



# BIBLICAL RECORDER

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## Billy Graham statue one step closer to Capitol

*Biblical Recorder*

A North Carolina legislative committee voted July 29 to approve a model of a statue of Billy Graham to represent the state in the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

The proposed bronze statue of Graham – a world renowned Southern Baptist evangelist who died in 2018 – would replace the likeness of former N.C. Governor Charles Aycock if it receives final approval by a congressional committee.

The N.C. legislature’s statuary hall selection committee unanimously approved the design, which was created by Charlotte sculptor Chas Fagan, according to *The Charlotte Observer*.

News reports indicate the 10-foot-10-inch statue will feature Graham in a typical pose for the North Carolina preacher: standing upright, one foot slightly in front of the other, with one finger pointing at a Bible passage.

“In the history of this state, there’s probably been no one who has been more well known around the world than Mr. Graham,” said David Bruce in a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association press release.

Bruce was Graham’s executive assistant and now serves as one of the seven statuary hall committee members. Bruce said Graham was well known not only for preaching but for his humility, his compassion and a personal code of ethics that was above reproach.

The state committee is slated to vote in September on which Bible verses to include on the statue’s base.

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## Volunteers respond to hurricane, tornado recovery requests



A member of a Baptists on Mission (BOM) chainsaw team cuts through a large tree in Wilmington in response to Hurricane Isaias damage reports. (BOM photo by John McIntyre)

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | *BR* Assistant Editor

Baptists on Mission (BOM) disaster relief volunteers continue to serve affected communities across North Carolina amid the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

“We have multiple areas of work going on,” said Tom Beam, Baptists on Mission disaster relief coordinator, in an email to the *Biblical Recorder*.

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## Pastors split over return time for adulterous ministers

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

When a pastor commits adultery, most of their fellow pastors believe they should withdraw from public ministry for at least some time.

A new survey of U.S. Protestant pastors by Nashville-based LifeWay Research finds 2% of pastors believe a fellow pastor who has an affair does not need to take any time away.

“Scripture doesn’t mince words about adultery,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “From the Ten Commandments, to the Apostle Paul’s lists of wicked things, to the qualifications for elders listed in 1 Timothy, adultery is not appropriate for a follower of Christ nor a leader of a local church.”

Few believe less than a year is a sufficient

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# What about this year's annual meeting?

BSC Communications

**B**aptist state conventions across the country are all facing a similar question right now – what do we do about our annual meeting?

Some state conventions have already announced plans to cancel their meeting or conduct a virtual meeting. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is currently considering various options because we have some decisions that our convention needs to make that will help us in 2021 and beyond.

By now, many of you have learned that this year's annual meeting will not be held at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro on Nov. 9-10 as originally planned. With limits on public gatherings in place until mid-September and no clear indication on when those limits would be eased or lifted, it became evident that holding the annual meeting at the Koury Center in 2020 would not be possible.

The state convention's executive leadership team has had frequent discussions with Koury Center officials throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and on Aug. 7, we made the necessary decision to cancel our contract with Koury for this year and begin exploring other alternatives for our 2020 meeting.



**MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.**  
BSC executive  
director-treasurer

When we canceled our contract with the Koury Center, an automated email was sent by the host hotel to those messengers and guests who had room reservations indicating that their rooms had been canceled. We were not aware that this email

would be sent out, and it created some confusion about the status of the annual meeting. Once we learned of this email, we worked to release a statement as quickly as we could to indicate that convention officials were beginning to explore alternative options for this year's meeting. We apologize for any confusion those events caused.

Our executive leadership team is now having discussions with our board of officers, elected convention officers and other leaders to explore various options and scenarios for this year's annual meeting. Further discussion will happen with the executive committee Aug. 25. Ultimately, any decision regarding this year's annual meeting rests with our board of directors in accordance with our bylaws, which state that in the "case of emergency or unusual circumstances," the board is empowered to "change the time or place of meeting or cancel the sessions of the Convention."


These certainly are unusual circumstances that we find ourselves in due to COVID-19, which

## IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

continues to impact our lives. If we have an annual meeting this year, it will look much different than any we have had before. However, I can assure you that you will enjoy being present, and I hope you will attend if possible because this will be the final convention that I will have a role in leading. I invite and encourage all North Carolina Baptists to pray for convention leaders and board members as we discuss various options for this year's meeting in light of the ongoing public-health situation.

Thank you for your patience as we work through these logistical challenges. We will provide updates related to the annual meeting as quickly as we can and in as many places as we can. Please watch the convention website ([ncbaptist.org](http://ncbaptist.org)), the annual meeting website ([ncannualmeeting.org](http://ncannualmeeting.org)) and the *Biblical Recorder's* print edition and website ([brnow.org](http://brnow.org)) for updates. We will also provide updates via email, social media and the N.C. Baptist mobile app.

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him"* – James 1:5 (NKJV). 

