





BIBLICAL RECORDER

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Biblical Recorder

ore than 100 Christian leaders signed a letter sent July 24 to the Democratic National Committee calling for the organization to shed "abortion extremism" and embrace pro-life poli-

The group urged the political party's platform committee to "recognize the inviolable human dignity of the child," citing theological, scientific and political reasons.

At least two Southern Baptist pastors were among the signers: S. Carter McNeese, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fairmont, N.C. and D.A. Horton, pastor of Reach Fellowship in Los Angeles, Calif., professor at California Baptist University and doctoral student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

McNeese told the Biblical Recorder that although he is not registered as a Democrat and does not support the party's full platform, the majority of the residents in his community are registered Democrats and he felt it was important to take the opportunity to speak up about pro-life

"Anytime we have the opportunity to speak up and advocate for the most vulnerable among us, we need to do that," he said.

The list of signers also included well-known Christian leaders such as activist Shane Claiborne, Baylor University professor George Yancev and the executive leadership team at Transformation Church in South Carolina.

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By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Editor

Thile some camps or other events were canceled since COVID-19 shut down North Carolina earlier this year, the three Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) camps and conference centers have remained open for guests.

From the Blue Ridge Mountains to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, North Carolina Baptists have access to three camps and conference centers -Truett Conference Center in Murphy, Caraway Conference Center and Camp in Sophia and Fort

Caswell, also known as the N.C. Baptist Assembly on Oak Island.

"We're just coming back as slow as we can," said Jimmy Huffman, Caraway's director, in an interview with the Biblical Recorder. "We never have closed; we've been open every day."

Of course, all of the centers made changes to adjust to local health department and Centers for Disease Control guidelines, but many of the cleaning protocols were already in place before COVID-19, Huffman said. Extra hand-washing stations and more hand sanitizer have been placed around the facilities. Extra cleaning efforts are made between each guest's visit as well.

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Prayer, patience urged in EDT search process

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

The chairman of the search committee tasked with recommending the next executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) urged N.C. Baptists to be prayerful and patient as the search process gets underway.

Committee chairman Noah Crowe, intentional

interim pastor of Peachtree Memorial Baptist Church in Murphy, said he has made contact with the committee members and is working to schedule an initial meeting via video conference call to establish parameters for the committee to conduct

Crowe was appointed chairman of the ninemember committee on July 16 by BSC board of

See Search page 9

Pray for the next leader of your state convention

BSC Communications

"Il never forget the request that my late father Imade of North Carolina Baptists on the day I became the 14th executive director-treasurer of the

Baptist State Convention of North Caro-

"Please pray for him every day of your life," my dad urged those who attended the installation service on April 11, 2006, at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-

It's hard to believe that 14 years have passed since that day, because I remember those events as if they were yesterday. Yet the reality is that my retirement is on the horizon effective at the end of February of next year. And as the search gets underway for my successor, I want to issue an appeal similar to what my father gave to North Carolina Baptists during this period of transition.

First, pray for the search committee that has been appointed to recommend the next executivedirector treasurer. The nine-person committee was named during a recent meeting of our board of directors held on July 9.

I believe the committee is a good representation of North Carolina Baptists. It includes pastors, church planters and lay people. It includes individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. It includes a good mix of older and younger leaders, and each of them are or have been actively involved in the work of the state convention.

While I am confident that this committee will take their responsibility seriously and serve North Carolina Baptists well, they need our prayers.

In fact, committee chairman Noah Crowe has asked each member of the committee to enlist three individuals to pray for them and the committee on a daily basis throughout the search process.

Would you commit to pray for them, as

Pray for wisdom, discernment, unity and oneness of spirit for the committee and its members. Pray for spiritual strength, physical strength and endurance throughout the process. Each member of the committee has an active role in their local church, in addition to other ministry, career and family obligations. Above all, pray for God's clear direction and guidance as the committee conducts its work.

Second, pray for the next executivedirector treasurer. Although the search

process is in its early stages, and we don't know who the next executive director will be, God already knows.

Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the team. Pray that the next executive director will have absolute certainty in their sense of calling to the role.

Also, the search committee welcomes and strongly encourages N.C. Baptists and others to prayerfully recommend individuals to be considered as the next executive-director treasurer. Please submit names of individuals for the committee to consider through a special email address that goes directly to committee chairman Noah Crowe. That email address is: ncedt@ncbaptist.org.

Finally, pray for the future of the Baptist State



Convention of North Carolina. I can honestly say that our state convention is one of the best. I am thankful for our churches, their pastors and leaders, and their faithful support of missions and ministry through the Cooperative Program.

We have been blessed to enjoy a season of peaceful years without controversy even though we are not without our differences.

The reality is that we are Baptists and all messengers from our member churches have an equal voice, but we must never allow those differences to divide us for the sake of the gospel. I am grateful for the great spirit of cooperation we have enjoyed during our board meetings and annual sessions. I am also thankful to God for the many achievements and accomplishments that have been made as churches have embraced and engaged the "Impacting Lostness through Disciple-making" strategy we launched in 2014.

The next executive director of this state convention will face their own set of unique challenges. For example, just a few months ago, who could have imagined ministering in the midst of a pandemic? Yet our God is bigger than the challenges we face, and I am still convinced that we can still accomplish more together than we ever could apart. Lift up Jesus and give Him the glory for all that He chooses to do through North Carolina Baptists.

"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good" – 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NKJV). ■

Teachers make a difference; let's pray for them

Dee Dee Vogt

Grace Stallings

Administrative

Assistant

Fditorial Aide

By KEVIN SHRUM | Baptist Press

veryone has one, and mine was Mrs. Barbara Brockett. She was my public high school history and government teacher. And though I am approaching the end of a second doctorate, Mrs. Brockett impacted my life in monumental ways like no other teacher I've ever had. What was it that made such a difference in my

life? How does a teacher do this? It is time for us to pray for our teachers as they enter another year of trying to make a difference.

MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.

BSC executive

director-treasurer

Mrs. Brockett taught us to love history, especially American history. She is the reason I know that there are three branches of government legislative, judicial, executive; that America was founded on a robust federal system structured as a representative republic; that America was founded in liberty while still in the process of delivering that liberty to all her citizens. Given time, the system works for all; jettisoning the system is fatal to a free society. She was thoroughly pro-American, but measured and circumspect.

