

Leland Kerr reflects on lifetime of faith, connection at retirement

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Chitwood encourages Asian American Southern Baptists to partner on mission

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BIBLICAL RECORDER

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Cedarville reinstates president; Danny Akin resigns as trustee

By JONATHAN HOWE | Baptist Press

The Cedarville University Board of Trustees reinstated Thomas White as president June 26. White had been on administrative leave since May 1, following the controversial hiring and firing of a faculty member accused of sexual abuse.

The reinstatement comes as the result of independent investigations into both the hiring of Anthony Moore and Moore's conduct while employed at the independent Baptist school.

According to a statement by the board, Husch Blackwell LLP, the firm tasked with the independent investigation, "found no evidence that Moore engaged in any conduct of a sexual nature on campus or with any University student or employee elsewhere."



THOMAS WHITE

The investigation included a "thorough review of all relevant communication" involving White and Moore, the trustees, The Village Church and employment references.

Related to the hiring of Moore, Husch Blackwell LLP concluded Moore was hired out of "benevolent motivation," but White "took steps that he knew, or should have known, clouded the specific nature" of Moore's misconduct, and "subsequently failed to notify the Board of the specific nature" of Moore's misconduct.

White's actions came under scrutiny earlier

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Court disappoints pro-lifers



Southern Baptists participate in the 2019 March for Life in conjunction with a pro-life conference organized by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. The march concludes with a rally at the Supreme Court of the United States in Washington, D.C. (ERLC photo)

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

Pro-life leaders expressed deep disappointment with the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal June 29 to uphold a Louisiana law designed to protect the lives and health of women by requiring hospital admitting privileges for doctors who perform abortions.

In a 5-4 decision, the high court ruled the law – which mandated a physician must have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of a facility where he or she performs an abortion – vio-

lated the U.S. Constitution by imposing an "undue burden" on a woman's right to the procedure. The justices found the Louisiana measure was nearly identical to a Texas admitting privileges law they struck down in 2016.

Pro-life advocates had been hopeful the Supreme Court's willingness to rule on the Louisiana law signaled it was already prepared to revise the legal standard it used when it invalidated the Texas requirement four years ago.

See Court page 11

Getty, Redman headline virtual worship conference

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

Some of today's most renowned and influential worship leaders and artists are coming together for a first-of-its-kind virtual training event designed for anyone involved in worship ministry in the local church.

The Resourcing Worship Virtual Conference, scheduled for Aug. 1, will feature more than 60

speakers and artists delivering keynote addresses and breakout sessions in an interactive online event. Confirmed speakers and worship leaders include Keith Getty, Matt Redman, Shelly Johnson, Mike Harland, Matt Boswell and others. The vocal group Veritas will lead in times of worship throughout the daylong event.

Cost for the event is \$15 per person through

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Pastors need prayers, patience amid pandemic

BSC Communications

Two recent articles related to the comfort levels of people returning to in-person worship highlight the ongoing challenges that pastors and churches continue to wrestle with amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

One survey conducted by the American Enterprise Institute reported that nearly two-thirds (64%) of Americans were “somewhat” or “very” uncomfortable attending indoor worship services due to ongoing concerns over the coronavirus. The survey polled more than 3,000 Americans from late May to early June, and the results were reported by Baptist Press and other media outlets.

While acknowledging that COVID-19 continues to be a very legitimate concern, some pastors are fearful that the practice of worshipping online or via television may tempt members to be slow in returning to church attendance in a new normal. In an article published on Thom Rainer’s “Church Answers” website titled “What is keeping people away?,” leadership consultant and former Southern Baptist pastor Ron Edmondson writes, “People have fallen into a nice routine of online and in-home worship.”

Based on personal conversations and anecdotes I’ve heard from pastors across our state, I believe that they have done a good job trying to weigh the health and safety of their members with the desire to gather together again for corporate worship even as they have attempted to keep everyone happy.

Some churches have felt compelled to go back to meeting outdoors or through online gatherings after they had resumed indoor services because some attendees were testing positive for COVID-19 after participating in indoor worship.

These continue to be difficult and trying times for pastors as they seek godly wisdom and counsel to make the best decisions possible. Some long-tenured pastors feel this current situation has led to some of the most difficult days that they have experienced in ministry. Pastors need your prayers and your understanding as they try to make the best decisions for the church family.

Even if they don’t express it, many pastors know that there are a variety of perspectives and opinions related to the coronavirus, stay-at-home orders, face coverings, worship services and more

among their flock. Pastors know that whatever decisions they make, they will not please everyone. They will be criticized for not opening church services, and they will be criticized for opening church services. They will be criticized for requiring or encouraging face coverings in services, and they will be criticized for not requiring or encouraging face coverings in services. Pastors find themselves in a “no-win” situation.

In these days, difficult decisions, dwindling attendance and other issues can weigh on a pastor and make their calling even more challenging. Now is the time to show them patience and grace as we lift them up in prayer.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Now would be a good time for you to express your personal appreciation to your pastor and let him know you are investing more time in intercessory prayer for him as he ministers during these daily challenges.

A short text or an email to him can offer more encouragement than you realize. Just a few words to let him know you realize his load is heavy and that you appreciate and respect him will be a special and welcomed blessing.

You can also help your pastor and your congregation by making phone calls to others and inviting them to pray with you during that conversation for the pastor and the needs of the people within your church fellowship.

A positive word may cause them to disregard negative thoughts they have been tempted to dwell on in relation to other members or church leadership.

I challenge you to live by the inspired words in scripture that I have included below as we live through unusual and difficult days. Live like who you really are – a child of the God who is love!

“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” – Philippians 4:2.

“Do all things without murmurings and disputing” – Philippians 4:14. 

Five lessons I learned from a COVID-19 spike at our church

By **DEREK ALLEN** | Guest Column

In March, April and May, our church staff braced for a wave of COVID-19 cases to sweep through our church family. It never happened. In fact, for the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic, our church family of about 1,500 only experienced a handful of cases. As far as we know, none of those cases was spread at one of our events. Two weeks ago, that all changed.

Like most churches, we moved to an online-only format in March, but as soon as our governor and state department of health gave us the green light, we started meeting in socially distanced services. A few weeks into those services, we had a coronavirus scare, but it was short-lived.

One of our staff members was exposed to someone who later tested positive for the virus, and our entire staff was with the exposed staff member in a two-hour staff meeting a few

days later. The exposed staff member then tested positive. We had the rest of our staff tested, but everyone else tested negative. No one, including the one staff member who tested positive, showed any symptoms. We breathed a collective sigh of relief, and many of us, including myself, came away from that experience more convinced than before that the only real threat we faced from COVID-19 was our services being shut down again.

Then it happened. The first phone

call came on a Friday from a staff member. “Bad news. I’ve got a fever, body aches, and six out of the 11 symptoms on the CDC’s checklist.”

The next week was filled with phone calls and text messages about symptoms and tests and who had been exposed to whom. By mid-week, we learned that the virus, which would eventually work its way through about half of our staff, had spread to some of our volunteers.

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Leland Kerr reflects on lifetime of faith, connection at retirement

By LES GURA | Wake Forest Baptist Health

Leland Kerr, who retired June 30, spent five decades leading Southern Baptists.

He was a pastor, an associational missions director and church development director, working with seven churches in three states and three Baptist associations. For the last seven years he served as FaithHealth liaison with Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. Kerr coordinated projects like the annual Mother's Day Offering with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), and helped lead FaithHealth's mission of connecting churches and their members to assist those struggling with health care or basic needs.

"I like what it means to get churches into their communities to meet the needs of those in need of health care," Kerr said. "I've really felt called to the position."

Even in retirement, Kerr knows the work of connection never ends. He spent the past few months meeting a new challenge head on – the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects, especially on the poor.