## 3 reasons to fly the Great Commission banner

**I** have lived in Southern Baptist circles since I was a kid. My parents were members of two churches during my childhood that were affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

I came to Christ at a Southern Baptist student camp. I was baptized in Southern Baptist waters, one of those baptistries with a mural of the Jordan River above the choir loft.

After 18 months of trying other denominations in college, I wound up joining an SBC church and eventually went to a Southern Baptist seminary. Later I was ordained as a pastor in an SBC church.

The church I planted five years

ago, where I am currently the pastor, is a Southern Baptist church. I have sent friends to serve as missionaries through the SBC's mission boards and sent many dollars through our Cooperative Program to help fund our ministry efforts.

I am grateful for the missionary fervor and theological faithfulness that characterize my experiences in Southern Baptist life.

In that spirit, I offer my clear-eyes-full-heart-can't-lose support of our convention of churches identifying as Great Com-

mission Baptists, the alternate name adopted by the SBC in 2012.

Here are three reasons why I am eager to employ this name in describing our local church:

**1) I want to cast a better vision of our cooperative work.**

I have regular conversations with people thinking about joining our church. They often ask about our denominational affiliation. When they hear we are a "Southern Baptist

Convention" church, it comes across as insider language. It is like telling

someone who has never watched professional baseball that my favorite team is in the "NL East." The name usually needs explanation.

For others who may be somewhat familiar with the SBC, the label can be more of a hurdle than a help when casting a vision for why they should join us. The negative reactions are not universal. Some of our most faithful, evangelistic members were raised in SBC churches, and they are grateful for that legacy of faithfulness. So am I! Yet, in my experience, these folks are not the majority. Most people who recognize the SBC label hesitate when they hear it.

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**SPENCE SHELTON**  
Guest Column



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# N.C. Baptists exploring ‘alternative options’ for 2020 annual meeting

By CHAD AUSTIN | BSC Communications

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina’s (BSC) 2020 annual meeting will not be held at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro on Nov. 9-10 as originally planned due to continued uncertainties about large-group gatherings amid ongoing concerns related to COVID-19. Baptist state convention officials will begin exploring alternative options for this year’s annual meeting.

On Aug. 5, N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper issued an executive order that extended Phase 2 of the state’s reopening plans until Fri., Sept. 11. The order limits mass gatherings at “an event or

convening that brings together more than ten (10) people indoors or more than twenty-five (25) people outdoors at the same time in a single confined indoor or outdoor space, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, or meeting hall.”

Following the extension of this order and with no clear indication on when limits on mass gatherings would be eased or lifted, it became apparent that holding this year’s annual meeting at Koury Convention Center would not be feasible.

On Aug. 7, after weeks of discussion between Baptist state convention and Koury Convention Center officials, BSC executive leaders made the decision to cancel the contract with

Koury for this November. The convention incurred no penalties from the contract cancellation.


Upon cancellation of the event, an automated email generated by the Koury Convention Center was sent to messengers and guests who already had room reservations for the event at the host hotel. BSC officials were not aware that the cancellation email would be distributed so quickly and apologize for any confusion this has caused.

Convention officials will now begin the process of exploring alternative options for this year’s annual meeting. According to convention bylaws, changes to the date, time or location of the annual meeting must be ap-

proved by the convention’s board of directors.

The bylaws state that “In case of emergency or unusual circumstances, the Board of Directors (the “Board”) is empowered to change the time or place of the meeting or cancel the sessions of the Convention.”

Convention officials request the prayers of North Carolina Baptists as they begin the process of exploring alternative options.

Future updates related to this year’s annual meeting will be posted to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina website at [ncbaptist.org](http://ncbaptist.org), the annual meeting website at [ncannu-almeeting.org](http://ncannu-almeeting.org) and through the N.C. Baptist mobile app. 

# Study: Churchgoers confident in the Bible, but sometimes find it challenging

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

Most churchgoers say they can address doubts others have about the Bible, but half admit they have problems understanding scripture on their own.

Despite repeatedly affirming confidence in their own abilities to explain and understand the Bible, a recent LifeWay Research study in partnership with Explore the Bible curriculum found 57% of

Protestant churchgoers say they find it challenging to make sense of the Bible when they read it on their own.

One in 5 (19%) strongly agree, while 38% somewhat agree. Around 2 in 5 (41%) say they don’t find it challenging, including 16% who strongly disagree.

“Churchgoers are ready to defend the Bible as true and as a faithful moral standard,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “But most admit they stumble on understanding the specific meaning as they read.”

“Reading and studying as an individual is important, but we need others to help us think through what we discover,” said Dwayne McCrary of Explore the Bible. “Studying together also allows us to gain insights from others that move us forward in our study as well.”

Regardless of how challenging churchgoers find the Bible, they seem sure they can recognize its relevance to them and help others understand it. Nine in 10 churchgoers (90%) agree they can usually understand how a passage of scripture is relevant to them. Only 7% disagree.