She is the reason I know that every state has two senators, totaling 100, and that the Senate is supposed to

operate as "slow as molasses" through what seem to be tedious rules in order to help the nation avoid making rash political decisions.

She taught us how bills are introduced and laws are passed: introduction, conference/negotiation, then resolution.

Mrs. Brockett taught us that the House of Representatives has 435

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Digital giving boosts churches amid pandemic

By TESS SCHOONHOVEN | Baptist Press

barbecue restaurant, a fast food place or two and a department store are about all the town of Munford has, according to Reese Gill, student pastor at Munford Baptist Church.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Gill and the other 250 or so people who attended Sunday morning worship services at Munford Baptist were accustomed to giving their tithes and offerings in physical form: checks and paper bills.

But due to restrictions that took church services primarily online during the pandemic, Munford Baptist did what many other churches did - transitioned their giving to an online format.

"When our church services moved to online exclusively at the beginning of the pandemic, we had to do a lot of explaining and instruction for our people to understand how they could give online," Gill said.

"Because of this we saw our average monthly giving go to about 85% online.

"I know for many of our faithful members it was so much easier to just give online rather than finding the opportunity to come by the church to drop off a check since we were no longer meeting in person."

Gill explained that online giving has become normal for many members, and he anticipates that trend continuing into future years, not just at Munford, but at churches across the country.

"Now that we have been meeting in person again, people are still giving online mostly," Gill said. "If online

giving has been this successful in rural Alabama among many church members who are not the most tech savvy people, I believe it is reasonable to expect the majority of churches to see their giving shift heavily to online."

Online giving can provide a more streamlined process of facilitating church finances, Gill noted. With less physical cash and checks to deposit at a bank, small congregations may find it easier to move most of their giving online.

Ryan Abernathy, pastor of West Metro Community Church in Yukon, Okla., said that while many in his congregation were already giving online, the pandemic has increased those numbers. He estimates about 75% of members now give online in some way: 50% through the church's online portal and another 25% through automatic draft or bank checks.

"We had a couple of people comment that if they knew it was that easy, they would have switched years ago," Abernathy said. "I think the future of church financial health will be largely a result of embracing this

Sam Rainer, pastor of West Bradenton Baptist in Bradenton, Fla., said the church's leadership team asked members to switch to online giving.

The two-campus church, with a pre-pandemic attendance of just over 700 people, has seen online giving increase from 20% to 50% since the emphasis.

Rainer said in addition to the giving portal on the church's website, the church will also be adding a text-togive option in the next month.

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Rick Hughes' retirement not end of ministry

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Editor

ike most ministers, Rick Hughes may be retiring from his full-time job at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC), but he plans to continue ministry for as long as he can.

Hughes, who has been a BSC employee for 20 vears, will retire Aug. 31 after serving most recently as a consultant for evangelism and discipleship. He has previously served at the BSC as a Sunday School consultant, church health consultant and Carolina Faith Rider liaison.

"However you measure the value of Rick Hughes, he is a most successful minister of the gospel," said Milton A. Hollifield Jr., in an email to the Biblical Recorder. "When I first met Rick, he was pastor of a strong, growing, mission-minded church that was a leading church in their Baptist association."

Hollifield described Hughes as flexible after he has served in a variety of roles at the convention.

"In addition to serving N.C. Baptist churches and associations as a specialist in Christian education and disciple-making, he helped support our new church plants, he worked in equestrian ministry with cowboys and he has also been our staff liaison with Carolina Faith Riders motorcycle ministry," Hollifield said. "He knows what to do and he knows how to work with people."

Battling cancer for five years, Hughes has recently been declared cured by his doctors.

"He is a model we can all learn from about dealing with adversity," Hollifield said. "Throughout different time periods in recent years, he has served the Lord faithfully while Rick and his wife Kathy have both endured the difficult rigorous journey through cancer treatment."

The year he was cleared, his wife was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer.

"I went from patient to caregiver," he said in a phone interview with the Recorder. "God doesn't waste suffering. My suffering has allowed me to step into the life of others who were suffering."

The son of tobacco farmers, Hughes became a Christian at age 9, shortly after his father professed Christ as Savior.

"It was a radical thing that happened to the whole family," Hughes said, because they all accepted Christ. "It was totally beautiful. My dad, he had such a gospel-centered heart," he said. "My dad would take me with him visiting. He taught me what loving people unconditionally looked like."

He credits his father with teaching him how to be "tough and tender, the way Jesus modeled and did everything." His father was called into the ministry, and Hughes followed later, after a stint in the fire department, as a medic and a police officer. He went to Wingate College (now university) and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Hollifield was working in mission growth and evangelism at the convention when Hughes joined the staff. He was pastoring a church that was experiencing amazing growth and serving as a mentor to church planters for the North American Mission Board.



Hughes praised the convention for allowing him to be himself. "They have taken care of me," he said. "They really work hard to serve the churches."

Hughes pastors Brookhaven Baptist Church in Germanton and King Cowboy Church. One meets Sundays; the other meets Thursdays.

"Rick possesses a great love for God and seems driven to help as many people as possible establish a personal relationship with Christ," Hollifield said. "Rick also possesses a heart filled with love and compassion for people. Whenever you are in his presence, you will be encouraged by him.

"His retirement from this Convention will leave large shoes to be filled by multiple people, but I wish both Rick and Kathy the best as they continue to serve Jesus wherever they are because that is not just what they do, that is their distinctive identity," Hollifield concluded.

Hughes also plans to spend time with his family as well as continue leading his two churches and working as a chaplain with local law enforcement.

Hughes recently received a premier grill/smoker to continue his love of preparing food for his family. "It turns cooking into an art," he said. His family gathers each Tuesday for a family meal together. He and his wife, Kathy, have their son and daughter over with their spouses and children. Add in family friends, Hughes considers this time one of his favorites each week.

He hopes his "retirement" will allow him more time to gather like this.

"I want to live every day of my life to the fullest,

to the glory of God," he said. Hughes' team leader, Brian Upshaw, said they became "fast friends" when Upshaw joined

the BSC staff in 2008.

"I was new to North Carolina, and Rick made an effort to introduce me to pastors and churches across the state," Upshaw said. "We shared a love for Jesus, His Word, for small group ministry, and helping the church to return to its missional mandate. In many ways, I would say Rick has discipled me over the last 12 years."