"I think we've had to adapt to a new way of doing ministry, and the one-on-one, face-to-face work has been more difficult," he said. "It's more of a challenge to assist churches, but the needs are still there."

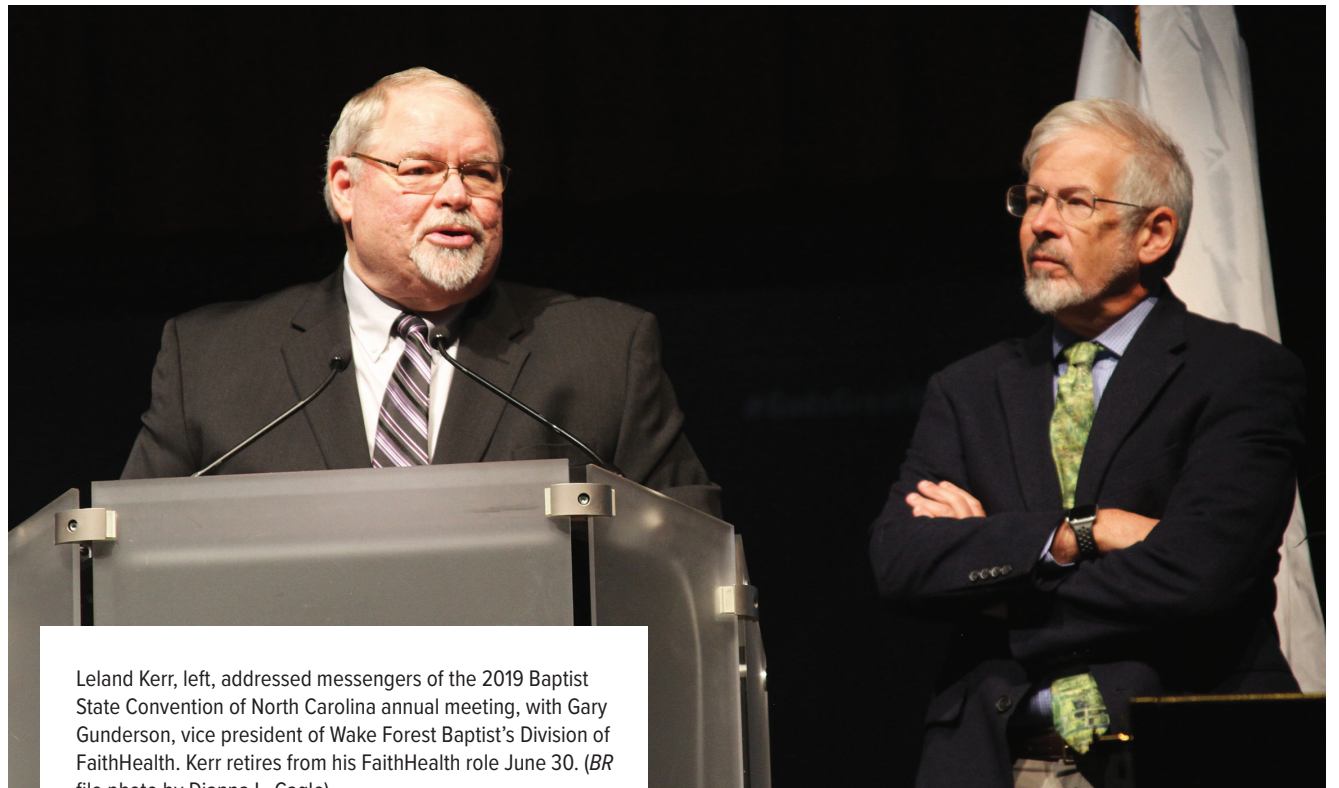
"But we work really well as a team in helping them do the problem-solving, the 'think-tanking.' We are using our creative energy to find ways to reach out to the community and reach out to churches in the community."

Ultimately, the pandemic has only changed the methods, not the work of FaithHealth, Kerr said.

Kerr's grace in handling the challenges of the pandemic speak to his lifetime of skills, his peers said.

"One of the things that makes Leland Kerr unique is that he has served North Carolina Baptists in almost every way conceivable: local church pastor, associational staff member, director of missions, and institutional representative through his role at Wake Forest Baptist," said Brian Davis, former BSC associate executive director-treasurer, who succeeded Kerr as FaithHealth liaison.

"I am hard-pressed to think of anyone else in recent memory that has served the Convention and its churches in so many ways. Leland is a uniquely gifted Baptist, who has uniquely served Baptists



Leland Kerr, left, addressed messengers of the 2019 Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting, with Gary Gunderson, vice president of Wake Forest Baptist's Division of FaithHealth. Kerr retires from his FaithHealth role June 30. (BR file photo by Dianna L. Cagle)

and brought great glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad to not only have served alongside him, but to call him my friend."

Gary Gunderson, vice president of Wake Forest Baptist's Division of FaithHealth, said what Kerr brought to his role is "an utterly unique perspective on the complex fabric of relationships between the Baptists of North Carolina – and broadly the churches of all sorts – and the medical center.

"He has transformed the relationships between the hospital and Baptist State Convention to reflect the shared ministry resting on that complex relationship, and taken us a long way from just talking about formal governance and funding," Gunderson said. "As meaningful as those are, the shared ministries of care, education, prevention and compassion are way more important to the lives of many thousands of people every year."

Gunderson also noted how Kerr, "a pastor's kid and a pastor and friend of many," managed to gain trust in working with hundreds of church leaders, including lay people and clergy.

"He sees with integrity how deeper values and shared work cross over what seems impossible," Gunderson said.

Kerr said he is most proud of strengthening Wake Forest Baptist's partnership with the Baptist State Convention "and hopefully extending that into more of a shared ministry of partnership – by working more closely with Baptist associations, by seeing ways to work with the North Carolina Baptists on Mission organization, by identifying specific needs in a church or association and then finding ways to have the convention fulfill that need."

Kerr identified the joy of the work he's accomplished in his lifetime through the Mother's Day Offering, a program that raises money for hospital patients and their families who need assistance in having bills paid at the hospital.

When a patient is approved for assistance, Kerr said, he often receives letters or emails expressing gratitude.

And then there are the telephone calls.

"To hear their joy," Kerr said, his own voice dropping in awe of the recollection. "Sometimes I could barely understand them for their tears. They didn't know someone would do something like that for them. It was just overwhelming to them."

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Les Gura is director of communications and a counselor with CareNet Counseling, an affiliate of Wake Forest Baptist.) **BR**

Ethnic minority fellowships see growth despite broader SBC declines

By DIANA CHANDLER | Baptist Press

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is growing in three key metrics among ethnic minority fellowships despite a continuing decline among the broader SBC, according to a report the Convention Advance-

ment Advisory Council (CAAC) released June 24.

Southern Baptists comprising six ethnic minority fellowships increased their churches, members, and worship attendance, but suffered declines in missions, baptisms and congregations (a category combining churches

and missions), the CAAC said in its 2020 report to its membership and ethnic fellowship leaders.

At the same time, the broader SBC and white Southern Baptists decreased in all categories included in the report, according to the CAAC Dashboard 2020 from the CAAC Subcommittee on Research.

Minority ethnic fellowships comprised 22.3% of the 51,538 Southern Baptist congregations included in the report regarding 2018, the most recent year studied, using data from LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

The only rises in baptisms in 2018

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National CP giving steady, down only 1.47% for year

Baptist Press

Gifts to the national Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget for June 2020 were below budget by almost \$1.3 million, but the deficit was much less than projections for the month as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact churches financially.

The \$15,106,500.79 given through the CP was 4.11% less than the same month last year. North Carolina's June contribution to the national funding channel was down more than 11% from last year. Other states saw steep declines.