Four in 5 express confidence in their ability to help others with doubts about the truthfulness of scripture (81%), difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible (82%), and confusion over a Bible passage (81%).

“It is possible the confidence churchgoers have in helping others understand the Bible comes more from what they have been taught than from their own reading,” McConnell said. “Those who attend church most frequently have more confidence in helping someone with a confusing passage of scripture.”

Older churchgoers are more likely to feel hesitancy in their biblical understanding than others in the pews.

Around 1 in 5 churchgoers 65 and older (19%) lack confidence in their


ability to address the doubts of someone struggling with the truthfulness of scripture.

Churchgoers may have such confidence because they profess enjoyment in Bible study. More than 9 in 10 (93%) say they enjoy exploring a passage of scripture to understand its meaning; 5% disagree.

Baptist (97%) and non-denominational churchgoers (95%) are more likely than those who attend a Restorationist movement (83%) or Lutheran church (76%) to say they appreciate digging into Bible passages.

As part of that exploration process, overwhelmingly churchgoers see two aspects as important: understanding the original context of a passage and applying that passage to our modern context.

Nearly all churchgoers say it is important to understand the context in which the Bible was written (96%) and it is important to apply the meaning and principles of scripture to today’s context (93%).

Full story is at [BRnow.org](http://BRnow.org). 

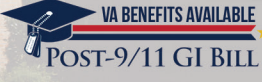
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# Women at Work panelists examine racism in workplace

By LIZ TABLAZON | *BR* Assistant Editor

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's (ERLC) third Christian Women at Work webinar brought together four women working in different fields to examine racism in the workplace.

K.A. Ellis, director of the Center for the Study of the Bible and Ethnicity at Reformed Theological Seminary; Sunni Harris, a litigation attorney; author and editor Trillia Newbell; and Jenny Yang, senior vice president of public policy and advocacy at World Relief, discussed several aspects and effects of racism in an Aug. 4 conversation moderated by Chelsea Patterson Sobolik, ERLC policy director.

Ellis opened the discussion with an overview of what scripture says about human dignity.

"Genesis 1-3, we know, sets us up to understand how and why humanity is unique among all of God's creation," Ellis said, "and it sets us up to also understand why it offends God deeply when we show partiality, and it helps explain why we struggle to treat each other well."

"Genesis all the way to Revelation offers us the way forward to build communities that are both diverse and unified, if we're willing to enter into that space."

Ellis emphasized the unique way God created human beings compared to other creatures.

"He moves from speech and speaking things and 'let there be' into 'let us make,' and all of a sudden in the language, God's creating becomes tactile. It's deliberate, and it's intimate," she said.

"When God gave humankind dominion over creation, He knew the value of a human being. He never intended for people to have domination over other human beings. That's the difference between

dominion over creation – and shepherding and stewardship of creation – over domination and rule over other human beings."

Newbell elaborated on the importance of holding ideas to scripture.

She shared about a time when a white man approached her after a speaking engagement and tried to use scripture to defend his belief that she, as a black woman, was "subhuman."

In order to engage the issue of racism well, Newbell said Christians need to have a "real understanding of what we don't know." Christians should be "suspect of ourselves and what we've been taught in order to learn the real beauty and truth that is explained in the scriptures."

Harris spoke about an area of corporate policies affected by racism. She provides legal advice regarding the CROWN Act, which seeks to protect against discrimination based on race-based hairstyles. Grooming policies that require employees to maintain a "professional" appearance "is not defined by the imago dei. It is usually defined more so with regard to eurocentric norms," Harris said.

Black women are more likely to be sent home because of their hairstyles and less likely to be promoted, she said.

Harris referred to a survey that found 80% of black women who responded have altered their hair to conform to corporate norms.

"If God does number the hairs on our head, how disheartening is it that 80% of black women don't feel comfortable wearing their hair the way God made it?"

Harris also highlighted the consequences of racist remarks and attitudes within the workplace. She cited a study that found that 50% of women of

color working in law have experienced demeaning comments, and 67% have been excluded from networking opportunities.

"That means while I should be focused on doing my job, I'm focusing trying to think through or pray through trauma of receiving harassing statements."


"It hurts to be excluded, but that's not really the real issue. The issue is for me to do my job well, I need relationships, both internally and externally. If I'm not being invited to certain networking functions, it hampers my ability to do my job well."

Yang and Ellis expanded the dialogue to examine racism around the globe. Refugees, for example, experience interpersonal and systemic racism in countries around the world that keep them from accessing the protection they need, Yang said. She also pointed out ongoing inter tribal and ethnic conflict in other countries.

Ellis, who works to address persecution of Christians, said Christ has "limited Satan to a handful of tricks in terms of how he oppresses humanity, and he's just not creative in how he dehumanizes. He's just really good at marketing and repackaging the same stuff over and over again."

When Sobolik asked panelists about how to move forward together in uplifting women who have experienced racism, Newbell said, "I really do believe so much in the family of God." Newbell encouraged listeners, as those who are sisters in Christ, to love, encourage and admonish each other.

