Mississippi in April to fill the unexpired term of a trustee who resigned.

One intriguing possibility for a missed meeting involves the Executive Committee (EC). SBC policy analysts debate whether the convention’s bylaws permit the EC to elect entity trustees on the convention’s behalf. SBC attorney Jim Guenther said “it is clear the Executive Committee could not elect trustees of some of the entities of the convention because of the wording of their charters.” But even for entities where it might be permissible, EC chairman Mike Stone gave

no indication the committee will seek to elect trustees.

In general, the anticipated result of this year’s trustee board actions, Stone said, is that “current trustees remain in place until June 2021.”

Despite well-defined policies for missed annual meetings, some challenges remain.

Smaller states and defined territories will lose representation on some boards temporarily if their lone representative is forced to rotate off without an immediate replacement. At GuideStone, for instance, the sole representatives from California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana and Maryland/Delaware/the District of Columbia all are slated to rotate off the board this month.

Southern’s lone trustee from Ohio likewise rotates off the board this month.

Another potential concern is that SBC messengers won’t have an opportunity this year to amend the list of nominees to trustee boards. Messengers exercised that prerogative in 2018, when they granted Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission trustee Dan Anderson a second term despite the Committee on Nominations’ recommendation to fill his slot with someone else.

In the absence of an annual meeting, it is especially important that trustees recall their accountability to the convention and that the convention recalls its dependence on the trustee system, said Jimmy Draper, president emeritus of LifeWay Christian Resources and a former SBC president.

Southern Baptists must not “become distanced from the trustees,” Draper said.

Trustees must not “become isolated on their own, working with the entities, and lose their sense of responsibility to the convention.”

Yet Southern Baptists need not worry about a year of missed trustee elections, Draper said, “because we are proceeding based on what we are allowed to do.”

History suggests Southern Baptists are up to the challenge.

Since the SBC began meeting annually in 1866, it had previously only missed two scheduled meetings (due to World War II reductions of available food and lodging, among other factors). In each instance, the SBC Annual records that trustees extended their service for an additional year, with vacancies filled temporarily by the various boards.

Yeats said those missed annual meetings were followed by a boom of “new post-war, born-again disciples for Christ and a passion for the church to permeate culture with a biblical worldview.”

Between 1945 and 1962, membership in Southern Baptist churches increased 74% to 10.2 million and annual gifts through the Cooperative Program increased 411% to \$53.5 million, according to Albert McClellan’s history of the Executive Committee.

Such historical realities remind Southern Baptists, Yeats said, that the trustee system can be a powerful tool for facilitating gospel witness, even when annual elections prove impossible.

“In some ways,” Yeats said, “the [coronavirus] pandemic has set Southern Baptists free to make the gospel above all in every context.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – David Roach is a writer in Nashville.) 

## Police shoot, arrest man across from service


*Biblical Recorder*

A worship service at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Waxhaw, N.C., ended early after a disturbance by a neighbor led to a police-involved shooting.

Pastor Rich Myers told the *Biblical Recorder* the church bears “no ill will” toward their neighbor.

Police were called when Christopher Eugene Ross, 54, was reportedly yelling obscenities across the road from the church May 24 during

the congregation’s outdoor drive-up service, which was interrupted when Ross allegedly began yelling.

It took three deputies to arrest Ross, who was the recipient of a stun gun and two gun shot wounds during the confrontation. His wounds were not life threatening. He was hospitalized and released. Ross faces charges of disorderly conduct for interfering with the service, two counts of assault with a deadly weapon against law enforcement officers and resisting, delaying and obstructing an officer. 

*Annual*  
**HISTORICAL WRITING / MULTI-MEDIA  
COMPETITION**

**\$500 AWARDED TO WINNERS**  
recognized at BSCNC Annual meeting in November

**CATEGORIES:**

- Church History - Written and or Multimedia
- Association History
- Biography, Autobiography, Memoirs and Personal Reflection

Entries should be released in 2018 or 2019. All entries become property of the Baptist State Convention.

