



# BIBLICAL RECORDER

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## Religious liberty questions remain after court's ruling

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

The U.S. Supreme Court left multiple questions regarding religious liberty unanswered but provided some hope in its landmark decision for gay and transgender rights, said advocates for the First Amendment freedom.

In a 6-3 opinion June 15, the high court ruled the category “sex” in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act encompasses “sexual orientation” and “gender identity,” thereby providing non-discrimination protections for homosexual and transgender employees. Religious liberty defenders said the justices’ decision left employers with biblical convictions on sexuality open to legal challenges.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), predicted the decision “will have seismic implications for religious liberty, setting off potentially years of lawsuits and court struggles, about what this means, for example, for religious organizations with religious convictions about the meaning of sex and sexuality.”

Jonathan Whitehead, a Southern Baptist lawyer in the Kansas City, Mo., area, said Monday the high court’s redefinition of “sex” in workplace law “has indirectly triggered hundreds or thousands of lawsuits against religious groups. Before today, almost no church, ministry or college in America discriminated ‘based on sex.’ But after 10 a.m. today, the meaning of ‘sex’ in hundreds of laws was suddenly different.”

Whitehead, who wrote a friend-of-the-court  
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## SBC EC elects first African American chair



Rolland Slade, pastor of Meridian Baptist Church in El Cajon, Calif., was unopposed as Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee chairman. He was elected by ballot vote. (BP photo)

Baptist Press & Biblical Recorder

The Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) elected its first African American chair in a special called meeting June 16.

Rolland Slade, pastor of Meridian Baptist Church in El Cajon, Calif., was unopposed as EC chair and was unanimously elected by ballot vote. Outgoing chair Mike Stone called for a ballot vote, he said, to mark the historic moment.

“I think we all realize by what is going on in this country as well as in our convention, this tim-

ing is in many ways the providence of our Lord,” said Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Ga.

The meeting was conducted online via Zoom and livestreamed at [SBCEC.net](http://SBCEC.net).

Many, including Slade, attributed his election to God.

“I don’t think there was ever a plan for me to be in this position,” Slade told Baptist Press. “I think

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## Southeastern trustees cut tuition, salaries

Baptist Press

Responding to the economic downturn prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the executive committee of the board of trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) approved a budget for 2020-21 that includes cuts of 3%, including staff salary reductions and also a 5% tuition reduction.

The decision was made during a virtual meeting June 15. During its spring meeting in April, the board of trustees voted to allow the final budget approval to be postponed in order for SEBTS officials to have a better understanding of the overall economic and enrollment impact of the pandemic.

The cost-cutting measures were necessitated

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# We need one more

By NATE JONES | BR Board of Directors

In recent weeks the world has taken notice of the long-standing injustice of racism perpetrated against people of color. Many companies, organizations and countries have responded to the brutal killing of an African American in police custody.

Protesters of different races, backgrounds, ages and beliefs are demonstrating their lack of tolerance for this behavior by law enforcement. There must be a remedy to this deep-seated evil that plagues us.

Our convention leaders have spoken out condemning the behavior and practice of racism. Together our voice is clear, but have we done enough?

It is not enough to simply say, “I

don’t condone racism or participate in racism.”

We must do what we can to be part of the solution. Scripture tells us in 1 John 4 that God loved us and we ought to love others. In fact, if we don’t love others, then the love of God is not in us.

So what does this mean for you and me? I have never protested and don’t see myself doing that in my future. I can’t change legislature and write policies abolishing racism. Yet, I also cannot call myself a Christian and stand by watching the evil, only to hide it under a “bush.”

What I can do is unveil this evil when it occurs around me. I can and should “... Love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mark 12:31).

We can begin by getting to know someone that we don’t know today. It is difficult to hate or mistreat someone with whom you have developed a relationship. We can practice “intentional neighboring.” The root of the problem is sin. Christ’s love is the answer to sin in the world.

We can and should take these issues to the Lord in prayer. He has given us the assurance that we can ask anything in His name and He will do it.

We can know something needs to be done and be a part of the action to expose sinful behavior. We can love like Jesus loved to change the lives of the people around us. It’s time to stop excusing bad behavior and to expose bad behavior.

Since racism still exists in our world, we are not done. We need one more person to take action where God has given us the opportunity. We need one more act of kindness in our neighborhoods. We need one more person to step up as a leader to be an example, through the God-given gifts and talents we have, using them to His glory and honor.

Silence is not being a part of the solution. Saying you are not the problem is not being a participant in racial justice and equality.

We need one more person to do their part. Is that person you?

*(EDITOR’S NOTE – Nate Jones is chair of the Biblical Recorder’s board of directors. He is a member of Cross Culture Church in Raleigh, N.C.)*

## Ongoing concerns over SBC declines

BSC Communications

Like many of you, I missed gathering with friends for this year’s Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Orlando, Fla. As you know, the meeting was canceled in late March due to concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

Canceling this year’s annual meeting was a shocking move at the time, but it has proven to be the correct decision as our nation continues to grapple with the effects of COVID-19. I’m thankful for the wisdom and foresight of our SBC leaders to make this difficult but necessary decision for the safety and well-being of the thousands of messengers from our churches who would be attending the meeting.

Despite the cancellation of the meeting, Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC executive committee, and other SBC entity heads provided updates about how God is at work in our convention during a special two-hour online event held June 2. SBC President J.D. Greear delivered his address via video on June 9, the same day he would have shared with messengers in Orlando.

Amid these updates came the unsettling news of the continued statistical decline in membership and baptisms among Southern Baptist churches based on the data from the 2019 Annual Church Profile (ACP).



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.  
BSC executive  
director-treasurer

In analyzing the data, Baptist Press reported an overall drop in membership for the 13th consecutive year. Membership numbers fell by more than 287,000 (about 2%) from 2018 to 2019, which was the largest single-year drop in more than 100 years.

Total baptisms across the SBC fell by more than 4% from 2018 to 2019.

According to the ACP data, overall membership numbers in North Carolina showed a drop in membership of about 29,500, which reflected a 2.6% decrease from 2018 to 2019. While our state’s membership numbers reflected a similar trend

with SBC numbers, our state’s baptism numbers were even more concerning.

Total reported baptisms in North Carolina fell by about 11.6% from 17,511 in 2018 to 15,483 in 2019, a drop of more than 2,000 baptisms from the year before.

Moreover, more than 2,200 of our approximately

## IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

4,300 N.C. Baptist churches reported no baptisms in 2019, which was up from 2018.

Our temptation might be to say that even though we are not doing well, we are still doing better than some other churches or conventions. That is an unacceptable attitude.

We should be determining that by the grace of God, we will improve our efforts to minister, cultivate relationships, evangelize, baptize and disciple. We can reverse these declining trends if each of us makes a firm commitment to God that we will change our attitudes, repent, share the gospel with others and give people an opportunity to accept Christ as Savior.

While these numbers are troubling, I share many of the same concerns that Dr. Floyd has expressed regarding how data from our churches is collected and reported. Furthermore, there are concerns over the number of churches that choose not to complete the ACP. LifeWay Research reports that

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# African American leaders call for Southern Baptists to stand together

By **TESS SCHOONHOVEN** | Baptist Press

Calling the racial unrest roiling the nation “spiritual warfare,” and saying “unless hearts change, nothing will change in America,” Philadelphia pastor K. Marshall Williams urged Southern Baptists to stand together in unity against injustice.