Harris added that she can listen to her family because of their relationships, and encouraged listeners to enter into relationships with people who are different from them.

"There's a level of trust established, and then some of the blinders may fall off," she said. 

## WMU announces voluntary retirement plan amid COVID financial crisis

By JULIE WALTERS | Woman's Missionary Union

In response to a decline in sales due to COVID-19, national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) announced Aug. 5 it is offering a voluntary retirement plan to staff.

"We have worked incredibly hard over the past several years to 'right size' our organization based on revenue projections," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national WMU. "With two difficult back-to-back downsizings and budget cuts, our goal has been to simplify and put limited resources where they can make the most impact for the Kingdom."

Over the past four years, WMU has cut 34% from its budget, which will be \$5.2 million beginning in October for 2020-21. Sales of curriculum for missions groups is WMU's main source of revenue.

However, with so much uncertainty related to the pandemic, many churches are not ordering these resources.

"This year we were strategically poised for growth and then COVID-19 hit our vibrant ministry with a force unequal to anything we've seen in recent decades," Wisdom-Martin said.

When churches suspended in-person services and many across the country were sheltering-at-home at the onset of the pandemic, WMU quickly responded by moving GA and RA lessons for April and May online, creating free missions resources for families during the summer, providing free PTSD Bible studies and resources for pastors, and launching a new podcast with inspiring interviews.

While these efforts help to meet needs, they don't replace income lost from decreased sales as churches

grapple with not knowing how to plan for needed resources.


With diminished revenue and uncertainty of when it may rebound, it was necessary to contain costs and present a balanced budget for 2020-21.

"We value all of our employees," said Wisdom-Martin. "Each and every one makes meaningful contributions, and we are seeking to be as gracious and generous as possible. After the consideration period for those eligible for the voluntary retirement offer closes on Sept. 21, we will determine how much of a deficit in the budget remains and how to proceed from there."

With vision and proper perspective, a crisis can bring opportunity. Although the pandemic has significantly impacted WMU's ministry model and so many other realities, COVID-19 didn't catch God by surprise.

"Even in the midst of these difficult days, we confess God as our sustainer and provider," Wisdom-Martin said. "I believe He has a hope and a future for WMU. This crisis has negatively affected our bottom line but it has positively amplified our mission."

"Changes in our culture and church community bring opportunities for us to explore missions engagement in new and different ways," she continued. "People are open to gospel conversations like never before; this is not the time to shrink back, but to boldly proclaim Christ."

Based in Birmingham, Ala., national WMU is not a part of the Cooperative Program allocation budget and receives no funds from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering or Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. It is supported through the sale of magazines and products and from investments and charitable contributions. 



# Banner

Continued from page 2

But here's the thing, when I explain what the SBC does – we collaborate with other churches to train pastors, send missionaries and plant churches – the tension leaves the room.

From there, I begin to cast the vision for how they can be a part of the mission of God with our church in partnership with other churches. Together we can see an unbelievable gospel impact in our lifetime.

Describing ourselves as Great Commission Baptists puts this vision in the forefront. Why shouldn't we welcome the mission-focused language? The name more accurately represents who we are.

## 2) Our current name carries baggage.

I am praying that God would allow our local church to grow into a multicultural church. We aren't there yet.

I am asking God to reveal blind spots to me where my own cultural preferences may be trying to rebuild the wall of hostility God has torn down in Christ.

I still have so much to learn about

becoming a multicultural church, but I know that cultural diversity among our leaders is a must. That means recruiting pastors who represent the cultures of our community and it is difficult for many African American leaders to adopt the label Southern Baptist.

Our convention was established to prioritize the mission of God together. By God's grace we have consistently been about his mission over the years. But one of the main contention points at our founding was between southern slaveholders and northern abolitionists.

Southern slaveholders were offended that in their current convention of churches they would not be allowed to serve as missionaries while owning slaves. Since some believed it was their God-ordained right to own slaves, they formed their own convention of churches.

A tragic reality of our Southern origin story is that our God-honoring emphasis on the gospel mission was matched by a God-dishonoring com-

mitment to the enslavement of people created in God's image.

I don't presume to fully understand the experiences of our minority brothers and sisters, but I do try to listen to their concerns and I pray this illustration will shed light on common perceptions of our convention's name. If someone were attempting to recruit me to serve on the board of a fictional, pro-life "Margaret Sanger Adoption Agency," I would be confused and offended.

Margaret Sanger founded the eugenics movement and believed most minority children and children with disabilities should be aborted. If the person trying to persuade me explained, "Oh, we don't abort minorities and disabled children anymore, now we advocate for them," I would ask why on earth they were still flying the Sanger flag. I would refuse to join until the name reflected the current heartbeat of the organization.

In recent years we have taken steps to repent of slavery's role in the SBC's founding and the racism in our past. These are important steps. And that's exactly what adopting another name is – an additional step in the right direction. A name change doesn't erase the past, but it promotes a desire for a different future.