Mail 2 copies to:  
Baptist State Convention, Historical Committee  
PO Box 1107  
Cary, NC 27512-1107

The Deadline for submission is July 31, 2019  
Contact Penny Cozadd at  
(800) 395-5102, ext. 5618  
or pcozadd@ncbaptist.org



# Conway pastor dies from apparent suicide amid investigation

By **SETH BROWN** | *BR* Executive Editor

North Carolina pastor Jayson Rowe died by apparent suicide June 2, according to the Conway Police Department (CPD). Law enforcement officers were investigating an allegation of criminal sexual misconduct against Rowe when they received a call about his death, a spokesperson told the *Biblical Recorder*.

Officers responded to the call immediately and attempted resuscitation, CPD said. The medical examination and investigation reports are forthcoming. Rowe, 40, had been the pastor of Conway Baptist Church since 2018. He is survived by his wife, Heather, and three sons, along with his mother, Linda. Conway's deacon board chairman, Tom Collins, said the church is focused on ministering to the Rowe family. Collins confirmed that a church member who is a minor recently brought forward a credible allegation of "inappropriate contact" committed by Rowe.

Rowe was a former staff member and student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

(SEBTS), where he lived in campus housing for five years. The school sent an email to residents who lived in the same apartment complexes as Rowe from 2014-2018. The message, signed by SEBTS president Danny Akin, informed more than 800 current and former students about the allegation against Rowe and encouraged them to report any alleged inappropriate behavior to an independent firm working with the seminary.


Southeastern said it will provide further resources to help parents talk to their children about any potential concerns, but noted that local law enforcement had no indication that Rowe was engaged in misconduct involving minors outside of the recent investigation in Conway.

"We were grieved and appalled upon learning of this sexual abuse, but I want to be clear: we will do anything in our power to assist sexual abuse victims," Akin said in a statement. "Our commitment is to stand with victims not only in our prayers and also in our actions. We are taking every necessary

step at this time to ensure the protection of those in our community."

In 2013, Rowe was arrested for falsely reporting a crime in Darlington, S.C. Rowe told law enforcement that a man with a knife car-jacked him and forced him to withdraw money from a bank, according to local news reports. After a brief investigation, authorities determined Rowe's encounter with an alleged suspect was consensual and unrelated to any violent activity. He was released on bond.

Collins told the *Recorder* that the church's search team, which he led, was aware of the arrest when they hired Rowe. "We were satisfied that it was an isolated event," Collins said. "We saw no other red flags in our review of his records."

Southeastern said Rowe disclosed the arrest in 2014 as part of his application, noting that the incident was a misunderstanding and charges were dropped. He had "good references" and "no other warning signs," said a spokesperson. 



JAYSON ROWE

## Drop

Continued from page 1

Multisite congregations reported an additional 505 campuses where local church ministry takes place.

### Churches and missions

McConnell said the significant drop in membership is due in large part to the decrease in church-type missions and congregations continuing to update their membership.

While some missions no longer exist, others moved from that category to full-fledged churches.

"The term mission is an important missiological designation that points to the fact that churches are started with the help of many others," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"In 2019 several state conventions confirmed with congregations that they are now self-sustaining, shifting their designation from being a mission to a church. Although in many cases this is belated, we celebrate this ministry milestone with these congregations."

According to LifeWay Research, 75% of Southern Baptist congregations participated by reporting at least one item on the profile, which is similar to previous years. McConnell said these reports are beneficial during COVID-19.

"In this season of social distancing,

we realize how important our cooperative connections are within the SBC," he said.

"The Annual Church Profile is an important annual check-in to make sure other congregations, associations, state conventions, and national entities have the contact information, leadership names, and a few statistics to stay connected with a congregation."

"Many contacts have been made during this difficult time that were only possible because information was updated and stored in a national database."

For the first time in 100 years, however, a state convention did not collect total membership numbers, he said. An estimate for Oklahoma congregations is included in the data based on previous reporting from current congregations.

### Attendance drops

Other key metrics also declined. Average weekly worship service and Sunday School or small group attendance each dropped by less than 1%. The average worship service attendance fell to 5,250,230, while average small group attendance declined to 3,236,196.