Nearly every church across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has been restricted in some form in the last few months from meeting in person for worship by state and local policies on social distancing and limits on gatherings, though in recent weeks many have resumed gathering while following state and local reopening plans. National CP receipts in June dropped by \$647,919.55 from the June 2019 total of \$15,754,420.34.

The \$15.1 million given was an increase from April (\$14.1 million) and May (\$14.8 million), when the impact of the pandemic was most acutely felt. April marked the lowest monthly national CP total since December 2016.

"I am overflowing with gratitude to God and to our churches for their continued giving through the Cooperative Program," said SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Ronnie Floyd in a statement. "

The faithfulness of our churches in their giving in the midst of this pandemic is so very encouraging! While projections indicated that our CP

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July 18 and \$20 per person after July 18. Groups of five or more can register for \$10 per person through July 18. Group members do not have to be from the same church, but a distinct email address for each individual must be submitted at the time of the group registration.

Registrants can access and view all of the conference content for 90 days following the conclusion of the online event. More information and registration details are available at resourcingworship.com.

"We are striving to equip our churches amid these times of not being able to gather in large groups," said Kenny Lamm, senior consultant for worship and music with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, who is one of the event's organizers.

"This event is made very affordable as a joint venture of worship consultants from state conventions across the country. We hope this conference will have global appeal."

The conference was birthed out of conversations among worship ministry consultants at nearly 20 Baptist state conventions at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic. The event is believed to be one of the first partnerships between numerous state conventions and other Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entities for a large-scale ministry training event.

"We are doing something together that would be impossible for a single state convention to do alone," said David Manner, associate executive director of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, who also works in the areas of leadership and worship. "By providing this virtual conference experience, we have been able to bring together internationally known worship leaders to provide high-quality teaching and training on a

variety of topics at a fraction of what it would cost to attend a comparable event in person."

In addition to Manner, Lamm and other state convention worship consultants, faculty members from SBC seminaries as well as local church pastors and worship leaders will lead more than 60 breakout sessions addressing various topics related to worship ministry.

During one of the breakout sessions, Manner will facilitate a panel discussion on "Worship and the Racial Divide" that will include pastors and worship leaders from two local churches in Topeka, Kansas, whose respective congregations are made up primarily of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds.

Other sessions will address a variety of biblical, theological, practical and technological aspects of worship and local church ministry. Several sessions have been designed for senior pastors, as well.

"It doesn't matter what the size of your staff or congregation is, this virtual conference offers something for everybody at a price that is so affordable," Manner said.

In addition to details about the virtual worship conference, the resourcingworship.com website includes additional resources for pastors and worship leaders that are collected and compiled from worship ministry consultants at various Baptist state conventions and other sources.

Email renewingworship@ncbaptist.org or call (800) 395-5102, ext. 5634.

Visit accevents.com/e/VirtualWorshipConference.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Chad Austin is editor of communications for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.)



KENNY LAMM

Resigns Continued from page 1

this spring when it was revealed that Anthony Moore, a former theology professor at Cedarville, had been accused in January 2017 of secretly recording videos of another staff member as he showered.

At the time, Moore was serving as pastor of the Fort Worth campus of The Village Church.

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

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

Cedarville's board of trustees described themselves as "incredibly grieved over this new information and the questions it raises."

The board acknowledged White "apologized for these mistakes, acknowledged his errors in judgment and oversight, and has expressed remorse."

As a result, the board is requiring White "to complete courses on victim prevention and victim advocacy," and "to lead Cedarville University to emphasize victim prevention, awareness, advocacy, and other related areas."

As a result of the reinstatement, at least two trustee members announced their resignation from the board: Danny Akin, president of

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, and Mark Vroegop, lead pastor of College Park Church in Indianapolis.

Akin noted in a statement released on Twitter that "the events surrounding the hiring of Moore and the five year plan of his restoration was seriously flawed from the beginning and poorly implemented once he arrived at Cedarville."

Akin called the independent investigation report "extremely troubling" and the reinstatement of White a decision he "could not support."

Vroegop issued a similar statement on his website, saying he "could not support" the direction of the board,

and that he did not "believe these steps are sufficient in light of what the report revealed."

Other Cedarville trustees with Southern Baptist ties who remain on the board include Corey Abney, senior pastor at Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla.; Jason Duesing, provost at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Hayes Wicker, interim pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in Mooresville, N.C.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Jonathan Howe is vice president for communications at the SBC Executive Committee. Diana Chandler, Baptist Press general assignment writer/editor, contributed to this report.)

NEWS BRIEFS

Mississippi flag

(Biblical Recorder) Mississippi governor Tate Reeves signed a bill June 30 to replace the state flag to a design that does not include the Confederate symbol, two days after the state House and Senate voted in support of the change. On July 1 state officials held a ceremony to retire the flag and send it to a history museum. Residents will vote on a new design in November.

Mississippi Baptists had joined other groups in calling for the change June 23 in a statement signed by Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) officials and former MBC presidents.

“We further encourage all Mississippi Baptists to make this a matter of prayer and to seek the Lord’s guidance in standing for love instead of oppression, unity instead of division, and the gospel of Christ instead of the power of this world,” the statement said.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and a Miss. native, commended the move. “Skeptics might suggest that Mississippi’s move is just about a symbol. I understand that sentiment, but would suggest that symbols matter, too – especially when those symbols point not toward heaven but toward hell,” he wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed.

The House voted to retire the flag first with a vote of 91-23. The Senate followed with a 37-14 vote.

State legislators put the emblem on the upper left corner of the flag in 1894.

Voters chose to keep the flag in a 2001 statewide election. An increasing number of cities and all of Mississippi’s public universities have taken down the state flag in recent years. But until now, efforts to redesign the flag sputtered in the Republican-dominated Legislature.

Tennessee lawmakers pass pro-life bill

(Tennessee Baptist Mission Board) On the last day of the Tennessee General Assembly legislative session, a sweeping pro-life bill went from near extinction to becoming law.

The bill, which is considered one of the strictest pro-life legislations in the country, includes a provision that makes an abortion illegal except to save the life of the mother or in cases of serious risk once a once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which can be as early as six weeks’ gestation.

House Bill 2263 was passed late June 18 and the companion Senate Bill (SB) 2196 was passed just after midnight June 19. The votes in both chambers were by landslide margins and Gov. Bill Lee has promised to sign it once it arrives on his desk. The bill closely resembles pro-life legislation Lee proposed in January, legislation many thought had been derailed in this session by the COVID-19 pandemic. A late surge to close out the legislative session brought the bill from a figurative scrap heap to passage before legislators were scheduled to adjourn for the year.

USCIRF urges Nigerian government to intervene

(Baptist Press) Citing the murder of “hundreds” of Christians in Nigeria in June by a Boko Haram faction, U.S. religious freedom advocates urged the Nigerian government to intervene to protect religious freedom there.

The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a Boko Haram faction, is blamed for three June attacks in Northeast Nigeria that killed at least 121 and injured hundreds of residents of Christian villages, according to news reports. At least 20 Nigerian soldiers were also killed.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) encouraged the Nigerian government to protect religious freedoms under attack there.

“The Nigerian government needs to be doing more to protect the freedom of religion, particularly in the northeast region,” USCIRF Vice Chair Tony Perkins, a Southern Baptist, said in a June 22 press release. “Over two years after ISWAP abducted Leah Sharibu, it is unacceptable to see the group continue to inflict such devastation on the Nigerian people.”

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Almost two weeks after that first phone call, we are still waiting to find the end of the virus’ spread among our church family. This has been extremely challenging as a pastor and leader, and I hope I can share my experience with others who might learn from our mistakes dealing with COVID-19. Here are five lessons I learned.

1. There is a second wave. While I’m not going to get into the debate about the national and international second wave of COVID-19 cases, the second wave is real for our church family. In fact, this is really the first wave. We didn’t see anything like this in March, April or May, but what we are watching now can only be described as a wave of infections spreading through our church.