## 3) Our future isn't southern, it's global.


Head over to the North American Mission Board's website and look at where we are trying to work together to plant churches. Most of these cities are not southern. Now go over to the International Mission Board's site. Many of the unreached people groups we are trying to reach do not live in the southern part of the United States.

We are a network of churches with global reach and I am so thankful to be a part of it. Our local church has a dream of sending someone from our church to reach an unreached, unengaged, uncontacted people group with the Good News in the next 10 years. We are already going to the nations, why not celebrate it?

Our future leaders are not confined to the South. Let's look down the road a bit. If God in His kindness should turn the tide and increase salvation numbers through our cooperative efforts to reach the nations, then He is also going to raise up leaders for tomorrow's church among those people. One of our future presidents of Great Commission Baptists may never set a childhood foot in the "Bible Belt."

What if our banner has created blinders to the possibilities God has for us across the world? What if 50,000 churches could be 500,000 churches in 30 years? That is the kind of vision I hope we start dreaming of as Great Commission Baptists.

I have one life and so do you. I want to be known for what I am for – the glory of God in the unyielding hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Locking arms together under the banner of the Great Commission ... let's go.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Spence Shelton is the lead pastor of Mercy Church in Charlotte, N.C.) 



Cecil & Jean Frady

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## COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS

BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OF NORTH CAROLINA

All resolutions should be submitted in writing for consideration by the committee no later than **Sept. 10, 2020.**

### Send by mail to Committee on Memorials/Resolutions

Baptist State Convention of North Carolina  
PO Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512

### Send by email to Penny Cozadd

Business Services, Executive Leaders Assistant  
[pcozadd@ncbaptist.org](mailto:pcozadd@ncbaptist.org)





Baptists on Mission (BOM) volunteers prepare meals to be distributed in Bertie County after an EF-3 tornado killed two people in the area and did extensive damage. (BOM photo)

## North Carolina Missions Offering prayer guide

### Sun., Aug. 30: Baptists on Mission

Pray for the leadership of Baptists on Mission, also known as N.C. Baptist Men, and the 18 different ministries they support. Ask God to use these ministries and everyone involved in them to take the gospel to people in need and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

### Mon., Aug. 31: Church Planting Pastors

Pray for church planters, and ask the Father to draw many people to Jesus through new churches across North Carolina. Pray that God would raise up more church planters across our state.

### Tues., Sept. 1: Disaster Relief

Thank the Lord for the work of disaster relief volunteers, and pray for them as they show and share Jesus' love with people in need.

### Wed., Sept. 2: Mission Camps

Pray for the directors and volunteers of the mission camps in Red Springs and Shelby as they share the good news of Jesus by serving local residents of these communities.

### Thurs., Sept. 3: Church Planting Consultants

Pray for church planting consultants with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina who help recruit, train and encourage church planters across our state.

### Fri., Sept. 4: Baptist Associations

Pray for the local Baptist associations that work with local congregations to reach their communities for Christ by strengthening churches, sharing the gospel and making disciples.

### Sat., Sept. 5: Medical/Dental/Health Ministry

Thank God for the medical professionals, pastors and counselors who volunteer their time to bring physical and spiritual help to hurting people. Pray that patients will meet Jesus and know His love.

### Sun., Sept. 6: Church Planting Among North Carolina's International Population

Pray for church planters and churches that will be planting churches across the state to reach the increasingly diverse population of North Carolina.



# Respond

Continued from page 1

Hurricane Isaias created an EF-3 tornado Aug. 4 that weather officials said was about six football fields wide. The tornado killed two people and injured dozens when it went through an area near Windsor, N.C.

“Volunteers have been cutting trees, tarping roofs and doing yard cleanup,” Beam said.

Baptists on Mission volunteers are serving in Bertie County based out of Cashie Baptist Church in Windsor. A feeding operation is open at Memorial Baptist Church in Williamston. Food is prepared at Memorial and distributed at Cedar Landing Missionary Baptist Church in Windsor. Beam said Windsor is in the “heart of the damage.”

Through local churches and the Wilmington Rebuild Center, Beam said work orders relating to the recent hurricane are being handled for three counties – Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender.

As of Aug. 10, more than 1,500 meals had been prepared and distributed by about 50 volunteers. Beam expects at least 5,000 meals will be served in Bertie County.

Add to that total, more than 50 recovery volunteers have served with 15 assessors and 10 chaplains.

“Our largest challenge is finding enough volunteers that can commute to volunteer,” Beam said. “We are limited in overnight facilities because of the pandemic. We are making it work, and great ministry is taking place.”

Beam said assessors are also in Alleghany County as a result of the Aug. 9 earthquake on the state’s border with Virginia. The quake, which registered as a 5.1 magnitude, was reported near Sparta, N.C. Officials said there were several smaller earthquakes prior to the largest one reported at 8:07 a.m.