Baptisms fell by more than 4%, dropping from 246,442 in 2018 to

235,748 in 2019. In 2019, there was one baptism for every 62 Southern Baptists.

"These numbers are not able to tell the story of all the evangelistic efforts that many individuals and churches have put in this past year. They do indicate, however, that the efforts of the same number of people in a congregation on average are seeing fewer people come to Christ and being baptized," said McConnell.

"The Southern Baptist Convention is not immune to the increasing secularization among Americans that is seen in more of our children and our neighbors not having interest in coming to Jesus."

### Declines in giving

Total church receipts and undesignated receipts were both down in 2019 after two years of growth. Total church receipts reported through the ACP fell 1.44% to \$11.6 billion. Undesignated church receipts decreased 0.01% to \$9.6 billion.

Congregations reported total mission expenditures of \$1.1 billion and Great Commission Giving of \$541 million.

Giving through the SBC's Cooperative Program is not included in the ACP statistical summary.

Actual giving totals are available

through Baptist state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee, which processes the mission gifts.

### State-level highlights


While the national numbers declined across the board, several state conventions saw growth, particularly some outside of the traditional Bible belt.

Colorado, Hawaii-Pacific, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin, Northwest, Puerto Rico, and Utah-Idaho Baptist Conventions all reported a more than 30% increase in baptisms for 2019.

Florida had the most baptisms by a single convention with 25,338 and neighboring Georgia had the largest numerical increase with 1,901 more baptisms in 2019 than 2018 (19,641 to 17,740).

Congregations in the Hawaii-Pacific, Iowa, and Michigan state conventions grew membership by more than 20% in 2019. Kentucky had the largest numerical membership jump, adding 42,315 people to their congregations last year.

Individual congregations voluntarily report their ACP data to their local Baptist associations and/or their state conventions.

National statistics are compiled and released when all cooperating state conventions have reported. 



# Retired North Carolina pastor missing in Hawaii



Bob Walker, a retired pastor, veteran and former Raleigh resident, was last seen near the Pupukea Paumalu trail on Oahu's North Shore May 13. (Facebook photo)

*Biblical Recorder*

Volunteers in Hawaii are still searching for 74-year-old Bob Walker, a retired pastor, veteran and former Raleigh resident. Officials said Walker, who was last seen near the Pupukea Paumalu trail on Oahu's North Shore May 13, has dementia.

Walker served churches in Mississippi and Texas before coming to North Carolina. He moved to Hawaii last year to be closer to family, according to local news reports.

From 1977 to 1991, Walker served as pastor of Five Points Missionary Baptist Church (now Forest Hills Baptist Church) in Wilson, N.C. He formerly managed a LifeWay store on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest,

N.C., and served as interim pastor of Parkwood Baptist Church in Durham, N.C. Walker attended Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh before relocating to Hawaii.

Kim Humphrey, administrative staff at SEBTS, worked with Walker at the LifeWay store in 2005. "Bob hired me, with no retail experience at all, and was the most patient teacher I could imagine," Humphrey said in a statement to the *Biblical Recorder*. "He radiated joy in his interactions with faculty, students and staff as they would come into the store for assistance."

An SEBTS Twitter post asked "the Southeastern family to pray" for Walker. Friends set up a GoFundMe page for donations to help cover the costs of search efforts. 

## NOBTS Continued from page 4

Ph.D., but by the time he walked into his first day on the job he'd picked up a second, from the University of Birmingham in England. Both doctorates specialize in philosophy of religion, and his written works range from postmodernism to Thomistic hylo-morphism.

Dew, who became a Christian at the age of 18 and will soon mark 25 years of following Christ, said he's been doing apologetics almost that long and in the last quarter-century "apologetics as a discipline has evolved tremendously."

In the past, atheists asked evidence-focused questions requiring evidence-focused answers – such as the existence of God or the reality of miracles. Now, Dew said, "they still say we're irrational," but have added a second accusation: "You're not just irrational for believing this – you are bad for believing this."