“The world is waiting for us to come together,” said Williams, senior pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church of Philadelphia.

“Because beloved, truth be told, this is just a dress rehearsal for when we get around the throne. I think maybe God is stripping us. I don’t know about you, but this has been a stripping time for me, a pruning time for me, a time in the refiner’s fire, that God would see what He really has as far as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Williams’ comments came during “A 60 Minute Conversation on Race in America,” a panel discussion hosted online June 17 by Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC), who brought together five African American Southern Baptist pastors and leaders.

Along with Williams, panelists included Rolland Slade, senior pastor of Meridian Baptist Church of El Cajon, Calif., and newly elected chairman of the SBC Executive Committee; Charlie Dates, pastor of Progressive Baptist Church in Chicago; Kevin Smith, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware; and Willie McLaurin, vice president of Great Commission relations and mobilization of the SBC EC.

While thanking Floyd for convening the call, Dates said “this is a very tiring conversation, not simply because of the events of recent weeks ... [but] because this has been a 401-year struggle for African Americans.”

Dates added that real change would come from pastors joining together to combat racism.

“If the persons who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ are not in the front lines of strategy and demonstration, then the world will simply be blowing hot air in trying to bring change,” Dates said. “We can demonstrate the gospel in power and in witness in leading them in peaceful protesting.”

Smith encouraged believers to view the topic through a biblical lens and to use biblical rhetoric rather than “the combat rhetoric that’s going on all around us,” adding,

“If we start with the Lordship of Christ and the scripture, we can engage with some of these tough subjects.”



**K. MARSHALL WILLIAMS**



**CHARLIE DATES**

McLaurin expressed a need for SBC ministry pipelines available to develop vocational leaders from an ethnically diverse perspective. While agreeing, Smith said it should extend to include discipleship for laypersons “to live as salt and light out in their communities.”

“The pipeline that is hurting us as regards race in America, as regards a lot of things in America – materialism, greed, consumerism – is discipling [church] members in such a way that when they go out in the community, they are just different than other people,” Smith said.

Asked whether the SBC is progressing on racial issues, McLaurin noted his experience as an interim pastor of 16 “predominantly Anglo churches” in Tennessee.

Saying he was the first black man to preach in some of the churches, he recounted a moment when a 10-year-old boy responded to an invitation. The boy’s father came down the aisle, hugged McLaurin and asked to speak to the congregation.

“He said, ‘I wasn’t for this black man coming to be our interim pastor,’” McLaurin said, “‘but my 10-year-old son has gotten saved today and today this black pastor is my brother in the Lord. And any of you who have a racist bone in your heart, you need to come to the altar today and get it right with Jesus.’”

“I don’t know what happened after that, because I was filled with tears,” McLaurin continued. “But we are making progress.”

Smith acknowledged significant positive change since the SBC’s founding 175 years ago in a split with northern Baptists over the issue of slavery, as well as since the Civil Rights movement of the 20th Century.

But he said he has been discouraged in recent years by “indifference and insensitivity” from many white Christians.

“I’m certainly encouraged. Things have certainly moved and changed since 1845 and I’m comfortable saying they’ve changed since 1945,” Smith said.

“But I don’t think the last decade or so ... has been the best window in that long story of Christians in the United States dealing with the issue of race. And I really have a burden about it, because I think it matters evangelistically and missiologically.”

Affirming Southern Baptists’ strong, passionate stands against abortion and sexual immorality, Wil-

liams said he wanted “us to be as passionate about racism and injustice, because it’s part of the biblical mandate, Micah 6:8, to do justice.”

“I don’t think we need to write any more resolutions,” he said. “We need to put some shoe leather in it and effect some change. ... Our younger generation wants to see practical application of the biblical principle. And for us right now, our hypocrisy because we haven’t acted on it and dealt with America’s original sin, it has hindered the heathen from hearing when we holler about the holy. They can’t hear us.

“And so we have a great opportunity. That’s why I’m here. That we might be a bridge-builder, a unifier, that we might stand as a collective, incarnational presence.”


Slade, who was elected June 16 to chair the SBC Executive Committee, challenged Floyd, whom he described as “a man of action,” to press forward into the issues of racial injustice discussed Wednesday.

“We knew that when you called, we’re gonna do something,” Slade said. “We’re gonna have a call, but I know ... it’s gonna be more than just talk. This is the launching pad. We’re going on from here.”

Floyd noted that their conversation was taking place five years after the murders in Charleston, S.C., of nine African American church members by a white supremacist. The night before the killings, messengers to the 2015 SBC annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, had cried out together in prayer over “matters of injustice and ungodliness,” Floyd recalled, adding, “We were on our face before God about this issue.”

Floyd said when he learned of the shooting, he said it felt as though Satan had won the battle – “But we got back up and we moved forward, we did what we could do at the time.”

Floyd urged viewers to engage in conversations like Wednesday’s, saying Psalm 133 has been “on my heart for churches and for our Southern Baptist Convention,” and quoting, “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!*”

He added, “I appeal to all of you, regardless of the color of your skin, we must fulfill what Jesus said in John 17:21,” and then quoted the verse, “*May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I am in You. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.*” 

## CORRECTION

In the June 13 issue of the *Biblical Recorder*, the wrong advertisement for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) historical writing/multi-media competition was run. The ad indicated due dates and publishing dates that were not correct. Any entries to the BSC are due by July

31, 2020, and should have been released in 2019 or 2020. Categories include church history – written or multi-media, associational history, and biography, autobiography and personal reflections and memoirs. Winners will receive a \$500 award. Please see the corrected ad on page 7.



# Court rules against DACA revocation

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 18 the President Donald Trump administration erred in the way – not in the fact – it rescinded a program for certain undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children.

In a 5-4 opinion, the high court found the administration acted in an “arbitrary and capricious” manner in revoking Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era policy to protect from deportation undocumented immigrants who arrived in this country before their 16th birthday.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice John Roberts said the dispute in the case is not whether the administration “may rescind DACA. All parties agree that it may.

“The dispute is instead primarily about the procedure the [Department of Homeland Security] followed in doing so.”

The justices’ reasoning in the decision means the Trump administration or another administration could still end DACA by doing so in a way that

gains the Supreme Court’s approval.

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore and others called for Congress to act to solve the problem.

Dreamers, a label that stems from the name of a bill introduced to protect this category of immigrants, “are not an abstraction,” said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). “They are people created in the image of God, who were brought here as children by their parents. Their entire lives are at stake right now.”

The justices’ opinion “might address an immediate question of administrative law, but it does not, ultimately, protect our vulnerable neighbors,” he said. “There is no sending these people ‘back’ – in many cases they have no memory at all of the land of their parents’ origin.

“Those who have lived as good neighbors, contributed so greatly to our country, should be protected from the constant threat of having their lives upended. Congress should move immediately to protect our Dreamer neighbors.”

The Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT) called for a legislative fix in

a letter sent to Congress after the opinion’s release. In it, EIT leaders – including Moore – asked congressional members “to act quickly and on a bipartisan basis to pass legislation to create a pathway for those who arrived in the U.S. as children and who meet other necessary and appropriate qualifications to earn permanent legal status and, eventually, citizenship.”

Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., a Southern Baptist, has called for Congress to provide a solution for Dreamers, but he said the Supreme Court’s decision could make it more difficult.