Calling Hughes everyone's "biggest cheerleader," Upshaw described Hughes as "the most authentic human being I know" having "the heart of a pastor and missionary."

Retiring at age 64, Hughes said, "I don't want to become an old man and then retire. I want to be able to live into my passion, to be able to love people."

Hughes views himself as a broken person "that's been saved by the grace of God that will come alongside other people who are broken."

He turns 65 on Nov. 7.

Like many other pastors, Hughes has faced some challenges with COVID-19.

But make no mistake, even with the challenges posed with this pandemic, Hughes is excited.

"This is one of the greatest opportunities for the gospel," he said. "I've had more gospel conversations with people social distancing than I can remember in a long, long time."

Hughes predicts that COVID-19 will continue to be a problem "for a long, long time."



Pro-life leaders call FDA to remove abortion pill from U.S. market

By TOM STRODE | Baptist Press

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore and more than 20 other pro-life leaders have called for the federal government to withdraw an abortion drug from the market because of its threat to women as well as unborn children.

In the July 28 letter, the pro-life advocates urged the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to categorize mifepristone, sold under the brand name Mifeprex, as an "imminent hazard to the public health." The letter was sent barely two weeks after a federal judge halted during the CO-VID-19 pandemic the FDA's requirement the pill may only be dispensed in a medical setting, such as a hospital or clinic.

Mifepristone - often known as RU 486 and authorized by the FDA under President Bill Clinton in 2000 - not only is approved for killing unborn babies in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy but is "highly dangerous for women," the letter said.

The pill "poses a four-times higher

David Horton

Bible College

President, Fruitland Baptist

risk of complication" than first-trimester, surgical abortion, the prolifers said, citing information from the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG).

Yet, abortion industry advocates recklessly insist on the abortion pill's later-term use; its availability without a prescription, blood work or ultrasound; and the total elimination of what little informed consent [the FDA's protocol] currently provides," the letter said.

Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said the FDA has "a responsibility to protect the American people from the marketing of dangerous drugs and products. This pill is lethal to preborn children and also potentially perilous for their mothers. The FDA should reject this drug, and we should all work to support children and their mothers in ways that affirm life, not violence."

At the end of 2018, the FDA reported 24 deaths, more than 1,000 hospitalizations and nearly 4,200 "adverse

J. Chris Schofield

Director, Office of Prayer

event" cases among women who have taken mifepristone for an abortion since 2000.

In the letter, the pro-lifers said, "Adverse events are notoriously underreported to the FDA," and women who suffer harmful side effects "are likely to seek care at emergency rooms, not the abortion facilities where they received the pills." Emergency rooms are not required to report such effects, so "the true number of adverse events is impossible to assess," according to the letter.

The FDA approved a generic version of Mifeprex in 2019.

In addition to Moore, others signing the appeal to the FDA were Lila Rose, president of Live Action, which organized the letter; Donna Harrison, AAPLOG executive director; Carol Tobias, National Right to Life president; Franklin Graham, Samaritan's Purse president; Marjorie Dannenfelser, Susan B. Anthony List president; Catherine Glenn Foster, Americans United for Life president; Jeanne Mancini, March for Life president; and Roland Warren, Care Net presi-

Mifepristone is part of a twostep process in what is referred to as a medical or chemical abortion. Mifepristone causes the lining of the uterus to release the embryonic child, resulting in his or her death. Misoprostol, a second drug taken later, causes

the uterus to contract, expelling the embryo.

Federal Judge Theodore Chuang in Maryland ruled July 13 the FDA's requirement that a woman must receive mifepristone by means of a visit to a health-care facility is a "substantial obstacle" to her right to an abortion and likely unconstitutional during the pandemic, according to The Associated Press. His ruling means women can receive the abortion pill by mail or another form of delivery.

In their letter, the pro-life advocates encouraged FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn to fight the "abortion industry's radical push to overturn" in the courts his agency's requirements for mifepristone.

They also said they are encouraged by the FDA's determination to block the illegal trafficking of unapproved abortion drugs into the country and urged its ongoing effort.

The ERLC and other pro-life organizations worked to prevent the introduction of the abortion pill into the United States for more than a decade before the FDA gave its approval

In a March 24 letter, Moore and more than 50 other pro-life leaders urged Alex Azar, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, to prevent the promotion of abortion during the COVID-19 pandemic.



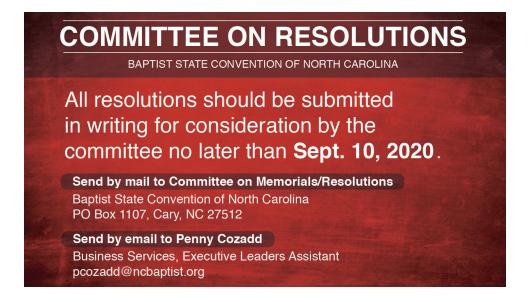
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Camps Continued from page 1

"We've had to make changes to be able to sanitize and keep guests safe," said Brian Hemphill, Caswell's direc-

All the camps have been financially impacted during these challenging months.

You would think the loss of income was tough, which it is, just knowing that you are losing all that money, but that's a byproduct of not doing ministry," Huffman said. "Our first natural reaction is to gather people; that's what we do, so we wanted to gather people somehow.

"Being empty has been the hardest thing."

All three directors expressed thanks to the BSC for helping them with the Paycheck Protection Program, in addition to guidance and encouragement.

"Our financial folks at the convention office have been able to keep us afloat," said Kenny Adcock, Truett's director, noting that the camp has resources in reserve "that have been utilized to keep everything moving along. We intend on weathering this storm."

Huffman said the BSC leadership has been supportive.

"They are asking us to do the best we can, and we are, but this is tough," he said.

More than 60% of camps across the country did not open this year, Huffman said, referring to a couple of camping industry surveys he had read.

"We looked at two things: can we make it safe? Can we make it fun?" Huffman said. "The biggest issue was the lodging, but we worked with our local health department. We made sure that we understood what they expected from us, and we could do that, and so we decided to open."

Caraway

One of the biggest adjustments, other than social distancing, was the style of dining offered at Caraway.

The main dining hall switched to cafeteria style, where someone puts your food on the plate for you and gives you the drink you want. Seating went from five people per table to three.