## Produce boxes

BOM secured an extension on the first response of Farmers to Family produce boxes and are currently in week five of eight of the second term.

Richard Brunson, executive director-treasurer of BOM, said the organization, which currently operates 23 distribution sites, has applied to continue with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program.

“We are so thankful to have received a USDA grant to provide food boxes to families across our state,”

said Brunson. “Through this grant we are providing 12,000 Farmers to Family Produce boxes each week to families affected by COVID-19. That’s approximately 200,000 pounds of fresh produce and fruit that is being distributed each week.”

BOM used its disaster relief network to organize volunteers across the state to distribute the food.

“Churches are ministering to thousands of people in their communities through this effort, and they are doing this in Jesus’ name,” Brunson said.

In the three months the food box program has been going, Brunson said 3 million pounds of food has been distributed.

## COVID-19 response

Since Feb. 21, Brunson said the BOM staff “have been spending the majority of our time on COVID-19 relief efforts.”

Crystal Horton, a registered nurse, coordinates educational and safety resources via a website: [baptistsonmission.org/coronavirus](http://baptistsonmission.org/coronavirus). The site provides churches and individuals with websites, flyers, videos and posters to help inform people about COVID-19.

The ministry has also donated 40,000 N-95 masks and 10,000 surgical masks to hospitals across the state who needed them. Utilizing the disaster relief network, BOM has a COVID-19 county coordinator for

each of the 100 N.C. counties.

“We have had over 600 churches who have said that they want to be a part of a network of churches who are ministering in their communities,” he said.

Working with N.C. Emergency Management through its 2-1-1 service and [CoronaCommunity.org](http://CoronaCommunity.org), BOM has helped identify people who are high risk and have food and or medicine needs. Brunson said more than 500 requests from families have been connected with local churches, and “these churches are helping them on a regular basis.”

Using disaster relief funds, BOM provided more than \$100,000 for COVID-19 grants for food distributed in local communities. Another \$100,000 was given to provide bulk food for churches cooking for people in their communities.

“We will continue to promote essential mission projects across our state and continue to encourage volunteers to help people in ways that protect our volunteers and the people that we are serving,” Brunson said, including dental clinics and health screenings.

## Regional rallies

Due to Gov. Roy Cooper’s announcement Aug. 5 that Phase 2 restrictions would continue, August mission rallies will be delayed until February 2021.

Brunson said there will be a “Facebook Live” Regional Rally on Aug. 20 at 7 p.m.

“Right now there are many needs



Volunteers with Baptists on Mission prepare food for distribution as part of the Farmers to Family produce box outreach. (BSC photo by K Brown)

across our state and we cannot just ‘hunker down,’” he said. “If you are high risk, you should not participate.”

There are essential projects at strategic locations across the state. If at all possible, BOM is asking people to volunteer time to serve, while practicing the three W’s – wear a cloth covering over your mouth and nose, wait at least six feet apart and wash your hands (or use hand sanitizer).

“Please pray for our staff, our board, our volunteers and our churches as we seek to serve others in the coming days,” Brunson said.

Visit [baptistsonmission.org](http://baptistsonmission.org).

## Missions offering

The North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) emphasis is still scheduled for September with a week of prayer slotted for Aug. 30-Sept. 6.

“Compelled by Love” is the theme for this year’s NCMO and is based upon 2 Corinthians 5:14.

“Like all special offerings, NCMO is down right now, but I think that churches feel that Baptists on Mission ministries and projects are vital and are bringing glory to God and I believe that our churches will pray and give generously,” Brunson said.

The goal is \$2.1 million and will be allocated by percentage to Baptists on Mission (41%), church planting (28%), mission camps (15%), associational projects (10%) and mobilization ministry projects (6%).

COVID-19 might impact giving, “but God is in control and we are going to keep on working hard to help churches minister to hurting people in their community in Jesus’ name especially during these difficult days.”

Visit [ncmissionsoffering.org](http://ncmissionsoffering.org). 

The EF-3 tornado that struck Bertie County damaged vehicles as well as a mobile home park. (Baptists on Mission photo)






# Graham Continued from page 1

Each state is represented by two statues in the U.S. Capitol's statuary hall. North Carolina's other sculpture is that of former governor Zebulon B. Vance. It is unclear if actions are being taken to replace Vance's statue at this time.

The U.S. House Appropriations Committee announced a funding bill last month that includes language directing the architect of the capitol to remove Confederate statues or those that represent "individuals with unambiguous records of racial intolerance." Aycock's was one of four statues mentioned specifically in the bill.

Graham's granddaughter and statuary hall selection committee member, Cissie Graham Lynch, told *The Charlotte Observer* the proposed statue illustrated Graham's boldness and gentleness. "Anyone who knew my grandfather one-on-one, knew about his softness," Lynch said, "whether it was in his hands, whether it was in his eyes."

In 2016, LifeWay Christian Resources moved a statue of Graham from its former headquarters in Nashville, Tenn., to Ridgecrest Conference Center in the North Carolina mountains. LifeWay announced in April that it plans to sell the conference center. 