The answer, Dew believes, goes back to approaches taken by C.S. Lewis and Blaise Pascal.

"Part of what Christians need to be laboring to do in this cultural moment is to show the goodness in the beauty of Christianity," Dew said. "Look, if Christianity is true, then it's good, right? Before you show lost people it's true, you should first get them to the place where they would want it to be true. And I think we're in a moment where the culture just doesn't want it

to be true because they think it's bad."

Dew looks back on his first 18 years of life, before he was a Christian, and recalled, "I can see 18 years of brokenness when I did it my way, doing everything I wanted."

"And then I threw myself on Jesus Christ ... and in that life, well, my goodness. I mean all I can see is life and flourishing."


But Dew said while "we need to show" the beauty of Christianity, so often Christians "fight like cats and dogs amongst ourselves. That shows no beauty."

And New Orleans, beyond its urban diversity and generous attitude, is well situated to show Christianity in a way lost people wish it were true.

That's mainly because of the local churches, according to Dew.

New Orleans' brokenness means if Christians aren't careful "the darkness here will absolutely overcome everything." Local churches across the New Orleans Baptist Association, Dew said, "line up shoulder to shoulder and get after it for the Kingdom."

Without dismissing meaningful theological differences, New Orleans churches "don't have the luxury of dividing over Calvinism" or other secondary matters, he said.

"The gospel is already offensive enough to unbelievers," Dew said. "But don't add your own offensiveness to it." 

## Unity Continued from page 2

cross we all receive the same grace that unites us as one family. So how can we fight for this blood-bought oneness?

### 1. Educate yourself.

Before we can move ahead, we must look back. It will be very challenging to experience oneness if you lack the knowledge of people's history and experiences.

Search for some books, podcasts or articles that will help you gain knowledge. There is a reason that African Americans feel the way that they do during these moments, and it's because of a long history.

### 2. Be quick to hear and slow to speak.

James would urge us to be slow in our speaking and quick in our hearing as it can lead to unrighteousness that does not honor God (James 1:19).

It's OK to just listen and ask questions. Wisdom is gained when we can just sit silently and listen to others without feeling the obligation to have


a response for everything.

### 3. Be a brother or sister in Christ.

I really believe that we have lost sight of what it means to be a brother or sister in Christ. If one part of the body is hurting and in pain, then the whole body is (1 Corinthians 12:26). Let us be people who are filled with compassion, sympathy, love, forgiveness, grace and patience. Let us embody the "one anothers" of scripture.

My prayer is that we experience Revelation 7:9-10 on this side of heaven.

Churches are filled with so many different people from all backgrounds and walks of life. If we are going to see that come to fruition, then we must begin to fight harder for the oneness that our Lord and Savior died for.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Darrick Smith serves as a senior consultant on the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Collegiate Partnerships Team.) 

Have staff changes, retirements, obituaries  
or church news you want to share?  
Send to [editor@BRnow.org](mailto:editor@BRnow.org).

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## The Testimony of Our Hope

June 21

### Focal Passage: 1 Peter 2:4-15

One of my favorite courses as a student at the University of Florida was an Ekphrastic poetry workshop the spring semester of my sophomore year. We met in the Harn Museum of Art on the edge of campus. For the first two and a half hours of class, we discussed anthologies our professor had selected and then workshopped a few students' poems. For the last 30 minutes, we roamed the galleries for inspiration.

I usually gravitated to the oil paintings, prints or installations. Our professor gave broad prompts, allowing us an unprecedented amount of freedom to engage whatever medium or subject we wanted.

Each week as we passed around copies of our poems to be marked up by our peers, it was fun to see what work of art each person chose.

Sometimes there would be a poem about a painting I had overlooked or a sculpture I had also been drawn to. Each week when we were let loose to wander again I began to see the works of art differently.

As we grow in our maturity in Christ, it changes how others see Christ. There was once a time we didn't recognize the beauty of Christ, but thankfully someone in our life did.

I remember when the grace of sanctification first struck me. I randomly thought, "It's so weird that God doesn't just take us to heaven when we get saved." He leaves us right where grace found us, or somewhere close. Though we're no longer of the world, we're still in it – called to look to Jesus and help others do the same.