"We used to do in-room service for overnight guests," Huffman said. "We're not doing that anymore. Once that guest gets here, we do not go in the room until they leave. And then,

after that, we wait 24 hours before we clean that room."

At the camp, meals take much longer now with some sitting outside and some inside. A housekeeper is assigned to stay at the camp to keep the common areas clean.

Instead of hosting two Grand Camps of about 100 participants each, Huffman said the camp hosted one consisting of about 70 people. Caraway recently hosted the N.C. Baptist Ministers' Wives retreat and the BSC executive board meeting in July.

Camp attendance has dropped about 45% from original registration numbers. The day camp, originally planned for three weeks, expanded to six because, "we've had a great response from the local community," Huffman said. "Some people have found us that didn't know we were here."

This is the first time in 12 years Caraway offered a day camp.

Camp Mundo Vista, which the Caraway staff operates, has had one group since the first weekend in March, and that was the girls camp this summer. Staff members work shorter work weeks to adjust for the revenue shortfall

At the recent grand camp for grandparents and grandchildren, temperatures were taken every day. Caraway takes temperatures twice a day for all overnight campers for the boys, girls and coed camps.

Some of the staff had to be quarantined eight days while waiting on COVID-19 test results after a visitor to a staff member came in contact with the virus, but everyone was fine.

Caraway recently reopened a mountain house where pastors and wives may stay at no cost as a retreat. But Huffman said he's not sure if that will be able to stay open unless they get donations to offset the cost of

"We've never had an income for that," he said. "We're trying to find an income to keep that open the rest of the year."

The director asked for N.C. Baptists to pray "that church groups and other non profits will trust us to keep them safe while they are here" and to pray for the safety of the workers and campers.

"We're pretty thrifty with our expenses," he said. "You have to be in this business, so anything we get, we can stretch that."

Fort Caswell

The island's "been nice and sunny" this summer, said Hemphill.

The cancellation of Youth Weeks, a ministry of the BSC's BeDoTell youth evangelism office, resulted in much lower numbers for the summer. A typical week would be teeming with more than 1,100 youth and chaperones plus day camp participants, but CO-VID-19 has dropped the fort's attendance to 350 for the week recently.

"That's a huge impact financially," Hemphill said.

But what hits more than finances is the life change that "happens in a huge way" at camps like BeDoTell, the first-time decisions to follow Christ, the calls to ministry.

"So many people aren't going to be here to experience that," he said, but "God is still working."

One of the staff members shared of a first-time decision that was made. "It's exciting to see how God is still using them even though the numbers are smaller," he said.

Day camps have been offered at Caswell for 25 years. "That's been a huge ministry to the community," Hemphill said.

Each camp has a maximum of 150 campers, and there has been a waiting list for every one of the weeks.

"We're moving forward for continuing the day camp for our students that are not in the classroom," Hemphill said. "We're working on the structuring on that," including providing time for remote learning.

'We feel very blessed," Hemphill said, noting that some have donated their deposits from the camp that was scheduled to Fort Caswell toward its operational costs.

Many transferred their deposits to next year, but others still came, staying within their own group and hosting its own youth retreat. Some used materials provided through BeDoTell. Others have created their own.

Hemphill said he is "just praying that we know God is bigger than the virus than anything that is going on in communities.'

While the numbers are down, Hemphill said it feels like more work because of the amount of cleaning that has be repeated throughout the

"Most of our activities are still open and going like normal," he said.

Summer accounts for almost half of Caswell's budget each year, and he told the *Recorder* in a phone call that they've already refunded more than a quarter of the center's budget for the year.

"We know that this is a difficult time," said Hemphill, who grew up coming to Fort Caswell and then served on summer staff as a college student. He has worked at the center for almost 30 years now.

Truett Camp

Truett's attendance is down about 35% since last year. "The whole virus thing has hit us hard," said Adcock.

An early July camp did cancel because of exposure to COVID-19 but no one on staff was diagnosed with

Adcock said boys' camp numbers were actually up this year. The facilities could host about 275 people from a church group. The camp offers hotel-style rooms as well as bunkhouses, and there are options for tent or RV camping with a newly refurbished bath house.

Planning ahead

All of the camps and conference centers have events planned for the fall. Some groups have canceled but others have not.

Adcock mentioned that Truett will be hosting a prayer retreat in September, a father-son camping experience in early October and Celebrate Truett Day on Oct. 10. A November men's camp is planned for early November.

Huffman said Caraway's "fall is looking really good because we has so many spring groups that canceled, and they rescheduled for the fall. But people are now getting worried again. They thought this would be behind

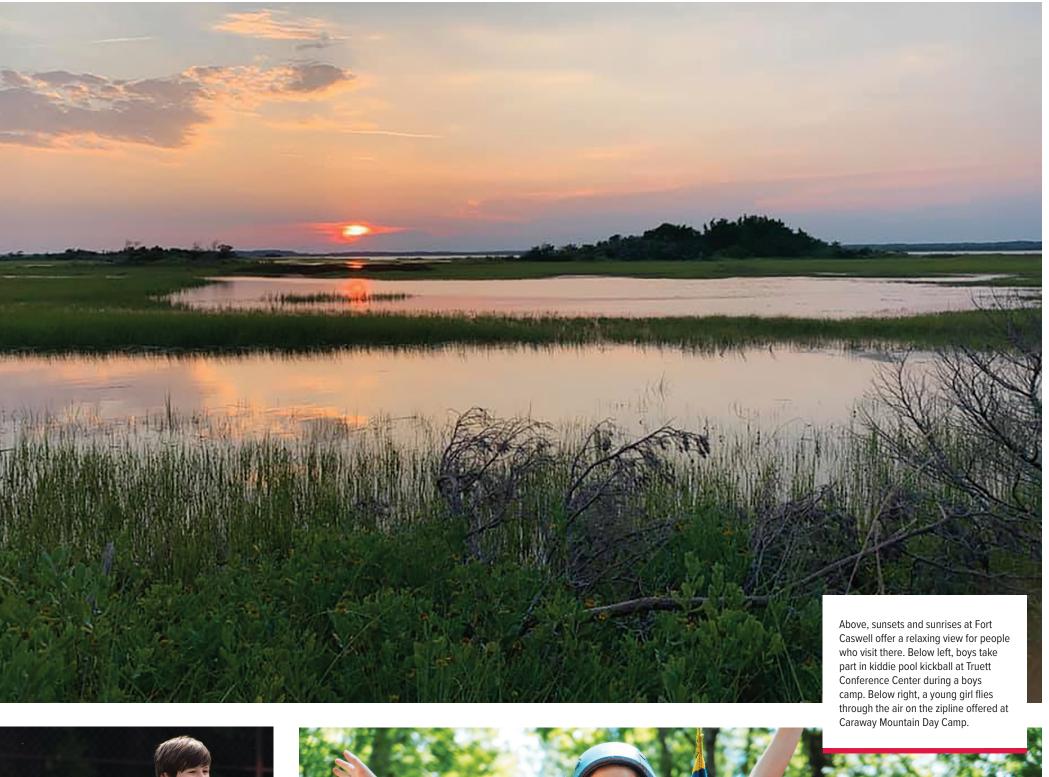
There have been fall cancellations but not a lot yet.