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period of withdrawal from public ministry: 3% say for at least three months, and another 3% say at least six months.

Around 1 in 6 pastors (16%) believe an offending pastor should stay gone for at least a year.

Other pastors want them to be away from public ministry for a longer period of time: 10% say at least two years, 7% say at least five years, and 1% say at least 10 years.

For more than a quarter of pastors (27%), a pastor who commits adultery should withdraw from public ministry permanently.

Three in 10 pastors (31%) say they aren't sure what the appropriate time frame would be.

"While the Bible is clear that this behavior does not fit a pastor or elder of a church," said McConnell, "there is much debate over how long this act would disqualify someone from pastoral ministry."

## Changes since 2016

Pastors' responses are similar to, though not unchanged from, a 2016 LifeWay Research survey.

Pastors today are less likely than those four years ago to say shorter time frames are appropriate periods of withdrawal from public ministry.

Compared to 2016, pastors now are less likely to say less than a year (6% to 10%) or at least a year (16% to 21%) is the right amount of time away.

"There has been much attention given to calling

# Franklin Graham announces national prayer march in D.C.

By DIANA CHANDLER | Baptist Press

**E**vangelist Franklin Graham is asking Americans to join him in a Washington prayer march Sept. 26 to plead for God to save the nation from its present distress.

"Our communities are hurting. Our people are divided, and there's fear and uncertainty all around us," Graham said in a video announcing the event. "So let's join together and do the most important thing, and that is to pray."

Amid a COVID-19 pandemic and an international uprising decrying injustice and racism, the president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse is asking the nation to place its hope in God.

"America is in trouble. It's in distress. But we do have hope and that hope is in our Almighty God," he said in the video posted at BGEA.org.

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee (SBC EC), said he's excited about the initiative.


"There has never been a time in American history where we have needed God more than today. This is why I'm excited about this initiative to call all Americans to pray at this critical time," Floyd said.

"We need to cry out to God for revival in the church and awakening in the nation so we will be even more empowered to reach every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation."

Floyd has long focused on prayer as a nationwide emphasis.

In his present role, he led the SBC EC to revise its mission statement to include assisting churches by elevating the ministry of prayer.

He served as president of the National Day of Prayer from 2018-19; a 20th anniversary edition of his book *How to Pray: Developing an Intimate Relationship With God* was released in 2019.

Graham is asking attendees to the Sept. 26 event to convene at noon for a two-hour march along the 1.8-mile route from the Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol building, stopping along the way for a series of prayers in the name of Jesus for the nation and its leaders. 

# Nearly 150 Christians killed in sustained violence in Nigeria

Baptist Press

**N**early 150 Christians have died in a campaign of violence by militant Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria's

Middle Belt since April, including 33 Christians believed to have been killed Aug. 5-6 in Kaduna State.

Nigeria's government has provided little defense to residents of Christian villages in several states. 

American leaders to account for sexual misconduct since 2016," said McConnell. "It is not surprising that fewer pastors believe public ministry should be restored in a year."

Overall, there is more uncertainty among pastors now. Current pastors are more likely to say they are not sure of the appropriate time away from public ministry today (31%) than in 2016 (25%).

## Differences among pastors

The ethnicity, education and denomination of a pastor influenced the likelihood of their response.

African American pastors are the least likely to say one who commits adultery should withdraw from the ministry permanently (8%).

Denominationally, Pentecostal pastors are the least likely to advocate for a permanent withdrawal (6%) and most likely to support staying away for at least a year (35%).

Methodists (7%) are more likely to say the pastor does not need to withdraw at all than Baptists (1%), Lutherans (1%), Pentecostals (less than 1%), and pastors in the Restorationist movement (less than 1%).

Pastors with a bachelor's degree (34%) are more likely to support a permanent withdrawal than those with additional education: master's (27%) or doctoral degree (22%).

Smaller church pastors, those with churches of

attendance between 50 to 99, are also more likely to say pastors who commit adultery should withdraw from ministry permanently than pastors of churches with 100 to 249 in attendance (31% to 23%).

"Pastors' opinions on the subject are a good barometer for opinions across churches," said McConnell.

"There is widespread disagreement from pastors across denominations, church size, age, race and education levels to quickly restoring pastors who commit adultery to public ministry positions."

## Methodology

The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted Aug. 30 – Sept. 24, 2019. The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called.

Responses were weighted by region to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys.

The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.3%. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Comparisons are made to a study with the same methodology conducted March 9-24, 2016.

Visit [LifeWayResearch.com](http://LifeWayResearch.com). 



# William M. Downs inaugurated as Gardner-Webb's 13th president

By JACKIE BRIDGES | Gardner-Webb University

The inauguration of Gardner-Webb University's (GWU) 13th president, originally scheduled as a week-long celebration in March 2020, was one of the many events canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of the traditional ceremony with a large gathering, William M. Downs was sworn in as president Aug. 6 in a small service attended by family, friends and GWU officials.