**LINDSEY HARRIS**  
member, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Asheville

## The Endurance of our Hope

June 28

### Focal Passage: 1 Peter 3:8-17

I remember the day we left so clearly. Pregnant and exhausted I loaded my backseat with clothes and shoes, third in the moving caravan behind the U-Haul and my husband's truck.

It had been a long three years at the church revitalization we moved there for, and the past six months had been particularly brutal. We had anguished in prayer. I had cried in the shower, begging God to move. My husband fasted and called on friends and family to join us in praying for God to soften hearts and open eyes.

As Peter continues his letter to dispersed believers, he begins a list of commands. I'm always so struck by commands in scripture. I love

how direct they are. You're either "[keeping your] tongue from evil and [your lips] from deceitful speech" or you're not (1 Peter 3:10-11). Commands are also some of the most intimate verses. There's no hiding with a command.

I don't ever want to relive those three years, but I'm thankful for the way the Lord sustained us. God's Word ministered to my heart in ways I can't explain and sometimes ways, quite frankly, I didn't want. God didn't make the pain of what we were living go away and for whatever reason He didn't move in the way we asked, but through His Word He walked with us. He kept us. He cut and revealed. He continued His work. He softened our hearts and opened our eyes in ways only the assurance of Christ and comfort of the Holy Spirit in the midst of suffering can do.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Compassion Demonstrated

June 21

### Focal passage: Proverbs 3:21-35

I know I'm the only person in all of humanity to have experienced this, but just a half-second after walking away from the end of a conversation, I knew I had really messed up.

What really stung was knowing that my words and my actions had failed to testify to the compassion I had encountered in Christ.

Proverbs reminds us that the wisdom of God, perfectly manifested in Jesus, bears heavily on how we are to treat others. We are to do good to others and not withhold it from them. We are to treat neighbors with respect and compassion and not do them harm. We are to speak truthfully and bear witness to the truth. These seemingly obvious exhortations remind us of the character that marks Jesus' followers. It is the character God Himself forms in us

as His children who are being sanctified. It is evidence of our belonging to His family!

The reward for showing kindness and compassion to others is sweet rest from fear. Those who seek another way must lie down as their fears quickly catch up to them. Their toils are never over. Yet the Lord's beloved enjoy pleasant sleep. That is, despite whatever circumstances surround them, they find themselves secure in the Father's embrace.

We need not envy the apparent success of the wicked, for the Lord's blessing is for the righteous. We experience this blessing most clearly at the cross, where the only righteous one suffered our punishment and in return shares His inheritance with us.



**MANNY PRIETO**  
lay pastor, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh

## The Choice

June 28

### Focal passage: Proverbs 4:11-27

Not long after getting married, I learned a lesson that many married couples before me can testify to – perhaps the most laboriously debated decision a married couple will make is the answer to, "Where do you want to go for dinner?" There are decisions of far greater weight, but none are so rigorously researched and thoroughly deliberated. Even after a decision is reached, the question lingers in the mind, "Did we make the right choice?" The matter typically isn't settled until about dessert time.

A far more pressing choice is laid out for us in Proverbs. The path of the wicked may entice us. The way of the wicked invariably leads to de-

struction. Despite all the marketing, they find no freedom. They are enslaved by their wickedness, trapped in addictive cycles of destruction. The wise keep off this path and pursue a different way.

The way of wisdom leads us toward freedom. It is not, as some suggest, an oppressive set of rules.

Solomon pleads that we consider the decision carefully. This is no time for passive decision making. Continuing down the path of wisdom requires daily, active choosing. Choosing to die to ourselves and instead to follow Jesus. Choosing to confess our failings before Him and cast ourselves on His mercy and grace. We are not naturally inclined to be so steadfast. Yet what joy to know that as we traverse the path of wisdom, the path of Jesus, our hearts are continually transformed to look more and more like His.