2. It happens fast. One week from the time I received the first phone call reporting symptoms, we were aware of more than a dozen people showing symptoms. What was even more shocking was that we could track four generations of transmission from the original person. We are two weeks in, and the numbers are growing at a faster rate now than they were last week.

3. Assume every sniffle is COVID-19, and act quickly. Like most churches and organizations, we had been following the recommended steps of isolation, testing and notifying those who have been in contact with anyone who tests positive. We’ve learned that the tests take too long, and false positives are possible along with false negatives.

We’ve experienced both. We’ve also learned that most COVID-19 cases mimic other common illnesses and even allergies in the early stages. The phrase, “I thought it was just allergies,” has been heard all too often among our staff in the past two weeks.

At first, we followed the health department guideline of quarantining anyone who had been within six feet for more than 15 minutes of someone

who is showing symptoms. Now, we quarantine anyone who even walked by the same building as someone with symptoms. If we had acted quickly to quarantine the entire staff, we would have cut our church-wide cases by at least half.

4. COVID-19 is a serious illness. Some of our staff experienced a day or two of mild symptoms, but several are still dealing with severe fever, fatigue, breathing problems and other symptoms. It has been a harrowing and demoralizing journey for our team, and the first person who reported symptoms has just started feeling some relief in the past few hours.

Thankfully, we had only one short hospitalization, but please don’t let that keep you from taking this seriously. Remember, we are less than two weeks into this, and at least one staff member is dealing with complications that could result in hospitalization. Hospitalizations aside, it has been heartbreaking to watch those I love and lead suffering intensely.

5. Isolation and social distancing work. I’m convinced that one of the reasons the virus hasn’t spread faster and farther is that we have been following procedures designed to isolate sick people and keep everyone else socially distanced. At the same time, we had gotten comfortable, and on a few occasions we were a little lax in those policies. We can trace almost all of the infections back to one of those times.

The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual impact of COVID-19 is significant. We’ve all blamed ourselves in some ways, and the last two weeks have presented new challenges daily. We trust the Lord is working through our suffering for His eternal glory and our eternal good, and perhaps part of that good and glory is that you can learn from our journey.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Derek Allen is the senior pastor of First Baptist Tillman’s Corner in Mobile, Ala. He blogs at jderekallen.com.)

Interested in writing Sunday School lessons?
Contact editor@BRnow.org.

2021 VBS archaeology theme leads kids to unearth truth about Jesus

By AARON WILSON | LifeWay Christian Resources

Next summer, kids will roll up their sleeves and grab excavation gear as they head to archaeological sites of present-day Israel with “Destination Dig,” the 2021 Vacation Bible School (VBS) theme from LifeWay Christian Resources.

In “Destination Dig,” kids will take the role of junior archaeologists as they embark on an adventure to study pieces of the past to learn the truth about who Jesus is and why He came.

Along the way, they’ll discover the truth of Jeremiah 29:13, that God reveals Himself to people when they seek and search for Him with all their hearts.

“Time and time again, archaeologists’ discoveries affirm the veracity of scripture,” said Melita Thomas, VBS and kids ministry specialist for LifeWay.

“By rooting Bible stories in tangible, historical finds, kids will discover for themselves that the Bible is true and that every page of scripture helps present the absolute and unwavering truth of the gospel.”

Famous artifacts and historical finds, including pottery jars holding the Qumran scrolls, the Pool of Siloam, Caiaphas’ steps and a first century, rolling gravestone, will help children get a visualization of biblical

events such as Jesus’ birth, miracles, betrayal, death, resurrection and the spread of the early church.

Each day of the week is framed around a different, overarching truth, including:

- Jesus came as God promised.
- Jesus demonstrated God’s power.
- Jesus was betrayed and rejected.
- Jesus died and rose again.
- The Bible is true.

“Archaeology is, at its core, a search for truth,” Thomas said. “And God has promised that people will find Him when they wholeheartedly search for truth.”

Throughout the VBS experience, kids will explore different rotation sites and activities including a Worship Rally Dig Site, Bible Study Tent, Artifact Crafts, Mess Tent Snacks, Recreations Ruins, Missions Market and Desert Cave Music.

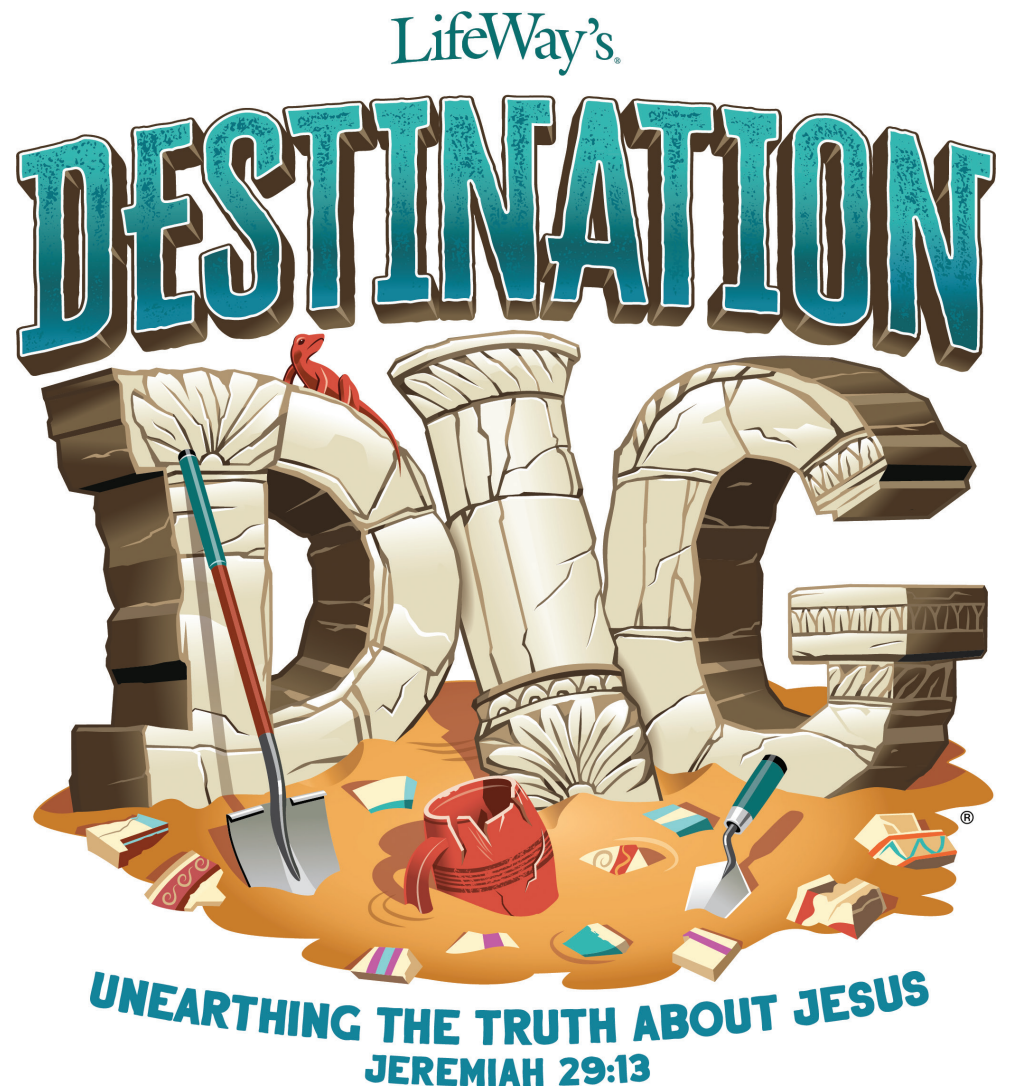
“Destination Dig” employs the motto, “Seek Truth! Find Jesus!”