"We have such unique camps and conference centers in our state," Hemphill said. "Our state is just blessed."

Each of the centers has options for individuals, families, church groups (large or small) to stay or visit the camps for personal retreats, ladies retreats, volunteer projects on site or in the community.

Check the websites of each camp – caraway.org, fortcaswell.org and truettcamp.org – for information about upcoming events or price points for a future stay, or contact them to ask about options while they are there.









Teachers Continued from page 2

members apportioned by the population of the states. She taught us why the Electoral College exists: so that the outcome of any given national election would truly be representative of the entire nation and not just a few highly populated states. She was an originalist when it came to the Constitution.

All of this I learned in my junior and senior years.

Mrs. Brockett suffered no fools. She accepted no excuses. None. If you told her you were dumb, she would firmly say, "No you're not." She demanded - not requested - excellence and hard work. She was able to get good work out of her students not by padding grades but by demanding excellence.

If you told her you were poor, she would tell you to quit complaining and get to work. She was raised poor, and she always told us that poverty was no excuse for a lack of hard work and excellence. And then privately, with no fanfare, she would cover some of the lunch fees of her poorer students. I saw her privately cry over some of her students. But there were no excuses. None. A heart of velvet covered by a layer of steel.

She even bravely confronted some parents who thought that "Mrs. Brockett was picking on their little Johnny" by demanding so much. It wouldn't have done those parents any good to ask the other students. We all knew Mrs. Brockett was right and that "little Johnny" was lazy. We were very protective of our demanding but loving teacher.

Mrs. Brockett taught us that none of us had a right to be prejudiced against another person, because all of us were from somewhere else, immigrants to a great land of promise and possibility. In fact, this was the first time I paid any serious attention to my German/Scotch/English heritage.

Mrs. Brockett taught us about the horrors of slavery and the heroism of Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and those early revolutionaries who sacrificed everything to found a new nation conceived in liberty.

She did not demonize our founders but taught us that "Providence" used men and women with feet of clay to form a union of people and states that could become "a more perfect union" with the passage of time.

She taught us that our rights are few but precious. And they are not granted to us by the state but are unalienable rights granted to us by God and protected and promoted by the state.

She taught us about socialism and communism, but had no tolerance for them as systems of government. She taught us that the free market remained the best system even when it sometimes got out of balance.

Mrs. Brockett demanded things of me other teachers didn't. At the time, I was more interested in being a jock. I was lazy in the application of my God-given faculties, I was told. I was an overall B+ student. But I made an A in Mrs. Brockett's class - the best grade I ever received from any teacher. I earned it because I met her demands; she gave it because I tried to excel to please her.

She attended my ball games, loved and laughed with her students. She was one of a handful of teachers who deeply impacted my life, demanding excellence, suffering no excuses, teaching me to wisely love my country, and loving me enough to make a difference in my life.

She has passed, but the older I get the more often I think of her. I thank God for Mrs. Barbara Brockett.

As the school year begins, let's pray for our teachers as they embark on what may be one of the most unusual years in their teaching career.

(EDITOR'S NOTE - Kevin Shrum is the lead pastor at Inglewood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn. This article first appeared at bpnews.net.)

What is your church or association doing during COVID-19 to reach your community and stay in touch with members? Are you physically meeting or still gathering online? Contact editor@BRnow.org.

NEWS BRIEFS

More than 40 cases of COVID-19 tied to revival

(Baptist Press) More than 40 members of Warrior Creek Baptist Church in Strawberry, Ala., including Pastor Darryl Ross, contracted COVID-19 after the church's annual revival during the week of July 19.

The church, which is located in a rural community south of Huntsville and usually runs between 80 and 100 in services, met for a while during the pandemic with drive-in services. In June, the church was back to some normal gatherings. The revival only made it to Thursday when Ross learned one of the men attending had tested positive even though he had no symptoms. The church shut the revival down, and "by Friday night, I've got church members sick everywhere," Ross told Al.com.

Ross also tested positive, but told the news outlet he had few symptoms. Masks weren't required for the revival, which Ross said many members skipped. No one with COVID-19 has been hospitalized so far, but two of the cases were serious, according to Ross.

The church has rebuilt since a fire in August 2018 destroyed its building.

Mississippi's The Baptist Record goes fully digital

(Baptist Press) The Baptist Record will cease printing after 143 years, going fully digital and free of charge on its own website, according to editor William H. Perkins Ir.

'There came a time when the last buggy repair shop in Mississippi had to close, because the need for horse-drawn carriages had passed," Perkins said. "As automobiles were to horse-drawn carriages in another era, the internet has brought tremendous change to the news industry, both religious and secular."

Perkins cited the newspaper's declining print subscription base as a factor that led to the decision to cease printing, along with hard-to-predict future costs of newsprint and postage.

"Too," he added, "the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, with no end in sight, has meant that advertising – an important part of balancing the Record's budget each year - has dropped off severely as companies prepare for more potentially bad economic news."

The new website will feature a modern look and feel while retaining the same level of quality news reporting, opinion and local church news, said Perkins, who is in his 24th year as editor after serving four years as associate editor. He said it may take a while for the Record staff to learn how to take full advantage of the new site's features.

Union University rescinds student's admission

(Baptist Press) Union University has recently found itself in the spotlight of the ongoing faceoff between religious liberty and sexual liberty.