# Fort Caswell adjusts summer operations

BSC Communications

**D**ue to ongoing concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) officials announced May 29 that no large group gatherings will take place at Fort Caswell this summer.

Instead, Caswell is providing camp and retreat options for groups that can maintain social distancing and other precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

BSC officials made the decision after much prayer and consultation with leaders from Fort Caswell, the convention's youth evangelism and discipleship ministry's Caswell committee, pastors and church leaders, as well as guidance from local, state and national health officials.

Located on Oak Island along the N.C. coast, Fort Caswell is one of three camps and conference centers that is owned by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

"Since the early days of the pandemic, we have been closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 and taking the necessary measures to protect our guests and staff," said Brian Hemphill, who serves as Fort Caswell's director.

"Everyone involved in this process did not arrive at this decision lightly because we know that God has used summer camps at Caswell to impact the lives of generations of students for Christ.

"We explored a number of different options for the summer, and our guiding principle all along



was to do everything possible to ensure the health and safety of everyone who participates in activities at Caswell.

"While we are disappointed in the necessary adjustments we've had to make, we are also looking forward to serving churches in a new way this summer."

The decision impacts Summer Youth Weeks, the annual event sponsored by the Baptist state convention's youth evangelism and discipleship ministry, also known as BeDoTell (BDT).

Each year, Youth Weeks draw approximately 7,000 middle and high school students and chaperones from N.C. Baptist churches to Caswell for weeklong camps over the course of the summer.

Youth Weeks incorporate a series of worship experiences and other activities built around a common scriptural theme.

Reservations for church groups that had previously registered to attend Summer Youth Weeks will still be honored, Hemphill said. Caswell is also accepting reservations for additional groups to register as space permits based on health recommendations.

In lieu of a complete program of live activities this summer, BDT staff members are providing a virtual camp experience as an option for church groups.

The BDT Virtual Camp Experience will include many staples of traditional youth weeks like worship, music, drama, messages from God's Word, a camp study curriculum, suggested game ideas and a devotional guide for churches.

The virtual sessions will be recorded in advance on location at Caswell and will be accessible to church groups for streaming at their convenience while they are at Caswell or another location. Church groups may follow the virtual experience as closely or loosely as they like, or they may create their own unique camp experience.

There is no program fee for the virtual offering, but there is a licensing fee of \$100 to cover the cost of producing the virtual experience. More details about the BDT Virtual Camp Experience will be posted at BeDoTell.com.

"We have been in the camp ministry for a lifetime," said Merrie Johnson, the BSC's senior consultant for youth evangelism and discipleship with the state convention.

See Caswell page 12

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Pastor

Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova, TN, is accepting résumés for **full-time Senior Pastor**. Trinity, a mid-sized SBC Memphis suburban church, is 25 years old with 2 retired pastors seeking the next pastor to bring new life and growth to our membership by inspiring revitalization in spirit and service. Trinity is firmly based on biblical principles and evangelistic outreach to the community. We are seeking a leader who will heighten the spiritual well-being of our congregation and teach and practice an intentional evangelism that ultimately increases the Kingdom of God. The successful candidate will be an engaging, biblically faithful teacher who relates well to people of different ethnic, socio-economic and generational backgrounds. The ideal candidate will also demonstrate active leadership experience and skills, adhere to Baptist theology, have a minimum of a master's degree and preferably five years pastoral service. Résumé, cover letter and/or recommendations may be sent to Barbara Williams, Pastor Search Committee chair at [psc@trinitybaptistchurch.org](mailto:psc@trinitybaptistchurch.org).

First Baptist Church of Mocksville is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor** to lead our congregation in ministering to the beautiful historic town of Mocksville located in the Piedmont of North Carolina. We are affiliated and support the Southern Baptist Convention, South Yadkin Baptist Association, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. FBC seeks to meet the needs of all members by offering both contemporary and traditional services. Information about our church can be found at <http://www.fbcmocksville.org>.

Please submit a letter of introduction, résumé and references to FBC Mocksville, Pastor Search Committee, 412 North Main Street, Mocksville, NC 27028 or [barryetter@gmail.com](mailto:barryetter@gmail.com).