VBS remains one of the most popular church programs in the U.S., LifeWay Research shows.

Six in 10 Americans say they went to VBS growing up, and 95% of parents with a child who attended VBS say it provided a positive experience.

VBS also continues to be a leading outreach event for churches.

“Last summer, more than 58,000 people made professions of faith as a



direct result of VBS,” Thomas said.

“Destination Dig” was revealed through a Facebook Live event June

30.

More information can be found at lifeway.com/vbs. 

Baptist Children’s Homes reminded of its history during challenging climate

By BLAKE RAGSDALE | BCH Communications

Even in the midst of the challenging circumstances brought about by COVID-19, Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina (BCH), which marks its 135th anniversary this fall, has remained operational. Deemed an “essential entity,” the non-profit ministry has continued caring for the needs of North Carolina children and families throughout its 23 statewide locations.

“Unlike other businesses and organizations that were required to curb their operating hours or even close their doors, we are open and must remain open,” said BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell. “The needs of the children we serve cannot be placed on hold.”

Blackwell and his leadership team put measures in place in order to continue providing the highest quality of care to boys and girls, many who have been removed from their family’s custody due to abuse and neglect. “We have complied with protocols set forth by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), N.C. Department Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), local health departments,

and regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS),” Blackwell said. “In fact, many of the CDC and NCDHHS protocols to safeguard against COVID-19 are practices BCH has utilized for years.”

According to Blackwell, staff members ranging from case managers to cottage parents, who live with as many as ten children in a BCH cottage, have stepped up their responsibilities during the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and have done so without complaint. “I hear from our staff members every day, and I am humbled and inspired by their loyalty, commitment and strong Christian witness as they give tirelessly during these challenging days,” Blackwell says. “Not only are they caring for numerous boys and girls, as they have always done, but they have taken on the role of educators because of school closings.”

Despite not being educated in the traditional classroom setting, children have experienced academic success as they have undertaken their studies in their cottages. As Blackwell and his leadership team have traversed the COVID-19 climate, he has not forgotten BCH’s rich history and that the ministry has navigated similar territory years ago.

“Those guiding BCH before us weathered the flu pandemic of 1918 as well as the polio quarantine of the early 1950s,” he said. “I have not only seen the presence of the Lord within what we are facing today, but I am reminded that His mighty hand has seen us through such difficulties time and time again.”

As BCH approaches its anniversary, Blackwell was inspired to create a short documentary that encapsulates this history while celebrating God’s providence throughout 135 years of ministry. Blackwell created the script and provided the voiceover while Blake Ragsdale, BCH director of communications, culled together footage and edited the three-minute video.

“We are thankful for our past and those who came before us that laid the foundation we stand upon today,” Blackwell says. “Most importantly, we are thankful that Jesus Christ is the heart of the BCH ministry. He is changing children’s lives today just as He did when the first child came into our care in 1885.”

Watch the three-minute documentary at bchnc.org/bch_strong. 

Chitwood encourages Asian American Southern Baptists to partner on mission

By LIZ TABLAZON | BR Assistant Editor

International Mission Board (IMB) President Paul Chitwood thanked Asian American Southern Baptists for sending, giving to and praying for missionaries during an online monthly meeting June 25.

In a conversation with the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Asian American Collective on "staying missionally engaged," he encouraged participants to consider joining the mission field, and to point others who may be interested in international missions to the IMB.

Speaking about IMB's goal of reaching growing urban centers across the globe and addressing participants from Los Angeles and New York City, Chitwood said, "Many of you have a much better idea as to how to do that than the typical IMB missionary who came from a little town in the Southeastern United States ... please come and partner with us."

Chitwood addressed a question about how to encourage next generation church leaders who feel there is no home for them in the denomination and perceive Asian American initiatives to be targeted toward first generation immigrant populations.

He assured listeners of his priority to rebuild or establish new relationships with church plants and other groups "to grow this cooperative missions family. The intent behind that is not to grow the International Mission Board, not to have bigger numbers or more success at the IMB."

"We are a vision-driven organization. Our vision is a vast multitude standing before the throne ... it's the vision of heaven. What we know is that vision will not be fulfilled by white Southern Baptists. That vision



Paul Chitwood, seen here with Korean Baptist leaders at a conference last November, recently challenged Asian Americans to stay "missionally engaged" by joining the IMB on mission. (BP file photo by Chris Carter)

will not be fulfilled just by Southern Baptists. That vision will be fulfilled by God's church everywhere and anywhere it is."

Ezra Bae, who serves as an IMB mobilizer for Asian American churches, added that second generation leaders, having grown up knowing their parents' culture and American culture, have cross-cultural experience and "can do a lot of what's on the mission field."

Race relations

Chitwood pledged to work more closely with Asian Americans and speak out on behalf of them in regard to racism, having recently reflected on violence toward Asian Americans in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He also encouraged them to remain

steadfast in their own fight against racism and support of Black brothers and sisters.

He said to look at the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), which states in Article 15: "In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism..."

"We have not agreed to a statement of faith that says racism is wrong. We believe racism is wrong," Chitwood said. "But we have agreed to a state-

ment of faith that says Christians should oppose racism."

Chitwood encouraged younger Southern Baptists, in particular, to not grow weary in doing good.

"When you're standing against racism, you are doing what Southern Baptists have agreed to do. Whether we have [done it well] is another question, but you are doing what we have professed that we will do. ... Do not sit down, continue to stand."

Peter Yanes, SBC executive director of Asian American relations and mobilization, said in a statement to the *Biblical Recorder*, "Amid this ongoing pandemic and racial unrest, our Asian churches shouldn't lose sight of the importance and the urgency of the gospel."

"The Asian American Collective of 2,000 churches can do better and stronger by coming together to reach our communities for Jesus Christ in partnership with our Southern Baptist Convention mission entities, like the International Mission Board."

"We're grateful for Dr. Paul Chitwood and the IMB's strong commitment to stand by us against all forms of xenophobia and racism, and the partnership to reach Asians locally and globally with the gospel." BR

High court affirms religious access

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

The U.S. Supreme Court narrowly upheld June 30 a state tax credit scholarship program that includes religious schools, thereby maintaining its recent support of the right of faith groups to participate in government programs.

The high court voted 5-4 to overturn a Montana Supreme Court decision that invalidated a state program that provides a tax credit of up to \$150 for a donation to a Student Scholarship Organization (SSO).

Contributions to SSOs finance scholarships given to families for stu-

dent tuition at private schools of their choosing.

The program approved by the state legislature includes Christian and other religious schools.

The Montana high court invalidated the entire program in a 2018 opinion because the law includes religious schools.

In overturning a lower court decision, the Montana justices said the plan violates the state constitution's "no-aid provision" regarding religious schools.

The ruling came in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*. BR

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 2019 or 2020. All entries become property of the Baptist State Convention.

Mail 2 copies to:
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PO Box 1107
Cary, NC 27512-1107

The Deadline for submission is July 31, 2020
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(800) 395-5102, ext. 5618
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Entries wanted for historical writing competition

Biblical Recorder

Each year the Historical Committee of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) sponsors a writing competition.

There are three categories: church history, association history (includes agencies and institutions); and biography, autobiography, memoirs and personal reflection. For the 2020 competition, the entries should have been released in 2019 or 2020.*

Older church histories can qualify if additional work has been done to bring them current to this date, and have not been previously submitted.

The deadline for submission is July 31. Winners will be recognized at the 2020 BSC annual meeting in November.

One of the tasks of the Historical Committee is to encourage churches, associations, institutions and agencies who are affiliated with the BSC to preserve historical

documents, artifacts, correspondence and records.


Closely related to this task is to encourage churches, associations, etc. to produce a “high standard history of individuals, churches, associations and conventions.”