The high court “has returned to Congress an even bigger mess while creating a long-term problem for any President responding to any previous Executive action,” Lankford said in a written statement. Congress “should address DACA in law, but now this decision – and the way it is written – leaves the long-term solutions for DACA recipients even more in limbo,” he said.

Members of Congress proposed the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act for the first time in 2001. The measure gained reintroduction several times

thereafter without being passed.

After more than a decade of congressional failures, President Obama issued an executive order establishing DACA in 2012.

The program provided a two-year window of protection from deportation and made participants eligible for permission to work and other benefits.

About 700,000 people participated in the program.

In September 2017, Elaine Duke, acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), issued a memorandum rescinding DACA.

In the majority opinion, Roberts said DHS violated the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), which governs the manner in which federal agencies establish and issue rules. The APA requires agency rule-making not be “arbitrary and capricious.”

The 2017 memo from DHS failed to address the legality of “forbearance” – protecting DACA participants from deportation – and therefore was “arbitrary and capricious,” he said.

In dissent, Associate Justice Clarence Thomas said DACA “was unlawful from its inception.” 

## Liberty Continued from page 1

brief for 24 state organizations of the Family Policy Council, added, “Everyone acknowledges that Congress did not intend this outcome in 1964. It will take years to unwind the implications for Southern Baptist churches, schools, employers and families.”

In the majority opinion, the justices acknowledged they were concerned about protecting free exercise of religion for employers but provided no assurances for those who act on their beliefs in hiring and firing.

Writing for the court, Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch noted Title VII has an exemption for religious organizations and the justices have recognized religious institutions are protected in their relationships with ministers. He also expressed hope the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) – a 1993 federal law he said “operates as a kind of super statute” – may “supersede Title VII’s commands in appropriate cases.”

But how such religious freedom doctrines relate to Title VII “are questions for future cases too,” Gorsuch wrote.

Writing in dissent, Associate Justice Samuel Alito said one of the potential harms in the court’s opinion would be to the freedom of religious organizations to make employment decisions based on the fidelity in beliefs and practice of applicants and workers.

Alito wrote that the Supreme Court’s new position “will threaten freedom of religion, freedom of speech and personal privacy and safety. No one should think that the Court’s decision represents an unalloyed victory for individual liberty.”

Some religious freedom lawyers found hopeful signs in the justices’ opinion, however.

The majority’s comments on religious freedom “intentionally signal to the American people that religious rights are still going to be an important consideration in these things,” said John Bursch, vice president of appellate advocacy for Alliance Defending Freedom, in a telephone news conference.

Regarding transgender issues, the justices appear to understand “biology is not bigotry, and disagreement about what it means to be male and female is not discrimination,” he said.

Bursch added that Gorsuch seems to be indicating to those with strong religious beliefs about the meaning of male and female “that those views will be respected and heard at the U.S. Supreme Court and should be in other places as well.”

Kelly Shackelford, president of First Liberty Institute, expressed gratitude that the court “was clear in the opinion that this federal statute does not overrule peoples’ religious freedoms. We will find out in the very near future whether this is a

hollow promise or a truthful assurance that the religious liberty of all Americans will be protected.”

In an article on its website, the ERLC said the decision “raises more questions than it answers. The court was not clear on many issues that will stem from this ruling and the impact they will have not only on Christians, but others relying on religious freedom or conscience protections.”

The ERLC and other religious organizations signed onto friend-of-the-court briefs filed last year by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that contended “sex” in Title VII does not include either “sexual orientation” or “gender identity.”

Though “sex” was long interpreted to refer only to whether a person is biologically male or female, the Justice Department under President Obama determined it also included people who identify as gay or transgender. President Trump’s Justice Department has returned to the previous interpretation.

Articles explaining the decision and highlighting significant quotes in the majority and dissenting opinions are available on the ERLC website ([ERLC.com](http://ERLC.com)).

The Supreme Court’s opinion and dissents in three consolidated cases under the title *Bostock v. Clayton County* may be accessed at the High Court’s website. 



# Conservative Baptist Network announces steering council

Baptist Press

The Conservative Baptist Network, a group formed last February “to cultivate the momentum needed for a course correction” in the SBC, announced a 48-member “steering council” June 17.

The group included: Anthony Allen, president of Hannibal-LaGrange University in Hannibal, Mo.; Emir Caner, president of Truett-McConnell University in Cleveland, Ga.; Kelvin Cochran, chief operating officer of Elizabeth Baptist Church in Atlanta and the former Atlanta fire chief; Mark Coppenger, former president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Mike Huckabee, former Arkansas governor and presidential candidate and former Southern Baptist pastor; Chuck Kelley, former president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council; Phil Roberts, former presi-

dent of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Michael Spradlin, president of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary; and Charles Stanley, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta and a past SBC president.

The steering council also included six members of the SBC Executive Committee, including the immediate past chairman and four who were elected June 16 as EC officers.

Mike Stone was EC chairman until his term ended June 18. Tom Tucker, a vocational evangelist from Rock Hill, S.C., was elected vice chairman. Joe Knott, an attorney from Raleigh, N.C., was reelected EC secretary. Jim Gregory, senior pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Mountain Home, Idaho, was elected chairman of the Committee on Southern Baptist Relations. Rod Martin,

CEO of The Martin Organization in Destin, Fla., was elected chairman of the Committee on Convention Events and Strategic Planning.

EC member Mark Ballard, president of Northeastern Baptist College in North Bennington, Vt., was also named to the Conservative Baptist Network's steering council.

“We are thankful to have incredible pastors and leaders who are committed to helping us see positive change in our Southern Baptist Convention,” Brad Jurkovich, the group's spokesperson, said in a news release.

Jurkovich, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bossier City, La., was the only person publicly identified as part of the Conservative Baptist Network's leadership at its launch. The news release said the steering council would “represent and support the continu-

ally growing group of conservative Baptists,” but did not specify any leadership roles.

One person initially listed as part of the steering council asked to be removed and was removed from the list.

Tim Patterson, executive director of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM), said in a statement released June 18 on the BSCM website that he had been invited by a friend during a brief phone call the previous day “to join a group dedicated to the inerrancy of Scripture and world evangelism,” adding “the name of the Conservative Baptist Network was never mentioned during that brief call.”

Patterson said when he learned that less than an hour after the phone call he had been named as part of the steering council, he asked that his name be immediately removed, and said he had “never been a member nor part of the leadership of the Conservative Baptist Network.” **BR**



MIKE STONE

## ‘It’s on me,’ SBC leaders and pastors say of baptism decline

By BRANDON ELROD | North American Mission Board

Several Southern Baptist leaders, missionaries and pastors are voicing a unified response to the continuing decline of baptisms across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC): “It’s on me.”

In the face of a steady, 20-year decline, a new video released by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) emphasizes the need for Southern Baptists to take both responsibility and action for sharing the gospel in North America.

The video begins with Kevin Ezell, president of NAMB, “In the past 20 years, North America’s population has risen by 48.2 million people,” Ezell says. After others on the video note the ongoing drop in baptism, Ezell

states, “I’m Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, and when it comes to baptism decline in the SBC, it’s on me.”

Johnny Hunt, NAMB’s senior vice president for evangelism and leadership, and Ezell lead off a chorus of Southern Baptist pastors and leaders who rally around the message that pastors and congregants need to be focused on evangelism personally in their lives and corporately through their churches.