Southport Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor** to lead our traditional congregation in the beautiful coastal community of Southport located in southeastern North Carolina. Candidates should have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and preferred advanced degree from an accredited seminary/divinity school with at least 5 years' experience. Please submit a letter of introduction, résumé and references to Southport Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 200 N Howe Street, Southport, NC 28461.

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.chinagrovefbc.com/job-opportunities>.

First Baptist Church, Black Mountain, is seeking to fill its position of **Pastoral Leader**. We are a traditional, moderate and missional congregation with supportive relations with local and state entities of CBF and SBC. Please send résumés to Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 656, Black Mountain, NC 28711.

### Church Staff

New Hope Baptist Church is receiving résumés for a **full-time Youth & Children's Pastor** through July 6. Send résumés to: New Hope Baptist Church - Attention: Search Committee, PO Box 116, Earl, NC 28038; or [russandmo@aol.com](mailto:russandmo@aol.com).

### Placing a classified ad in the *Biblical Recorder*

Choose one of three avenues:

- Send e-mail to: [advertise@BRnow.org](mailto:advertise@BRnow.org).
- Purchase ads at [BRnow.org/Advertise](http://BRnow.org/Advertise).
- Send a Fax to (919) 467-6180.

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.

# Caswell

Continued from page 11

She has coordinated Summer Youth Weeks in North Carolina for 19 years and served in youth ministry for more than 36 years total.

"It breaks our hearts that we cannot provide the exceptional BeDoTell Youth Weeks camp experience that you have become accustomed to summer after summer. However, we believe this is the best option to protect us all and still have camp."

Before the outbreak of the coronavirus, eight weeks of Summer Youth Week camps had been scheduled at Caswell beginning in early June and concluding in early August.

On May 1, Caswell and convention officials announced an amended Youth Weeks format that was to include five weeks of camp from July 13 to Aug. 13.

In an effort to accommodate as many church groups as possible, those weeks were to incorporate an abbreviated schedule from Monday through Thursday with additional weekend options available from Friday through Sunday.

Subsequent guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on May 19 allowed for the opening of youth and summer camps provided that recommended measures were implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in compliance with other state and local directives.

Hemphill said individual church groups that come to Caswell must stay together, practice social distancing and abide by other safety guidelines recommended by the CDC.


Hemphill also said that groups can participate in activities that comply with CDC and government guidelines related to COVID-19, and he noted that his staff is working hard to preserve as much of the camp experience and recreational offerings as possible while adhering to health and safety recommendations.

Hemphill likened operational decisions being made at Caswell to decisions being made by local church leaders about when and how to reopen.

"These are the same discussions your church is probably having," Hemphill said.

Hemphill and Johnson called on N.C. Baptists to pray for wisdom, safety and for God to move in the lives of youth this summer, no matter what this year's camp experience might look like.

"Please join us in praying for the Holy Spirit to move among the youth from your individual churches and raise a generation who will pursue a relationship with Jesus Christ that will motivate them to spread the gospel of hope that this world so desperately needs," Johnson said.


For more information about booking a reservation at Caswell for your church's youth group, contact Fort Caswell at (910) 278-9501. 

## NCBAM Hope Line now offers outbound calls

NCBAM

When North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) began its Hope Line service in summer 2019 to address social isolation and loneliness among older adults, no one imagined the societal changes that would occur nine months later. Over the course of just a few days in March, 2020, calls to the Hope Line increased exponentially. To meet the demand, the ministry opened the service on weekends and added two lines.

Now open daily, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., the Hope Line (866.578.4673) continues to receive more than 100 calls each week from older adults.

Hope Line now offers outbound calls. The service is free and can be requested by calling (877) 506-2226 or by emailing [ncbam@bchfamily.org](mailto:ncbam@bchfamily.org). A link will be sent to sign up for the service. Call recipients must be 65 or older and live in North Carolina. Requests can be made by individuals or by a family member or caregiver. 

# Where faith and funding converge.



Church Construction | Remodel Projects  
Property Purchase | Refinancing

(844) 273-7713