The competition was established to recognize and reward excellent historical publications.

To enter your history book, DVD, etc., mail two copies to: BSC, History Committee, P.O. Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512-1107. Contact

Penny Cozadd at (800) 395-5102, ext. 5618, or pcozadd@ncbaptist.org.

All entries become the property of the BSC Historical Committee and will be added to the N.C. Baptist Historical Collection (also known as the Ethel Taylor Crittenden Collection in Baptist History) at Wake Forest University.

For more information about the collection, visit: zsr.wfu.edu/special/collections/nc-baptist-historical-collection/. 

SBC Continued from page 3

were reported among Hispanic, Native American and “Other Ethnic” Southern Baptists, with the largest increase among Hispanic Southern Baptists, the CAAC reported.

Peter Yanes, who leads and coordinates SBC Executive Committee (EC) work among ethnic minority fellowships, said the data is important in building partnerships to fulfill the Great Commission.

“This will provide a better picture and understanding on how diversity and ethnicity should influence our ministry strategy, and hopefully will foster intentional partnership among our churches for the gospel,” said Yanes, SBC EC executive director of Asian American relations and mobilization. “There is much more we need to do in order to get relevant data to the local churches and pastors so that frontline decision making is based on relevant data and accurate facts.”

Dennis Mitchell and Minh Ha Nguyen compiled the data as co-chairs of the CAAC Subcommittee on Research. The report, combining Annual Church Profile (ACP) data from LifeWay Research and Racial and Ethnic Reports from NAMB’s Center for Missional Research, is the latest and most thorough study of Southern Baptist ethnic diversity available from the SBC EC.

NAMB’s Center for Missional Research provides more accurate information on racial, ethnic and language categories and names, Mitchell and Nguyen said.

“For example, ACP has only nine ethnic identifications while the [NAMB] reports provide over 30 ethnic and language groups,” the two said in written comments.

“In addition, CAAC is doing further research to identify ethnic and language groups among the ‘Other Asian’ category which includes some of the newest ethnic members of the SBC family (e.g. Chin, Nepalese, Burmese, Persian, South Asian, etc.). Often, these overlooked groups are some of

the most dynamic ones showing much vitality and growth.”

Following are CAAC findings in various ethnic categories.

All ethnic fellowships combined

Growth: 8,696 churches, up 1.02% from 8,608; 1,481,351 members, up 1.46% from 1,459,972; 618,602 in worship attendance, up 6.31% from 581,868.

Decline: 11,504 congregations, down 0.15% from 11,522; 2,809 missions, down 3.5% from 2,914; 27,160 baptisms, down 3.74% from 28,215.

White Southern Baptists

Decline: 40,033 congregations, down 0.91% from 40,400; 38,762 churches, down 0.46% from 38,940; 1,271 missions, down 12.96% from 1,460; 13,331,855 members, down 1.58% from 13,545,666; 4,679,193 worship attendance, down 1.25% from 4,738,620; 219,301 baptisms, down 2.92% from 225,907.

African Americans

Growth: 3,382 churches, up 1.23% from 3,341; 907,420 members, up 0.05% from 907,011; 258,970 worship attendance, up 3.69% from 249,744.

Decline: 3,920 congregations, down 0.23% from 3,929; 538 missions, down 8.5% from 588; 9,428 baptisms, down 15.35% from 11,137.

Hispanics

Growth: 3,509 congregations, up 0.09% from 3,506; 2,275 churches, up 2.39% from 2,222; 234,658 members, up 7.34% from 218,614; 142,454 worship attendance, up 4.83% from 135,894; 8,053 baptisms, up 20.32% from 6,693.

Decline: 1,234 missions, down 3.89% from 1,284.

Asian Americans

Growth: 2,095 congregations, up 1.06% from 2,073; 1,615 churches, up 2.09% from 1,582; 93,784

worship attendance, up 0.43% from 93,382.

Decline: 170,093 members, down 0.89% from 171,631; 480 missions, down 2.24% from 491, and 4,358 baptisms, down 24.80% from 5,795.

Southern Baptist Asian Americans include Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian and Vietnamese.

Native Americans

Growth: 913 baptisms, up 1.00% from 904.

Decline: 431 congregations, down 0.92% from 435; 390 churches, down 0.25% from 391; 41 missions, down 6.82% from 44; 35,829 members, down 12.40% from 40,900; 15,301 worship attendance, down 4.05% from 15,947.

Other Ethnic and Language Groups

Growth: 516 missions, up 1.78% from 507; 133,351 members, up 9.47% from 121,816; 108,093 worship attendance, up 24.39% from 86,901; 4,408 baptisms, up 19.59% from 3,686.

Decline: 1,550 congregations, down 1.84% from 1,579; 1,034 churches, down 3.54% from 1,072.

The Other Ethnic and Language Groups category is composed of multiple groups including Haitians, Nigerians, Kenyans, Middle Easterners, Brazilians, Slavic people, Jewish people and other language groups.

The findings are in concert with 2019 ACP data released in June, which shows SBC declines in baptisms, members, missions, and worship and Sunday School attendance, alongside a 0.16% increase in the number of churches.

The CAAC report, in its third year, was conceptualized and designed by Ken Weathersby, who retired in late 2019 as SBC EC vice president for convention advancement.

The CAAC said it plans to continue the dashboard for the next five years to establish sufficient information to analyze trends. 

Gains, losses noted in report on human trafficking

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

A nearly equal number of countries received upgrades and downgrades regarding their efforts against human trafficking in the last year, the U.S. State Department said in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report.

The State Department's report, which was released June 25, graded 22 governments higher than the previous year but demoted 23 in its tier system of categorizing how 188 countries performed in preventing trafficking, protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers. An estimated 25 million adults and children are victims of sex trafficking or forced labor, according to the State Department.

The 20th annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report "helps us to see just how much work there is yet to do in helping vulnerable people escape the trap of these predators and predatory networks," Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said in written remarks. "That 25 million people are enslaved around the world is an indictment of our age. That many ignore this reality is an even further indictment. God created human beings in His image and never gave human beings dominion or ownership over other image bearers.

"The Scriptures tell us that those who traffic in human beings are in rebellion against God's justice (1 Timothy 1:10)."

In introducing the report, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said, "[D]esecration of the inherent value and immeasurable worth of human beings, each of us created in the image of God, makes human trafficking a truly wicked act."

The United States joined 33 other countries in Tier 1, a category reserved for governments that fully comply with the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking.

Meanwhile, China and Russia were among 19 countries in Tier 3, which is for governments that "do not fully meet" minimum standards and "are not making significant efforts to do so," according to the report. Under federal law, President Trump will have 90 days to determine whether to elimi-

nate non-humanitarian, non-trade-related foreign aid to governments in Tier 3.

Among the country upgrades and downgrades, Namibia and Singapore moved up one level to Tier 1, while Japan fell from Tier 1 to Tier 2. Afghanistan, Algeria, Lesotho and Nicaragua fell from the Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 3. Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Mauritania and Saudi Arabia moved from Tier 3 to the Tier 2 Watch List.

Tier 2 is for countries that do not fully satisfy minimum requirements but "are making significant efforts," while the separate Tier 2 Watch List is reserved for countries that do not comply with minimum standards and are experiencing increased numbers of victims and failing to demonstrate efforts to combat trafficking.

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., a leader in the anti-trafficking effort in Congress, described the report as "tough but fair."

"Friends are taken to task," he said. "It appears to call balls and strikes accurately. ... The TIP report takes modern day slavery head-on, providing a measuring stick for progress – or for regression, and sanction."

Smith's original anti-trafficking bill, which became law in 2000, established the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and required an annual report. He also has authored four more anti-trafficking laws since then.