“We can have all of the good ideas. We can develop all the programs,” Hunt said, “but until we are daily following our Great Commission calling, it doesn’t matter. It’s on me, and it’s on all of us.”

During his tenure as SBC president, J.D. Greear, lead pastor of The

Summit Church in Durham, N.C., has sought to make evangelism a top priority in Southern Baptist life in part by partnering with Hunt and NAMB to launch the Who’s Your One evangelism initiative in 2019.

“We have got to own this problem and say, ‘Lord, what needs to change in me? What posture do I need to take to ask You why we’re not bearing abundant fruit?’” Greear said in submitted comments.

“I’m asking that question, and I would challenge every pastor, every Christian, every follower of Jesus in the Southern Baptist Convention to ask the same thing.”

In light of the challenges, Southern Baptist leaders shared their vision for how to move forward to equip and encourage pastors and Christians to develop a culture of embracing and sharing the gospel.

Larry Anderson, the director of

healthy churches for the Baptist Resource Network (BRN) of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, highlights three “Ts” to pastors in the BRN: institution, internet and intimacy.

“I encourage pastors to make institutional, corporate evangelism a priority through their churches, utilize the internet and social media as a creative platform for sharing their faith and to embrace their intimate relationships with friends, family and coworkers where they have been given the privilege and responsibility to be alive and saved, to be witnesses of the gospel,” Anderson said in written comments.

Albert Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), also appear in the video.

Akin shared more about the role

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# IMB leaders applaud Meador's faithful service



Clyde Meador, who served as executive advisor to the president at the International Mission Board, retired June 12 after more than 45 years of service to Southern Baptists. (IMB photo)

By JULIE MCGOWAN | International Mission Board

Clyde Meador, who served as executive advisor to the president at the International Mission Board (IMB), retired – or, more accurately, re-retired – on June 12, after more than 45 years of service to Southern Baptists.

Meador and his wife, Elaine, began their missionary service with the Southern Baptist entity in Indonesia in 1974. He served through the years as a missionary and mission field leader in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, the Pacific and Oceania. He has worked closely with four IMB presidents as a top advisor, and served two stints as the organization's interim president.

The Meadors first retired in May 2016 after 41 years in missionary service and executive roles. His respite from executive duties was short-lived; four months later, he was unanimously elected as IMB's interim president by trustees, before the election of current president Paul Chitwood in November 2018.


At Chitwood's request, Meador was approved by trustees to remain in the president's office as interim executive vice president for several months during the transition. In February 2019, at the election of Todd Lafferty as IMB's executive vice president (EVP), Meador agreed to remain as an execu-

tive advisor. In the subsequent months, he would fill the roles of interim vice president of mobilization; interim vice president of support services; and interim vice president of human resources.

"Eighteen months ago, I accepted the mantle of leadership from Clyde Meador, who was serving as interim president," Chitwood said. "At my request, he stayed on and served at my side in various interim roles as I continued to build out our leadership team. Whether as EVP or in mobilization, support services, or human resources, Clyde Meador did what Clyde Meador has always done: serve with humility and grace, lead with vision, inspire with his own personal walk with Jesus and give whatever it takes to get it done."

"The IMB would still be here had not Clyde Meador been here these last 18 months. But it wouldn't be this IMB. It would be less. I thank God for Clyde Meador, and not only for the past 18 months, but for the 46 years he and Elaine have served their Lord and Southern Baptists at the IMB."

John Brady, the IMB's vice president for global engagement, called Meadors "the glue" holding the IMB together.

"Clyde has inspired leaders at all levels across the IMB to abide in Christ as we face the burdens and challenges of leadership," Brady said. 

## Racial reconciliation not a 'finished project' 25 years after historic resolution

By DAVID ROACH | Baptist Press

Charles Carter chaired the Resolutions Committee that led the Southern Baptist Convention to repent of racism and make a historic push for racial reconciliation at the 1995 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta. But what may have been his most significant act of racial reconciliation that summer occurred after he returned home to Birmingham, Ala.

"As chairman of the Resolutions Committee," Carter said, "I was going to do something specific and concrete to implement what we had tried to say in words." So he arranged to have lunch with an African American pastor whom he had known casually. At lunch, Carter expressed his desire to be a friend and "meet occasionally."

He will never forget the pastor's response: "I've met about all I want to. I'm ready to do something."

That launched a years-long partnership between Shades Mountain Baptist Church, where Carter was pastor, and the black church his new friend served. They exchanged pulpits, partnered to bring biblical justice to the inner city and saw church members become friends across

racial lines. A quarter century later, many Southern Baptists tell stories like Carter's. The SBC's words caused people to notice its racial reconciliation resolution. Subsequent actions made the statement's impact reverberate.

Still, on the resolution's 25th anniversary, Southern Baptists have more progress to make when it comes to race. Some key architects of the resolution believe America's present racial strife presents the opportunity for another stride forward.

### 'One of the greatest days of my life'

By 1995, the convention had a history of making statements when current events brought racism to the fore. In 1954, the SBC affirmed the U.S. Supreme Court's school desegregation ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1968, messengers denounced racism following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and riots in more than 60 American cities. (Four years earlier, the convention missed an opportunity when it narrowly defeated a motion to affirm the Civil Rights Act of 1964.)

Events in the 1990s again caused

Southern Baptists to think collectively about racism. Riots in Los Angeles left 63 people dead and more than 2,000 others injured after four police officers were acquitted in the beating of Rodney King, an African American. The 1995 O.J. Simpson murder trial aired public allegations of racism against the Los Angeles Police Department once more.

Those two events "helped set the need" for a 1995 SBC resolution, said Gary Frost, a black pastor who served as SBC second vice president that year. But the convention's 150th anniversary "was the trigger" for a resolution acknowledging the SBC's racist past.

Then-SBC President Jim Henry told a conference audience in late 1994 he had confronted prejudice in his own life and believed Southern Baptists needed to repent of racism. Henry, Frost, Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land and others discussed the need for a resolution on the topic, and their efforts eventuated in a May 1995 multi-ethnic meeting in Nashville to draft a resolution.

"The most powerful memory of that process" was the "absolute

unity in the room about what we wanted to say together," said R. Albert Mohler Jr., then and now president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, whom Frost credits as the resolution's primary author. "It was all saturated in prayer and commitment to Christ."

The draft was submitted to the SBC Resolutions Committee, which presented it to the convention the next month largely unchanged. The SBC adopted it by a nearly unanimous vote June 20.

"That was one of the greatest days of my life," said Frost, who is now associational missionary for the Steel Valley Baptist Association in Warren, Ohio.

The resolution acknowledged that the convention's relationship with African Americans "has been hindered" by slavery's role in the SBC's founding and stated "many" churches had "excluded African-Americans." Messengers "lament[ed] and repudiate[d]" historic acts of racism and "apologize[d] to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime."

See Resolution page 8



# North Carolina Baptists distribute food to those affected by COVID-19

*Biblical Recorder*

Volunteers from Baptists on Mission (BOM), also known as North Carolina Baptist Men, are serving at distribution sites across the state getting food to those affected by COVID-19.

“Our disaster relief volunteers, our disaster relief leaders, drivers and staff are working so hard to make this possible,” said Richard Brunson, BOM executive director-treasurer.