The school – affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention and located in Jackson, Tenn. - rescinded a graduate student's admission after learning he had violated Union's Community Values Statements he had signed by being in a same-sex relationship. Alex Duron, the applicant, shared the news in a Facebook post July 21, prompting a social media backlash against Union but also expressions of support from Baptist leaders. The incident is another in a continuing series of cultural and legal conflicts between the freedom of Christian and other religious institutions and individuals to act upon their convictions and the freedom of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Union President Samuel (Dub) Oliver and the admissions staff "acted with respect toward the individual and in fidelity to scripture," and is still doing so "in the wake of the relentless negative social media attacks Dr. Oliver and Union are receiving," Davis said.

In his Facebook post, Duron said he received notice from Union the weekend of July 18-19 that his admission to the school's graduate program in nursing anesthesia had been revoked. Union, he wrote, failed to recognize "bigotry masked as religion is not Christian at all."

In his Facebook post, Duron criticized the fact Union's action is legal though the school receives federal funds.





Search Continued from page 1

directors' President Melanie Wallace during a board meeting held at Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro. Crowe called it an "honor" to be asked to serve as the committee chairman.

'This is a great honor, a great responsibility and one that I take very seriously," said Crowe, who also serves on the convention's board of directors and executive committee. "The members of the committee come from diverse backgrounds and have a lot of different experiences in North Carolina Baptist life. I am going to lean on them for wisdom, understanding and direction as we approach our work together as a team."

Some of Crowe's first orders of business will be to appoint a vice chairman and a recording secretary, which he is in the process of doing. During the initial conference call and subsequent meetings, Crowe said the committee will work to determine a meeting schedule, identify qualifications that the next executive director should possess, set a deadline to receive candidate recommendations, develop a preliminary questionnaire for candidates and more.

Crowe emphasized the importance of confidentiality out of respect for the committee's work and for potential candidates. Search committee meetings will be conducted in closed session without convention staff, members of the public or media present. Crowe said he would provide updates during the search process, but said that neither he nor committee members would discuss specific candidates until the committee is ready to recommend an executive director-treasurer candidate to the board of directors.

"We want to do a thorough job in our work, and we don't know how the Lord will lead us during the search process," Crowe said. "We want to work as quickly and efficiently as possible, but we are going to do our due diligence. We ask that people be patient with us during this search."

According to the convention's bylaws, the executive director-treasurer must be elected at an annual meeting or a special called meeting of the convention after the board nominates a candidate for consideration. Additional nominations may also be made during the meeting from the floor of the convention.

Crowe also called on N.C. Baptists to pray for members of the search committee as it conducts its work. In his initial contact with the committee. Crowe said he asked each committee member to enlist at least three individuals who would pray for them and the committee daily during the search

"Prayer is vital to our work, and my request is for N.C. Baptists to cover the committee in prayer throughout the process," Crowe said.

Although the committee is still in the initial stages of its work, a special email address has been established for N.C. Baptists to submit recommendations of executive director candidates for Crowe and the committee to consider. The email address is ncedt@ncbaptist.org.

Crowe said he and the committee invite and encourage N.C. Baptists to prayerfully submit names of individuals that they believe should receive consideration as the next executive director-treasurer.

The search committee will be looking to recommend a successor to Milton A. Hollifield Jr., who has served as the BSC's executive-director treasurer for the past 14 years. In May, Hollifield announced his plans to retire effective Feb. 28, 2021.

The executive director-treasurer's duties, as outlined in the bylaws, include serving as the chief executive officer and professional adviser of the convention, the board of directors and its committees, as well as serving as a spiritual leader who provides statewide "guidance and inspiration."

Updates on the executive directortreasurer search process can be found at ncbaptist.org/edtsearch.

Do you know someone who would enjoy receiving the **Biblical Recorder**? Email subscribe@BRnow.org.

Pastor resigns after celebrating KKK leader

Baptist Press

bivocational Southern Baptist Apastor resigned from his church July 29, after backlash resulting from his participation in an annual birthday celebration for Nathan Bedford Forrest, a leader in the Confederate Army and the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.

Will Dismukes, who is also a firstterm Republican state representative, resigned from his position at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Prattville, Ala., after a deacons' meeting. Four days earlier, he gave the invocation July 25 at the birthday celebration for Forrest. The event was held in Selma, Ala., on the same day as ceremonies honoring the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis.

Lewis, a leader in the civil rights movement and an Alabama native, was a longtime member of Congress from Georgia. In 1965, during a march in Selma that became known as "Bloody Sunday," Lewis suffered a fractured skull when he was beaten by Alabama state troopers.

In a post to Facebook July 26, Dismukes wrote: "Had a great time at Fort Dixie speaking and giving the invocation for Nathan Bedford Forrest annual birthday celebration. Always a great time and sure enough good eating!"

The post was later removed, but Dismukes' actions drew sharp rebukes and calls to resign both as a pastor and a legislator. He had led the church since February 2019.

"We are saddened and grieved to learn of the recent Facebook post by state Rep. Will Dismukes," said Rick Lance, the executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "... In the wake of tremendous controversy we reaffirm our opposition to any kind of racism." B

Sign Continued from page 1

"The Christian faith invites us to play a particular role in moving the conscience of the American people to end unjust discrimination against certain classes of people, as in previous civil rights movements," the letter said.

"Some of us are registered Democrats and some of us are not, but we appreciate the Democratic Party's stated commitment to human rights, equality, and fairness.

"Accordingly, we urge the Democratic Party to embrace policies that protect both women and children: legal protection for pre-born children, improved prenatal care for women in need, especially women of color, alternatives to abortion, and a comprehensive culture of life free from violence, poverty and racism."

The letter was organized by a prolife advocacy group called Democrats for Life. 🗪

Giving Continued from page 3

"The future includes less institutional giving as the oldest generation passes," Rainer said, "but there is much potential with the younger generation if churches will engage them with digital giving. Automatic, recurring digital gifts coupled with spontaneous text-to-give options will help fill the gap."

Some individuals may simply forget to give or make excuses for not giving to their church. Abernathy said online giving helps mediate those issues by providing a simple, streamlined approach.

But he added it's important to keep in mind the learning curve for some

members.

"I think we need more emphasis on helping churches, especially older, more established churches, to make this shift if we want them to survive," Abernathy said.

Rainer noted that because digital giving is here to stay, no church will be able to survive long-term without

"Paper money replaced gold. Checks replaced paper money. Now digital giving is replacing checks," Rainer said.