The report said the U.S. efforts that enabled it to remain in Tier 1 included "increasing the number of investigations, increasing the amount of funding for victim services, and increasing enforcement of the prohibition of imports made wholly or in part by forced labor."

Yet, it also said the U.S. "prosecuted fewer cases and secured convictions against fewer traffickers [than the previous year], issued fewer victims trafficking-specific immigration benefits, and did not adequately screen vulnerable populations for human trafficking indicators."

The Polaris Project, which describes itself as "a data hub for the anti-human trafficking field," said in its assessment of the TIP Report, "There is not

enough work being done federally to investigate labor trafficking and hold businesses accountable for labor trafficking abuses." Polaris said the report shows that only about 5% of federal convictions and prosecutions of human trafficking are labor related.

Joining the United States in Tier 1 were Argentina, Australia, Austria, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Guyana, Israel, South Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

In addition to China and Russia, Tier 3 consisted of Afghanistan, Algeria, Belarus, Burma, Burundi, Comoros, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Lesotho, Nicaragua, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, South Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan and Venezuela.

Last year, Trump limited specific kinds of aid to the governments of 15 countries in Tier 3, according to Pompeo. In other anti-trafficking acts by the administration this year, the president hosted a White House Summit on Human Trafficking and signed an executive order to fight trafficking and online child exploitation in this country, Pompeo said.

Upon the TIP Report's release, John Richmond, ambassador-at-large over the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, said the "report and the United States have made a positive difference." He said since the United States enacted the original anti-trafficking measure, the United Nations has adopted a protocol against trafficking and 154 countries have approved comprehensive anti-trafficking bills.

"The call of the 20th anniversary is clear," Richmond said. "We must commit ourselves to our goal of freedom. What traffickers are doing is an affront to the dignity of every human life, and we can stop traffickers, protect victims and work to prevent this crime."

The report, which covers April 2019 through March 2020, is available online at the U.S. State Department's website.

AROUND THE STATE

Staff change

Calvary Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, has called **WILL TOBUREN** as senior pastor. Members voted June 21. He has spent the last seven years at The Summit Church, Durham, area as executive pastor for discipleship ministries and previously served at Calvary for 16 years in various leadership positions.

He has a master of arts in reli-

gious education from Southeastern Seminary. He is pursuing a doctor of ministry degree with a concentration in pastoral leadership.

He also previously worked at Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte. A Utah native, Toburen served in the U.S. Air Force.

He and his wife, Julie, have four children, Abby (21), Jackson (18), Blake (13), and Alex (11). He begins work in mid-July. The church plans an installation service Aug. 2.

Have staff changes, retirements, obituaries or church news you want to share?
Send to editor@BRnow.org.

You can also advertise open positions through our classifieds page in print and online.
Contact advertise@BRnow.org.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

How Should I Respond to Politics?

July 19

Focal passage: Romans 13:1-10

When I was in high school, I became obsessed with both Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr. I bought Graham's autobiography – *Just as I Am* – and read through the book, but loved the glossy photographs the best.

Around this time, I also studied a speech by King in English class, noting the power of his rhetoric and his consistent use of biblical allusions. I loved how unapologetic King was with applying his theology to daily living. Watching clips of him, he was confident and steady in his conviction – ready and able to endure whatever may come to see the goodness of God recognized in the Black men and women of America.

Both Graham and King sparked a deep love for theology and ethics in me that eventually led to seminary

where I studied how to responsibly interpret scripture and see it change lives at home and on Capitol Hill.

As Christians, we are called to balance the providence of God with the precepts of God. In the book of Romans, we are told to both honor government and its leaders as well as obey the Lord.

We pray for our leadership – that they might know Christ, call out injustice and pursue genuine peace. We live that daily in our homes, towns and workplaces, and call others to do the same in love.

People remember Graham and King not simply because they were powerful speakers, but because they led with love and conviction. They were powerful in Christ!



LINDSEY HARRIS
member, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Asheville

We Are Joined Together

July 26

Focal passage: Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:8-10, 19-22

When I moved to Wake Forest in 2011 to begin seminary, I didn't know anyone. I had sensed the call into ministry at 16 and attended a summer forum for youth where I met two women – one in her 20s and the other in her 40s – both pursuing their masters of divinity, and I knew right then that would be me.

Fast-forward five years. I was 21 and moving hand-me-down furniture into Flaherty Farms with my parents, hyped at finally getting to study theology at a formal institution. I didn't realize how hard moving somewhere alone would be, even if I was literally living my dream come true.

In God's grace (and President Danny Akin's loving, but unapologetic push in orientation for students to find a local church), I was led to Faith Baptist Church in Youngsville. Over the next year or two, my church became my family. I went to Wednesday night Bible study led by our pastor and an inductive women's Bible study led by a woman (a space that was so needed and refreshing for me as a female seminary student when most of my classes were predominantly male).

When God calls us to Himself, He also calls us to His church – a group of different people who come together to be family for one another. We pray together, study the Word together, weep together, rejoice together, repent together and continue on together – all because of Christ, the One who calls us and then joins us together!

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Living Wisely

July 19

Focal passage: Proverbs 14:8-15

It happens every time. Even after all these years of marriage, every road trip has that moment where we are rapidly approaching a fork in the road, and I, mind numbed after hours of driving with crying children in the back seat, cannot remember which exit I'm supposed to take. The usual arrangement is that I'm not allowed to touch any electronic devices while driving so if there is a navigational question, my wife must find the answer. This fork in the road always brings about a panic trying to load an app and determine whether we need to get across four lanes of traffic to make an exit. We should have learned by now, but we haven't.

It's important to know which way you're going, and it's important to be going the right way. One of the foundational qualities of a wise person is

that they consider their way. They are not content to simply "go with the flow" without deeper analysis.

It can be quite the challenge to choose the difficulty of the narrow path when it seems like those taking the multi-lane highway are enjoying all pleasures while you're missing out. Mercifully, Proverbs reminds us that we don't actually know what's going on in the heart of another. All we can see is the outward appearance, and that can often be deceiving. In our age of perfectly-curated social media personas, we are constantly bombarded by what appear to be pain-free lives. Yet, the wisdom of Proverbs reminds us not to base our choices on such vanity. Instead, following Jesus will lead us to true and lasting joy.



MANNY PRIETO
lay pastor, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh

Pleasing God

July 26

Focal passage: Proverbs 15:33-16:11

In my short years as a pastor, I have quickly realized just how precious it is to have a teachable heart. Sure, it would be nice to always instinctively know the right thing to say or do in any situation, but being humble enough to listen and learn is far more precious. All of us are Jesus' sheep, sitting under His teaching, and all of us have much learning to do.

Some of my greatest joys as a pastor have involved difficult conversations with members where I have just been in awe of God's mercy by encountering a meek and teachable spirit in a brother or sister. Some of my greatest moments of spiritual growth have come through laying

aside my pride and learning what the Holy Spirit was teaching me.

In Proverbs, we're reminded that being teachable is central to our worship of God. We are in no position to command or demand anything. Fearing the Lord inevitably results in a humble, teachable posture. Who are we to have proud hearts before the Holy God?

In humbling ourselves and recognizing our lowly posture as those who need wisdom from the only wise one, we please God. He is the giver of all good things, and He delights in doing good to those in whom He finds pleasure. Yet it is not in the proud and powerful that He delights. It is in those who recognize their dependence on Him. Those who recognize God's grandeur and sovereignty walk in wisdom, knowing that "*the Lord has prepared everything for His purpose.*"

Court

Continued from page 1

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore described the ruling as “disappointing and wrong-headed.”

“The Louisiana law was directed toward the simple goal of protecting women from danger by placing the most minimal restrictions possible on an abortion industry that insists on laissez-faire for itself and its profits,” said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). “Nonetheless, we will continue to seek an America where vulnerable persons, including unborn children and their mothers, are seen as precious, not disposable.”