Baptists on Mission received a \$1.6 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide around 8,000 Families Food Box on a weekly basis. The boxes were announced April 17 as part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. It is currently designed to end June 30 but could be extended.

Around 180,000 pounds of food – 150,000 pounds of produce/fruit, 2,000 gallons of milk, 2,000 pounds of cheese and 9,600 pounds of meat – are being distributed to around 10,000 families each week. Brunson said 200 churches and community centers signed up to distribute this food.

“From Murphy in the west to the fishing town of Atlantic in the east, we’ve set up 17 different distribution sites for the produce boxes and 15 different distribution sites for the meat, milk and cheese boxes,” he said.

Most of the USDA grant money will be spent on food for people, but some will be used to pay for refrigerated trucks, fuel and other expenses. The North Carolina Missions Offering donations made through N.C. Baptist churches across the state are also helping with the cost of this ministry. BOM provided more than \$130,000 for COVID-19 grants and \$100,000 for bulk food for churches



Baptists on Mission works to load trucks filled with food purchased with grant money received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (Baptists on Mission photos)



Around 180,000 pounds of food – 150,000 pounds of produce, 2,000 gallons of milk, 2,000 pounds of cheese and 9,600 pounds of meat – are being distributed to around 10,000 families each week.

who are cooking for people in need in their communities.

Brunson said the organization is working through 2-1-1 and *Corona Community.org* to identify people who are high risk and have food or medicine needs. BOM has connected more than 300 families with local

churches who have ministered to their needs.

Hurricane recovery efforts also continue at several locations. With COVID-19 restrictions, most of the

work has to be done with local volunteers but there are some sites that can host small groups.

Visit [baptistsonmission.org](http://baptistsonmission.org) or [nc-missionsoffering.org](http://nc-missionsoffering.org). 

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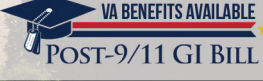
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# Resolution Continued from page 6

## ‘Real advancement’

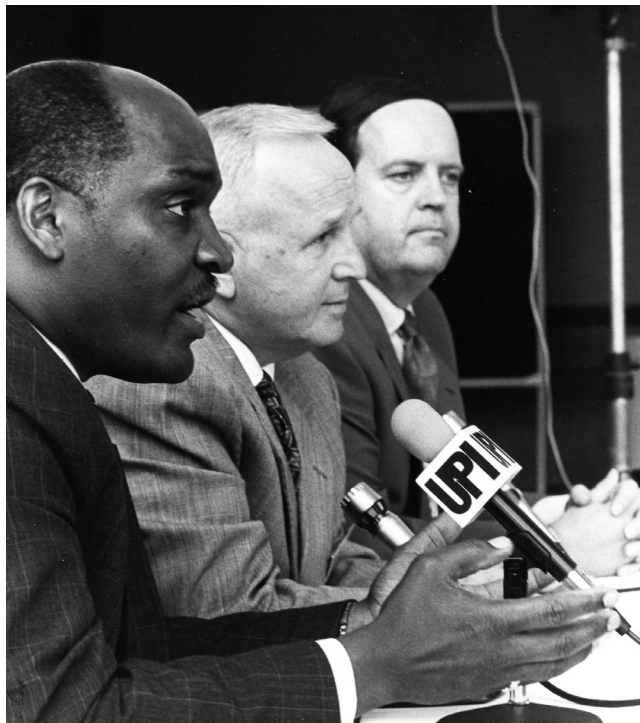
With the resolution adopted, the question became whether Southern Baptists would live up to it. Leroy Gainey, the first trustee-elected black faculty member at any SBC seminary, says the convention has made definite progress in racial reconciliation since 1995. He noted his own experience as pastor of the 1,200-member First Baptist Church of Vacaville, Calif., and his service as a professor at Gateway Seminary. He added that he was among four finalists considered for the seminary’s presidency in 2004.

“I’ve seen a real advancement, some real reaching out, some real desires at brotherhood and sisterhood,” said Gainey, J.M. Frost Senior Professor of Educational Leadership at Gateway.

Among advancements, nearly 1 in 5 Southern Baptist churches is predominantly non-Anglo. Fred Luter became the SBC’s first black president in 2012, and more than two dozen Baptist state conventions that cooperate with the SBC have elected non-Anglos as their presidents. During current SBC President J.D. Greear’s first year in office, 48% of his committee appointments were people of color.

This week, the SBC Executive Committee elected Rolland Slade as its first African American chairman. Yet work remains for the SBC to live up to its 1995 resolution. Despite the high percentage of non-Anglo Southern Baptist churches, 85% of all Southern Baptist church members are white, according to the Pew Research Center. (Just 60 percent of the U.S. population is Anglo.)

SBC entities are still seeking to increase the number of non-Anglos on their ministry staffs. The International Mission Board set a goal this year to have 75 black missionaries by 2025. At the end of last year, the number stood at 13 out of 3,700 career missionaries, according to the IMB’s 2020 CP Ministry Report. Gainey said SBC seminaries likewise have had difficulty recruiting African American professors.



Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) second vice president Gary Frost, from left; Resolutions Committee chairman Charles Carter, center; and Christian Life Commission executive director Richard Land discuss the 1995 resolution apologizing for the racist past of the SBC. (BP file photo)

Racial reconciliation is never “a completely finished project,” Mohler said. “Sanctification individually and as God’s people together comes progressively, and we need to lean into what honors God.”

Frost said two problems Southern Baptists should mobilize to address are a lack of equality in the criminal justice system and the breakdown of black families.

Additionally, he said, Christians can show America that creation in God’s image is the only objective basis for racial equality.

“Conservative African American Christians need our white brothers to step up,” he said.

## ‘A strong hope’

In the wake of protests over the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, by Minneapolis police, there are indications some believers may indeed be stepping up.


A Barna survey released June 16 found nearly all U.S. pastors agree that “the church has a responsibility to denounce racism,” and most (62%) say their church has made a statement on the unrest stemming from Floyd’s death.

SBC leaders issued a statement May 30 acknowledging that “in the hearts of our fellow citizens of color,” incidents like Floyd’s death “connect to a long history of unequal justice in our country.” Three SBC seminary professors wrote a June 15 op-ed in North Carolina’s *Biblical Recorder* news-journal noting “examples of racism” across America “just in the last few weeks.”

They urged believers to “listen willingly” to the perspectives of all people and “strive sincerely to find common ground.”

This summer, the SBC was scheduled to elect more non-Anglos to boards and committees and hear Greear’s vision for racial reconciliation during the contentious 2020 U.S. presidential election. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted cancellation of the 2020 SBC annual meeting, those plans were put on hold. Nonetheless, observers inside and outside the SBC have noted new opportunities to build on the 1995 resolution.

Among them is Charlie Dates, a black Chicago pastor whose church recently began to cooperate with the SBC. He expressed his view during a June 17 online conversation about “race in America” hosted by Executive Committee President and CEO Ronnie Floyd.

“If some strategic moves are made beyond resolutions and declarations,” said Dates, pastor of Progressive Baptist Church, then “the Southern Baptist Convention actually has a strong hope of putting feet to its gospel proclamation.” 

# Baptism Continued from page 5

SBC seminaries, SEBTS in particular, have in reaching people with the gospel.