"Every church will be more stable as more people give digitally with



BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

We Encourage One Another

August 16

Focal passage: Ephesians 4:17-32

The other day, my sister picked up blueberry plants to add to her garden. Apparently, when planting blueberries, it's better to plant at least two near one another. While self-fertile, a blueberry plant will produce more and bigger berries when it cross pollinates with a different variety nearby. So while possible to live and produce alone, blueberries only truly flourish when surrounded by other blueberry plants.

Isn't that like just like the church? As Christians, we might survive alone, but only when in community with other Christians do we truly flourish! Living the Christian life isn't easy - our flesh wars within and temptations of the world war without. It isn't uncommon today to hear someone proclaim that they love Christ, but not His church.

As you trace your way from Genesis to Revelation, there is one really obvious continuity – people, groups of people coming together. In the very beginning, God said it wasn't good for man to be alone, and so He created woman.

The same is true today, but living in community with one another isn't always easy.

Paul wouldn't have needed to tell the Ephesians "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs," if such encouragement was always natural.

When we build one another up as the body we accomplish more for the gospel together than we ever could alone!

We Strengthen One Another

August 23

Focal passage: Ephesians 5:8-21

began running in seminary. With The sedentary hours spent reading and writing every week, it felt good to get outside and feel my heart beat

> wildly in my chest. A few months into my new hobby, my sister encouraged me to sign up to run the Nike Women's Half Marathon in Washington, D.C., with her the following spring. At first I thought she was crazy.

She had run her first half marathon in a desert while deployed, training in a month and I hadn't even run a 5k. No way I could run with her! But, with my sister

hyping me up, cheering me on when I hit certain milestones and telling me how excited she was to run together, I signed up.

During this time I also had a mentor at church who, along with her husband, taught me about hydration, foot strike patterns and pacing.

Because of those who supported me, I finished 13.1 miles around the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, and the U.S. Capitol. There were tens of thousands of people cheering us on with signs, all female drumlines and bands along the course, and a sea of other women pushing themselves to accomplish something incredible in one of the most beautiful cities in America.

I would have missed it all if it weren't for the people in my life.

In the church, sometimes I think we forget just how much we can accomplish together for the Kingdom and for Christ. That's the beauty of the church: we have the opportunity to support one another, to cheer one another on, to run the race together.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

LINDSEY HARRIS

member, Mount Carmel

Baptist Church, Asheville

Finding Honor

August 16

Focal passage: Proverbs 31:10-16, 23-31

T's nearly impossible to avoid the dark cloud of reality television these days. I was recently subjected to an explanation of the plot of a dating reality show that ended with contestants marrying each other. Aside from the surrealist comedy of it all, there is a deep tragedy in what our culture values in selecting a spouse.

Mercifully, Proverbs provides us with a far more compelling portrait.

The portrait in Proverbs 31 centers on the wife, yet it provides all of us with a framework for the character to be cultivated as she submits her life to the Lord. This portrait of a godly wife should inform not just wives, but women in general and more broadly, all of us who seek to live lives that honor Christ.

The preciousness of this wife is

characterized by her trustworthiness, her wisdom and diligence in work, and her care for her family among other things.

These all stem from her abiding

trust and fear in the Lord. The evidences of her character flow from her dependance on God. She rejects that which is fleeting in pursuit of that which lasts.

There is honor and recognition for this woman, because her character is proven and her foundation secure in the Lord.

Do we honor and celebrate the same things as God? Do we overlook what God values because we have been influenced by what the world values?

May we reject all that takes us away from this vision and celebrate what God honors.

Relational Foundations

August 23

Focal passage: Song of Solomon 2:15-3:5

ne of the common warnings I offer to couples during pre-

marital counseling pertains to the importance of not glossing over issues because of their infatuation. As I tend to put it, those idiosyncrasies that you are eager to describe as charming now, may turn out to be points of irritation down the road. It's best to prepare for marriage with a sober mind, enjoying the beauty of the relationship while also recognizing that two sinners will come

together in a uniquely intimate and lasting way – there will be friction!

Of course, leave it to Solomon to describe it far more beautifully than I, with the imagery of catching those

cute little foxes that will tear up the vineyard if you let them.

In Song of Solomon, we find a celebration of the splendors of romantic love within the bounds that God has designed. We also find some very helpful building blocks leading to a healthy relationship that appropriately reflect the relationship of God to His people.

It's helpful to understand marriage in its appropriate context, which is succinctly presented to us in Ephesians 5. Marriage was created by God to illustrate the grand story of God loving and redeeming His people.

The qualities that mark a healthy marriage are those we have experienced firsthand from God as His people. We build trust within a marriage because we have experienced the trustworthiness of our God.

The character we cultivate leading up to marriage will follow us in.



MANNY PRIETO lav pastor, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh



AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

JUSTUS LONG MCKEEL, 85, died March 23 in Shelby, N.C.

A graduate of East Carolina College (now University), McKeel taught at Cerro Gordo High School for several years in Columbus County where he met and married his now late wife Juanita.

He was called into the ministry and was ordained at Bethel Baptist Church in 1960 and graduated from Southeastern Seminary (1963 and



JUSTUS MCKEEL

1970). After graduation, he began 50 years of ministry in several N.C. pastorates including Williamson's Crossroads Baptist Church, Gibson Baptist Church, Wade Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Ramseur and Center Cross Baptist Church.

He was a resident of Randolph County for 50 years and went on several mission trips to Honduras. He led summer mission conferences at Fort Caswell and was the moderator of the Randolph Baptist Association. He also served on the Board of Ministers at Campbell University.

He is survived by his three daughters, Mary McKeel Jones of Shelby, N.C., Martha McKeel McMasters of Charlotte and Jennifer McKeel Rakestraw of Reidsville, N.C.; sisters, Alice Faye Jarrell of Ahoskie, N.C., and Brenda McKeel Frick of Merry Hill, N.C.; five grandchildren and two great-

Memorials to First Baptist Church Ramseur, P.O.

Box 544 Ramseur, NC 27316; Center Cross Baptist Church, 1789 Center Cross Church Road, Asheboro, NC 27205; Alzheimer's Association at Alz.org; or Hospice of Cleveland County at hospicecares.cc.

ALISON CAROLINE LUTHER LUSK, 49, died July 14 after a battle with pancreatic cancer.