The National Right to Life Committee is “extremely disappointed,” said its president, Carol Tobias. The decision “leaves women vulnerable,” she added.

Kristen Waggoner, general counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, said women who want abortions “have the same right to competent and quality care as patients involved in other surgical procedures. Louisiana’s admitting privileges law protected that right.”

Abortion rights supporters welcomed the ruling.

Ilyse Hogue, president of NARAL Pro-choice America, called the decision “a win for women in Louisiana who will continue to have access to the time-sensitive abortion care they need.”

The ruling offered the latest setback to many evangelical Christians and conservatives who have sought the addition of originalist or strict constructionist justices to the Supreme Court. It followed by only two weeks a watershed, 6-3 decision in which the high court supported gay and transgender rights by ruling longstanding, non-discrimination protections in federal workplace law cover “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”

In the June 29 decision, Chief Justice John Roberts provided the margin needed for the justices who voted to reverse an opinion by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans that upheld the law.

Roberts did not sign onto the court’s decision

by a four-person plurality, but he cast the deciding vote by filing an opinion that concurred in its judgment.

Roberts dissented from the high court ruling in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, the 2016 ruling that overturned the Texas admitting-privileges law. But he said in his concurring opinion on the Louisiana measure that the question “is not whether *Whole Woman’s Health* was right or wrong, but whether to adhere to it in deciding the present case.”

The legal principle of precedents governing the court’s decision-making “requires us, absent special circumstances, to treat like cases alike,” Roberts wrote. “The Louisiana law imposes a burden on access to abortion just as severe as that imposed by the Texas law. ... Therefore Louisiana’s law cannot stand under our precedents.”

In the court’s opinion, Associate Justice Stephen Breyer described the measure under consideration as “almost

word-for-word identical” to the Texas law and said it “would place substantial obstacles in the path of women seeking an abortion in Louisiana.”

While Louisiana argued the abortion providers who challenged the law did not have legal standing to bring the suit, Breyer said the state waived such an argument at the federal-court level.

Associate Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan joined Breyer in the opinion.

Dissenting were Associate Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. Each filed a dissenting opinion.

In his dissent, Thomas said the abortion providers lacked legal standing. He also said the court’s previous abortion opinions on which the latest ruling was based “created the right to abortion out of whole cloth, without a shred of support from the Constitution’s text. Our abortion precedents are grievously wrong and should be overruled.”

The “undue burden” test relied upon in the

In his dissent, Associate Justice Clarence Thomas said the abortion providers lacked legal standing. He said, “Our abortion precedents are grievously wrong and should be overruled.”

court’s decision is a standard offered by the justices in their 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* opinion, which affirmed a legal right to abortion while allowing states to regulate aspects of abortion practice to protect the lives and health of women.

The ERLC, joined by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, contended in a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the Louisiana law the “undue burden” test is the incorrect standard for laws that regulate abortion doctors. In place of the “undue burden” rule regarding health and safety requirements, the Supreme Court should use a standard from a 1997 opinion that calls for “ordinary rational basis review,” they said in the brief.

Since the decision in the Texas case, President Trump has nominated Gorsuch to replace the late Antonin Scalia, who died in 2016 before that ruling. When Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy retired in 2018, Trump nominated Kavanaugh. The U.S. Senate confirmed Gorsuch in April 2017 and Kavanaugh in October 2018.

Before the opinion, 11 states had some form of admitting privileges laws in effect, according to the Guttmacher Institute, formerly an affiliate of Planned Parenthood. Those states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.

The Louisiana measure, introduced by Democrat Rep. Katrina Jackson, gained passage with overwhelming, bipartisan majorities in both houses and was signed into law by Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards.

The name of the case is *June Medical Services v. Russo*.

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Tom Strobe is Washington bureau chief for Baptist Press.)



RUSSELL MOORE

CLASSIFIEDS

Pastor

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

Church Staff

New Hope Baptist Church is receiving résumés for a **full-time Youth & Children’s Pastor** through August 7. Send résumés to: New Hope Baptist Church - Attention: Search Committee, PO Box 116, Earl, NC 28038; or 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.

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

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

CP Continued from page 4

giving in June 2020 may be down as much as 20% from June 2019, I inform you today that to God's glory we are only down 4.11% in June 2020 vs. June 2019. Furthermore, our giving shows a decrease of 2.92% after the first nine months of this fiscal year vs. a year ago, but our actual giving to date is only 1.47% below our projected budget for the first nine months of our fiscal year. "Southern Baptist churches and pastors are seeing the need to keep our missionaries on the mission fields in America and all over the entire globe.

"Giving through the Cooperative Program is demonstrating to everyone a display of God's goodness, because together we are continuing to support and send missionaries, plant churches, advance evangelism, equip pastors, promote life and religious liberty in the public square, as well as extend compassion across America and the entire world. Let's continue to reach the world for Jesus Christ! Let's do all we can to keep our missionaries on the mission fields across America and the entire world."

As of June 30, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget total \$145,213,356.17. This is \$4,366,664.78 or 2.92% less than last year's budget contribution of \$149,580,020.95. The amount given is slightly below the \$147,375,000 year-to-date budgeted projection to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America by \$2,161,643.83 or 1.47%.

The final amount received in June 2020 was \$1,268,499.21 (7.75%) less than the monthly budgeted amount of \$16,375,000.



Designated gifts in June amounted to \$14,475,402.31. This total was \$9,053,073.76 or 38.5% below gifts of \$23,528,476.07 received in June 2019. Also, this year's designated gifts through the first nine months of the fiscal year amount to \$153,844,979.86, which is \$16,788,279.67 or 9.8% less than the \$170,633,259.53 given through the same period in the previous fiscal year.

Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, Southern Baptist Global Hunger Relief, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and other special gifts. This total includes only those gifts received and distributed by the Executive Committee and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

The CP is Southern Baptists' channel of giving, begun in 1925, through which a local church can contribute to the ministries of its state convention and the missions and ministries of the SBC through a unified giving plan to support both sets of ministries.

Monies include receipts from individuals, churches and state conventions for distribution according to the 2019-20 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

State and regional conventions retain a portion of church contributions to Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program to support work in their respective areas and forward a percentage to SBC national and international causes. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

The convention-adopted budget for 2019-20 is \$196.5 million and is disbursed as follows: 50.41% to international missions through the International Mission Board, 22.79% to North American missions through the North American Mission Board, 22.16% to theological education through the six SBC seminaries and the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 2.99% to the SBC operating budget and 1.65% to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

If national CP gifts exceed the \$196.5 million budget projection at the end of the fiscal year, the Executive Committee's portion of any overage falls to 0.0% while IMB's portion

increases to 53.4% of the overage.

The other entities' percentage distributions of the overage remain the same. The SBC Executive Committee distributes all CP and designated gifts it receives on a weekly basis to the SBC ministry entities.

Month-to-month swings reflect a number of factors, including the timing of when the cooperating state Baptist conventions forward the national portion of Cooperative Program contributions to the Executive Committee, the day of the month churches forward their CP contributions to their state conventions, the number of Sundays in a given month, and the percentage of CP contributions forwarded to the SBC by the state conventions after shared ministry expenses are deducted.

CP allocation budget gifts received by the Executive Committee are reported monthly to the executives of the entities of the convention, to the state convention offices, to the state Baptist papers and are posted online at sbc.net/cp. 



FANNING THE
Flames
PRAYER SUMMIT
September 12
9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Truett Conference Center & Camp / 346 Truett Camp Rd., Hayesville, N.C.


	Mel Blackaby Pastor, First Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Ga.		Fred Lunsford Pastor, retired DOM, Truett Baptist Association
	David Horton President, Fruitland Baptist Bible College		J. Chris Schofield Director, Office of Prayer

Special prayer testimonies from Kenny Adcock and Al Hood.

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