“The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have charged us to educate their pastors, missionaries, women’s ministers and all other leaders,” Akin said. “Our goal is that every pastor educated at SEBTS would leave here with a commitment to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission.

“Our goal isn’t to have our students leave Southeastern with a passion for high baptism numbers. It’s to have them leave with a passion for the lost, for God’s Word and a passion to fulfill the Great Commission. If we are successful at impressing on students the urgency of eternity and the mission before us, we believe God will use them to reach countless men and women for Christ.”

Thomas Hammond, executive director of the

Georgia Baptist Mission Board, pointed out the need for a renewed, evangelistic spirit across all levels of the denomination.

“There’s no reason for us to point fingers or play the blame game because it’s on me,” Hammond said.

“It’s on us all. So, what we need to do is to really focus on the Great Commission. It’s to remember what Christ reminded us and that’s to keep our eyes on the harvest field because it’s abundant and it’s ready for harvest. It’s important for us like never before to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and to go out into the fields ourselves”

Kenji Adachi, pastor of All Peoples Community Church in the Washington, D.C., metro area, underscored the need for local pastors to involve themselves in evangelism and discipleship.

“It’s on me as a local pastor of a local church to make disciples and to see them baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit,” Adachi said. “So, it’s on me because Jesus has given me the Great Commission as the local pastor in my community to reach these people who are lost and far from Jesus.”

The challenge for Southern Baptists, said Hunt, is to engage unbelievers with intentionality and that starts with praying for and reaching out to one person.

“When it comes to the decline in baptisms, which represents a decline in people having a life-changing encounter with a merciful Savior,” Hunt said, “it’s on us to share the gospel of the eternal, living hope found in Jesus Christ.”

Watch video: [vimeo.com/428591732](https://vimeo.com/428591732). 



# Bryan Loritts opens up about how former church handled 2010 voyeurism incident

*Biblical Recorder*

Well-known speaker and author Bryan Loritts maintains that he did not cover up information related to an incident of criminal sexual misconduct that occurred at a church he previously led in Memphis, Tenn., although he admits he could have advocated more on behalf of victims.

Loritts, who recently joined the staff at The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, has been accused of participating in an “extensive cover-up of sex crimes,” according to independent journalist Julie Roys. He was the lead pastor at Fellowship Memphis in 2010 when the church’s worship director, Rick Trotter, placed a hidden camera in a church bathroom. Trotter was Loritts’ brother-in-law at the time.

Loritts sat down with the *Biblical Recorder* on June 9 to discuss how he and other church leaders responded to the voyeurism incident. The video-recorded conversation marks the first time Loritts has spoken openly about what happened in more than 10 years.

“I didn’t cover anything up,” Loritts said, adding that he only spoke to two victims and encouraged both to press charges. One of Loritts’ sisters was a victim.

“If I had to do it now, I would have risked being sued by my now ex-brother-in-law if it meant being vocal,” Loritts said. “I would have

thrown caution to the wind.”

Loritts told the *Recorder* he terminated Trotter within hours of learning about the hidden camera, but expressed regret over not calling authorities immediately.

“What I should have done immediately was call the cops,” Loritts said. “I didn’t do that.”

The day after learning about Trotter’s misconduct, Loritts said he handed over the device to the church’s executive pastor and instructed him to call the Memphis Police Department and Child Protective Services. Loritts said he was told that church leaders contacted the authorities, but a local news report in 2016 said Memphis police had no record of Trotter’s voyeurism in 2010.

“I didn’t push hard enough for written documentation as it relates to them contacting the authorities,” he said.

Within two weeks, church elders recused Loritts from the church’s decision-making process on the issue because of his familial relation to Trotter.

Church leaders informed the congregation that Trotter was no longer on staff the first Sunday following his termination but did not convey the details of his misconduct based on the advice of legal counsel.

“This idea of secrecy – it wasn’t us trying to hide anything,” Loritts said. “It was following the counsel of the lawyers.”



Bryan Loritts, who recently joined The Summit Church’s staff in Durham, discusses what happened at a Memphis church in a 2010 sex abuse incident. (Screen shot)


In 2011, Trotter began working at Downtown Church in Memphis, Tenn. Loritts recalled meeting with Richard Rieves, Downtown Church’s lead pastor, prior to Trotter being hired.

“I fully disclosed everything to him,” Loritts told the *Recorder*, but admitted that if he could do it over again, “I would have grabbed him by the collars, and I would’ve said, ‘Do not hire him.’”

Trotter was arrested in 2016 for taking illicit pictures of women during worship services at Downtown

Church.

“I feel culpable in what happened with these other people because I didn’t go the extra mile,” Loritts said.

J.D. Greear, who serves as lead pastor of The Summit Church and president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), has pushed for churches to develop better policies and practices to help prevent sex abuse and care for victims. That effort has remained one of Greear’s priorities throughout his tenure as SBC president. 

## Crisis pregnancy clinic helps more clients during pandemic

By **TESS SCHOONHOVEN** | Baptist Press

For many medical clinics and ministries, the weeks of social distancing brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in drastic reductions in the number of people helped.

But the workers at Human Coalition, a multi-site crisis pregnancy ministry with facilities around the country, found themselves serving even more clients through their virtual clinic.

Angie Ivey, director of the virtual clinic, said the brick-and-mortar locations in Texas were already utilizing a virtual model in conjunction with their physical services, but when the statewide shutdown was declared in March, the organization worked to expand the virtual capabilities to other locations as well. Rolling it out to all locations was done over the course of just one weekend, Ivey said.

Serving communities in Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania in addition to the clinics in

Dallas and Fort Worth, Ivey said clients phone in to the virtual call center and are directed to the clinic nearest them for care from social workers, nurses and clinic staff and volunteers.

According to Ivey, Human Coalition was the first crisis pregnancy center to transition to a virtual model, and the results have been encouraging.

“It has really proven to be very successful and has been a very exciting journey,” she said.

With 165 employees across all locations, Human Coalition saw an increase in clients during the months of economic shutdown – a 45 percent uptick in March alone. Many clients were experiencing the stress of an unplanned pregnancy on top of job loss and health concerns.


Ivey said having nurses and social workers available just to talk to women who do not know what to do, to help them understand their options and provide resources and community support has a significant impact, even when done remotely.

Ivey recounted the story of one client who called

in after she lost her job and, due to marital problems, her place to live. Though homeless and unable to find a job because of COVID-19, she wanted to keep her child. Human Coalition social workers were able to help her with a resume and secure her a job working for a hospital. The woman chose life for her baby because she was able to support herself, Ivey said.

Ivey said many expectant mothers have experienced job displacement because they worked in the food service industry. The remote platform is ready to help women in all sorts of difficult situations.

Although the physical clinic locations have not yet reopened, Ivey said Human Coalition is continuing to think through ways to innovate to better serve women at the local and state level.

In October 2019, the N.C. Human Coalition clinic was covered by the *Biblical Recorder* for the addition of an ultrasound machine, a partnership between local churches and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. 

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## The Joy Arising from Our Hope

July 5

**Focal passage: 1 Peter 4:1-2, 12-19**

For the past few months, I have been working with students preparing for AP Language and Literature exams. Because of the pandemic this year's exam was different: one rhetorical analysis essay. My students and I reviewed how the prompt would be worded and essay scored, and then we delved into past questions.

As we read through the texts, we practiced noting the rhetorical or literary strategies used and to what effect given the context and overall message. My clever students pointed out allusions and juxtapositions.