She attended Randolph Community College and Central Wesleyan College (now Southern Wesleyan University). For 12 years, she worked for Guilford County Department of Social Services, where she met and married her husband, Todd. The Lusks served in four churches in 20 years, most recently at Olive Grove Baptist Church, Pinnacle.. She had been working at Pilot Mountain Baptist Association.



ALISON LUSK

She worked with the West Stokes Toy Store to serve hundreds of families each Christmas and also volunteered at King Outreach Ministry. She and her husband fostered 13 children, adopting four.

She is survived by her parents, Will Roger and Alice Phillips Luther; husband of 20 years, Todd Lusk, and four children, David Lusk of Winston-Salem, Nicholas Lusk, Darrin Lusk and Caroline Lusk, all of the home; her "5th son" – Jarred Franklin of Apex. Memorials to: Olive Grove Baptist Church for West Stokes Toy Store, 2131 Volunteer Road, Pinnacle, NC 27043; Cancer Services, Inc. of Winston-Salem; Trellis Supportive Care or King Outreach Ministry of King.

Staff changes

DARRELL NANCE, former senior pastor of Kinza Memorial Baptist Church, Stanfield, N.C., since 2005 has transitioned back into bi-vocational ministry and is currently serving as interim pastor at Poplin Grove Baptist Church, Albemarle, and as an administrative associate with the N.C. Department of Public Safety.

Trinity Baptist Church, Newton, has called AN-**DREW BARRETT** as its second full-time pastor.

He preached his trial sermon on June 14, and the congregation approved his hiring by ballot and phone-in vote. A native of Huntsville, Texas, he graduated from Sam Houston State University and received a bachelor's degree in kinesiology in May 2017. He received his master of divinity degree with a concentration in theology from George W. Truett Theological Seminary in May. He was ordained June 21 at Elkins Lake Baptist Church, Huntsville, Texas. He has also served as youth pastor at Hilltop Lakes Chapel, Hilltop Lakes, Texas, from 2014 to this year and as family activities ministry intern at Central Baptist Church in College Station, Texas, in 2014. He is married to Sara.

CHRIS THOMAS has been called as pastor of First Baptist Church, Wilson. A graduate of Samford University with a bachelor's of religion (2006), George W. Truett Theological Seminary with a master of divinity (2009) and Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology with a doctorate of ministry (2020), Thomas previously served churches in Texas and Alabama. He and his wife, Sallie, have two sons, Kohl and Carter.

CLASSIFIEDS

Beech Glen Baptist Church, Inc, a Southern Baptist church in Mars Hill, N.C., with an attendance of 80+ for Sunday morning worship, seeks a full-time pastor who is devoted to Jesus Christ, passionate about shepherding his flock, and clear in his calling from God. Sermons should demonstrate strong biblical knowledge and applicability to everyday life. The ideal candidate will cast a vision for the future while embracing our strong focus on missions. Seminary and/or bachelor's degree preferred. Salary range begins at \$52K per year based on education and experience. Compensation will be structured according to your preferences and IRS regulations. Please send résumé to "Search Committee, PO Box 715, Mars Hill, NC 28754" and/or via email to bgbcpsc@ charter.net. Your application should include a link to an online sermon or some form of digital media (e.g. CD, DVD, etc.) sent to the PO Box above. Application implies consent to a nationwide background investigation.

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.

Miscellaneous

The High Point NC Jail Ministry is seeking a Chaplain/Executive Director to lead Christ-centered ministry under direction of HPJM Board of Directors. Working through jail staff and the Volunteer Program lead inmates who desire a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Send letter/résumé to dawnbingham7@yahoo.com.

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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.





N.C. ministry connects with retirees amid COVID-19 isolation

By CAROL LAYTON | NCBAM

In late March, when many churches stopped meeting and senior adults were advised to selfisolate due to the COVID-19 pandemic, regional directors at North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) heightened efforts to make contact with retired ministers - making 200 contacts in the first

NCBAM's Servant Care outreach provides ministry services to pastors, music ministers, and missionaries (65+), including their spouses or surviving spouses. The outreach also offers fellowship and educational opportunities for participants through ENCORE programs and regional events.

"It's such a blessing to connect with Servant Care participants," said Charity Johnson who serves the southeast region. "It makes me feel God placed me in this ministry for a purpose. He's equipped me with skills that I can give back and help take care of His pastors and His ministers who have dedicated their lives to God's people. They have always put others first and now it's time for us to put them

Rev. H* is a participant whom Johnson calls regularly. After serving as a Baptist pastor for more than 50 years, Rev. H. was widowed in 2014. Now at age 87, failing eyesight makes cooking difficult.

In addition to providing friendly calls and cards,



Servant Care

NCBAM's outreach to NC Baptist ministers 65+

Johnson also connected Rev. H. with a ministry at her church and now three home-cooked meals are delivered each week. "It's a blessing to help meet his needs," said Johnson. "He is so grateful."

Another of Johnson's Servant Care participants is Rev. M*, a retired pastor and director of missions (now called associational mission strategists).

"In addition to calling, I also send notes. Rev. M. called me back in tears. He said the Bible verse I had included in my note was a blessing to him as he was just starting chemo treatments. It blessed me that God used me in that way. It wasn't me. It was God using me to encourage someone," Johnson

Social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic greatly heightened the loneliness many Servant Care participants were already experiencing, according to Johnson.

"With not being able to attend church or even see family, their only human contact each week might be wearing a mask and going to the grocery store at 6 a.m.," she said. "Many are in need of prayer right now and of someone just to talk to. It's such a blessing to connect with these people of

More than 700 individuals are included in NCBAM's Servant Care outreach – with 64 new retired ministers added in June. Participation is not based on financial need. Servant Care participants receive regular phone calls and birthday cards. Frail participants receive assessments by an NCBAM regional director. (In-home assessments are currently handled remotely.) NCBAM regional directors work with Baptist associations to confirm and share updated contact information for retired ministers.

NCBAM's ministry director, Sandy Gregory, sees Servant Care as one of NCBAM's most important outreaches. "Many pastors join a new church when they retire and so the strong connections to the people who would be most eager to minister to them are lost," said Gregory. "NCBAM is helping to fill the gap by giving Servant Care participants the love, honor, and care they so richly deserve."

*Name changed Visit ncbam.org.🙉