They mused on the pacing of the pronouns (one passage shifting from third person singular to first person plural at a very poignant moment) and the impact of repeated phrases.

Writing to his audience then, Peter, however, says he doesn't want

them to be shocked or surprised. Refining trials were coming. They would suffer. People would misunderstand, mistreat and malign them. "But," Peter says, "rejoice ..." That one tiny shift word pivots the command away from preparation to the joy and hope of proclamation: "*do not be surprised ... but rejoice!*" It's going to get bad, but it's going to get so good! Why do we rejoice when we suffer in faithfulness to Christ? Because we don't suffer alone. We suffer with Christ! There's an intimacy with God and an opportunity for worship that only comes when we are despised and rejected.

So stay strong. Christ will not only sustain you, he will – once again – use what others meant for evil for good and even greater glory!



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

## The Culmination of Our Hope

July 12

**Focal passage: 1 Peter 5:5b-11**

Along with preaching for our online Sunday worship during self-quarantine, my husband would log in to Facebook Live from our home office around 10 a.m. to lead a quick weekday devotion, usually with our infant daughter Liv playfully joining as co-host.

The door to our office doesn't always shut completely, and our Golden Retriever, Cooper, has figured out how to exploit this architectural weakness. You would also see Liv, who is obsessed with Cooper, literally squeal and squirm just at the sight of our four-legged goofball. As fun as it was to watch each weekday morning, I know how difficult the last few months have

been for Will, preaching to empty pews, and for our pastor of youth and families, Cam, spending countless hours editing and uploading videos to make sure our congregation stayed connected.

It's been a long few months that no one expected, but as I write this – praise God! – Will and Cam are preparing for our church's first Sunday morning back together again.

As Peter closes, we see a sweet glimmer of hope coming after a long letter speaking to suffering. Peter continues to encourage his readers in how to live while dispersed – humbly, confidently and soberly – and then promises that God Himself would restore them. Though they lived through the stress and chaos of the unknown, the One who controls all things knew their situation. He Himself would restore, confirm, strengthen and establish them!

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Following God's Design

July 5

**Focal passage: Proverbs 5:3-11, 15-18**

I got into some trouble a few years ago. I was living away from home for the first time while attending seminary and had started a job at a bank. I quickly forgot all the healthy eating habits I was raised with and found myself encountering a break room kitchen that seemed to never run out of fresh-baked goods. A few years and 20 pounds later, the bill came due.

Solomon knows the allure of sin's siren call. He warns his readers about the pit of sexual temptation. Our culture has whole-heartedly rejected the warning of Proverbs and has instead plunged head-first into the wasteland of sexual immorality.

Solomon recognizes the peril of getting too close to sin, so he pleads that we not even approach the door.

To the unmarried couple who

negotiate barriers only to rush past them and negotiate new ones; to the married spouse excusing a flirtatious wink or touch in the workplace; to the one seeking digital concubines behind the false anonymity of a screen; to all these Solomon exclaims, "Flee!"

The dangers are too real and the pleasures too fleeting to trade God's good provision for something lesser. However glamorous the marketing of sin may seem, we should look past the gimmicks and see what wonderful treasures await down the path of God's design.

He does not withhold good from his children.

We can trust that God's blessing for sexuality as he intended is not second-best, it's the real deal.



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

## Pursuing Wisdom

July 12

**Focal passage: Proverbs 8:6-21**

Not long ago I returned from a trip to Europe and had brought some leftover coins for my children.

My kids are young, so the novelty of foreign coins was lost on them, but they did appreciate comparing sizes and colors with our American coins.

Notably, I noticed how they assigned value based on qualities that didn't always correspond to their actual worth. I decided to inform them of the actual worth, but they remained thoroughly unconvinced

that their method had any flaw.

Wisdom can't be reduced to possessing knowledge. We've got to do something with that knowledge, and we've got to do it in a way that navi-

gates the complexities of the world in which we live. It helps to remember that God speaks and provides the wisdom we so desperately need. We find God's words right, truthful, righteous, lacking deception and perversion – a stark contrast to how we might characterize the speech of mankind! Yet, we find that God doesn't just leave us with the obvious gulf between our character and His. No, he creates His character in us!

"To fear the Lord is to hate evil," Solomon tells us. As we grow in the Lord, so too will our wisdom. We are offered the promise of wisdom, "*those who search for me find me.*" Followers of Jesus enter into relation with Him.

This is a dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit living in us, sanctifying us daily. Will we trade in the fading treasures of this world for the true riches of God's wisdom?



## Cut

Continued from page 1

by projections of reduced Cooperative Program contributions and the slowing economy, as well as other factors related to the current moment in society at large. The approved budget includes an estimated \$932,000 in revenue reductions from the \$31.2 million budget for 2019-20.

The tuition reduction, made to assist students financially during the pandemic, was in addition to nearly \$250,000 in student financial aid that was made available at the start of the pandemic.

“By reducing our student tuition we are showing continued commitment to remove any obstacle that may stand in the way of our students going on from here to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission,” SEBTS President Danny Akin said in a statement released by the school. “It is my hope that money will never keep a single student from getting to go as soon as possible.”

In addition to reduced tuition, the 2020-21 budget allowed SEBTS to achieve its goal of not laying off full time staff members during the pandemic. In order to maintain staffing levels, staff will take salary reductions.

Akin’s salary will be reduced by 6%; members of the president’s cabinet will take 5% cuts. Other full time staff will receive reductions based on base salary:

- More than \$60,000: 4%
- \$40,000-60,000: 3%
- \$30,000-40,000: 2%
- Below \$30,000: 1%

Faculty members’ salaries will not be reduced during the 2020-21 budget year, but the base teaching load for faculty will increase from 18 credit hours per year to 21.

SEBTS also will switch insurance carriers from Cigna to GuideStone, saving \$400,000 through reduced premiums. Full Time employees will continue to receive full coverage for themselves and their families at no cost. Employer health reimbursement account contributions will be reduced from 80% reimbursements to 40% reimbursements for deductible costs.


SEBTS had already instituted a hiring freeze and frozen unnecessary spending. At the meeting in April, Akin told trustees the SEBTS administration had created plans to survive cuts of 5-30%, but added, “By God’s grace, I think that right now we’re in a good position to weather this.”

In April, SEBTS’ operating cash reserves totaled \$10.1 million. The funds are separate from board designated endowment funds. Monday, the executive committee gave permission to allow the seminary to release as much as \$3 million in cash reserves to cover any revenue shortfalls in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

In a statement, SEBTS noted it does not anticipate using the reserves, but said the contingency, along with a Paycheck Protection Program loan received in April, would allow the seminary to retain a strong financial position. The loan was made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act stimulus bill Congress enacted in March.

“King Jesus has called us to take the gospel to all nations,” Akin said.

“He is not surprised by the state the world and our country is in, and He has not pressed pause on the Great Commission. We may be surprised and disappointed by all we have experienced in the last few months, but we have not lost sight of our goal. We must press on in our commitment to equip students to serve Southern Baptists and to reach the lost.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE – The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Office of Marketing and Communications contributed to this report.) 

## SBC


Continued from page 2

25% of our Southern Baptist congregations do not report any data.

In North Carolina, roughly only 61% of our congregations complete the ACP.

It would be nice if the SBC had other ways to collect this information from churches, but no one has been able to suggest a better method for collecting this information that allows Southern

Baptists to track our trends and understand our needs. I welcome hearing ideas and suggestions from pastors and church leaders if you have a good solution to this dilemma.

“For God, who said ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” – 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV). 

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Pastor

First Baptist Church Spring Lake, North Carolina, is seeking a Southern Baptist **Bi-vocational Pastor**. The pastor will be needed to preach Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening prayer meeting/Bible study services. Visitation and some office hours will be part of the ministry by the pastor. Salary negotiable. Send résumés to 201 S. Main Street, Spring Lake, NC 28390, or [jbenduredavis@yahoo.com](mailto:jbenduredavis@yahoo.com).

Riverview Baptist Church of Lincolnton, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time Senior Pastor**. We are a conservative body of believers who enjoy a traditional to blended style of worship. We are affiliated and support the SBC, BSCNC and the South Fork Association. We adhere to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. Applicants should have a minimum of five years pastoral experience with some degree of Bible college and/or seminary training. Send résumés: c/o Pastor Search Committee: RVBC, 2230 Riverview Rd., Lincolnton, NC 28092, or email [office@riverviewbaptist.us](mailto:office@riverviewbaptist.us).

Goldston Baptist Church, Goldston, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **bi-vocational Pastor**. Please send résumés and sermon links to [goldstonbaptistchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:goldstonbaptistchurch@yahoo.com) by August 31, 2020.

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>.

### 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).

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:alison@BRnow.org) for information or visit [BRnow.org/Advertise](http://BRnow.org/Advertise).

### 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.

# First

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it's what God has done. ... I believe God loves diversity; He created us and we are all diverse. I think for us to not embrace it is saying that, 'We've got a better idea than You [God].'"

Slade served the last two years as EC vice chair. He was nominated by EC member Jared Wellman, pastor of Tate Springs Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas. After the vote, Slade thanked EC members, his family and his church for their support.

"We praise God together, and let's pray together and let's stay together," he said, "because I've learned that a family that prays together, stays together."

Just prior to Slade's election, EC members approved a bylaw amendment that untethered the group's officer elections from the SBC annual meeting. The move came in response to this year's SBC annual meeting cancellation due to concerns about a COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous language in the EC's bylaws stated that newly elected officers assume their roles at the conclusion of the SBC annual meeting. The new amendment stipulates that officers assume their roles three days after their election. In addition, EC members now have more flexibility to revise or cancel their meetings, according to the bylaw changes.

EC member Dwight Easler, pastor of Corinth Baptist Church in Gaffney, S.C., made a motion to scrap the proposed amendment in order to leave current officers in place until the 2021 SBC annual meeting.

Jim Averett from Birmingham, Ala., spoke in favor of Easler's motion, highlighting that his "greatest concern" was that only one current officer, chairman Stone, would be exiting a leadership position if elections took place based on the expected nominations at the time.

"That appears to me to be an injustice," Averett said, "and flies in the face of excellent, demonstrated performance over the last two years."

Easler's motion failed in a 60-12 vote.

The EC passed another bylaw change that enacted immediately a committee restructuring plan that was approved at its last meeting in February. Previous bylaw language tied the effective date of the retooled organization chart to the conclusion of the now-cancelled SBC annual meeting.

The pair of bylaw changes left outgoing chairman Stone with the responsibility to nominate individuals to fill the newly created committee chairs. Nominations from other EC members were permitted as well. Chairman-elect Slade recommended individuals for three of the four committee leadership positions.

The EC elected the following four committee chairs:

- Robyn Hari, a financial advisor from Brentwood, Tenn., was elected chairman of the Committee on Convention Finances and Stewardship Development. She was nominated by Slade.
- Rob Showers, an attorney from Leesburg, Va., was elected chairman of the Committee on Con-

vention Missions and Ministry. He was nominated by Stone.

- Jim Gregory, senior pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Mountain Home, Idaho, was elected to chair the Committee on Southern Baptist Relations. He was nominated by Stone.

- Rod Martin, CEO of The Martin Organization in Destin, Fla., was elected to chair the Committee on Convention Events and Strategic Planning. He was nominated by Stone.

- Tom Tucker, a vocational evangelist from Rock Hill, S.C., was elected as EC vice chair. Joe Knott, an attorney from Raleigh, N.C., was reelected EC secretary.

Marshal Ausberry, SBC first vice president, said Slade's election shows how far the SBC has come, and also shows the "mighty hand of God at work."

"His election shows the positive transformation that is occurring in the Convention," said Ausberry, president of the National African American Fellowship of the SBC and pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Fairfax Station, Va. "When you think of the founding of the SBC in 1845, largely over the issue concerning the ownership of enslaved persons by missionaries, to the election of Rolland Slade in the 175th year, this is a seminal moment for the Convention and all Southern Baptists."

In other business, the EC voted to recommend SBC annual meeting sites for 2025 and 2027 in Dallas and Salt Lake City, respectively; voted to allow the EC to participate in the Paycheck Protection Program if deemed necessary; and received Cooperative Program allocation and EC operating budget reports.

## Paycheck Protection Program

The EC granted permission for the entity to apply, if deemed necessary, for a Paycheck Protection Program loan of up to \$750,000 through the U.S. Small Business Administration under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

Bill Townes, SBC EC chief financial officer, noted that a loan could be used to potentially offset an anticipated decrease in Cooperative Program giving during the economic downturn related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Venue changes

The EC voted to recommend that messengers to

the 2021 SBC annual meeting move the 2025 SBC annual meeting from Salt Lake City to Dallas. The proposed date of the Dallas meeting would be June 10-11, 2025.

EC members also voted to recommend to messengers that the 2027 SBC annual meeting be held June 8-9 in Salt Lake City. Both recommendations are contingent upon satisfactory contract negotiations.

## Other business

At the close of the meeting, the Credentials Committee notified the EC of the election of a new chairman, Mike Lawson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Sherman, Texas, and an EC member. Stacy Bramlett, the outgoing chairman who is also a member of the EC, remains a Credentials Committee member.

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

In other business, the EC received a 2019-20 second quarter Cooperative Program budget report of \$101,138,686, dated March 31, a 0.4% increase from the same time last year.

The EC received a second quarter 2019-20 EC and SBC operating budget report, showing a negative total change in net assets of \$1,882,883. The loss was due to a drop in stock markets, according to Townes.

During the first six months of the fiscal year through March, revenue was under budget by \$395,098, and expenses were under budget by \$441,131.

Floyd told the group that in its next meeting, the EC would act on behalf of the SBC to adopt a Cooperative Program budget that would "impact every level of SBC life."

"We are now being faced with economic challenges that may lead us to make decisions we would have never imagined in February related to our Cooperative Program allocation budget for the year 2020-2021," said Floyd.

The next EC meeting is scheduled for September 21-22 in Nashville. 

## Searchers find body of retired N.C. pastor Bob Walker

*Biblical Recorder*

**B**ob Walker's family confirmed searchers found his body in the Pupukea Paumalu reserve on June 14. He was 74.

Walker, who moved to Hawaii from Raleigh, N.C., in 2019, was reported missing in mid-

May.

According to a Facebook post, Walker likely died after falling off a steep cliff. Family members said he had dementia.

Walker, a former pastor, attended Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh before moving to Hawaii to be closer to family. 