Downs officially took office at Gardner-Webb on July 1, 2019, after a highly competitive one-year national search. Reflecting on the past year, Jennifer Marion Mills, chair of the GWU Board of Trustees and member of the presidential search committee, said, "A leader is often measured by the times they live in. This year, 2020, has certainly been a challenging time for many people, businesses, and organizations. Gardner Webb has faced many challenges as well.

"Through Dr. Downs' leadership, Gardner Webb and its students, faculty and staff have risen to meet the challenges we now face. He empowers all around him to succeed. On behalf of the entire board of trustees of the University, I can tell you enthusiastically that we are looking forward to Dr. Downs' leadership in the future, and we are thankful for his leadership during these challenging times. Thank you, Dr. Downs, and thank you, Kim



Jennifer Marion Mills, right, Gardner-Webb University (GWU) presidential search committee chair and member of the board of trustees gives Kim Downs, left, the presidential medallion to put around William Downs', center, neck. He was inaugurated Aug. 6. (GWU photo by Bob Carey)

Downs, for your commitment, your vision, and your leadership."

Mills presided over the inauguration service. Also on the brief program were J. Eric Davis, senior pastor of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Boiling Springs, who gave the invocation, and David Royster, chair of the presidential search committee and a member of the Board of Trustees, who said the benediction.

"It is a profound privilege to serve at Gardner-

Webb," Downs said. "We have a 115-year history of academic excellence. We have a team of faculty, staff and students who each day dedicate themselves to something bigger than themselves. We have a supportive college town that we call home and that is eager to grow in concert with us.

A Raleigh native, Downs earned his bachelor's in political science with a minor in journalism from North Carolina State University (NCSU) in 1988. He holds master's and doctorate degrees in political science from Emory University. He grew up in an academic family with both parents on the faculty at NCSU.

Prior to his appointment at Gardner-Webb, Downs was the dean of Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, professor of political science, and W. Keats Sparrow Distinguished Chair in the Liberal Arts at East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, N.C. From 1997 to 2014, Downs served various roles at Georgia State University in Atlanta including area dean, department chair, director and professor. He is an accomplished lecturer, research scholar and author.

He and Kim have raised two children, Rachel and Bradley. Rachel is a 2018 graduate of the University of Georgia (chemistry, French) and is currently enrolled in the School of Dental Medicine at ECU. Bradley is studying political science and economics at NCSU. 

## Thornton named to two roles at SEBTS

By LAUREN PRATT | SEBTS

When Christy Thornton became a Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) student in 2012, she never would have imagined that she would play an integral role in the theological academy. Through her recent promotion to associate director of Ph.D. Studies and director of the Th.M. program at SEBTS, she is the first woman to hold a leadership position in a Ph.D. office in Southeastern's history.

"Christy Thornton is a gifted scholar and administrator," said SEBTS President Danny Akin. "She is the ideal person to supervise our Th.M. program and serve as an associate director of the Ph.D. program. She is a wonderful gift and blessing to the Southeastern family."

As part of her new role as associate director, Thornton is responsible for student progress, advisement and recruitment strategy. Thornton herself is in the dissertation stage of her Ph.D. at SEBTS, having entered the program in 2016. Her personal journey into the Ph.D. program makes her the perfect candidate to help students

understand and process the challenges of deciding to enter into advanced degree work.

Even before Thornton helped in recruitment and development for the Ph.D. office, she saw an opportunity to enter into a space in theological education where not many women existed.

"One of the reasons I love Southeastern is because I feel like I can walk to the table and be all that I am," said Thornton.

She believes that the theological academy is an avenue by which men and women can exemplify what it means to partner together in fulfilling the Great Commission.

"What if we could serve the church even better if we had a little more gender diversity in the theological academy?" she said. "I thought, I might be able to help with that. If these are my gifts and this is my context, I'd love to be able to serve in a way that allows theological education to serve the church even better than it already is."



CHRISTY THORNTON

Thornton is seeking to create change through her role in the Ph.D. office, but she is also modeling what it looks like for other women to study at the highest level. Ironically, Thornton's initial plans after college did not include seminary. She hoped to move to the Middle East and teach English after receiving her undergraduate degree in English Education from the University of Georgia. After spending two years as a Journeyman in North Africa, Thornton came to SEBTS to earn 20 hours of seminary credit, a requirement she had to fill to serve with the International Mission Board (IMB) long-term. What she thought was a short-term stint at seminary began to set the trajectory for her full-time calling.


"I really thought I would be at Southeastern for 18 months, and it's been eight years," Thornton laughs. "It's like the most hilarious irony of my life."

The first time a professor suggested Thornton pursue a Ph.D., she laughed out loud. Her aim was serv-

ing overseas, and she didn't plan on anything derailing her from that goal. However, as time went on, she began to see that the Holy Spirit was relentlessly and undeniably calling her into a life of academia.

After attending an IMB conference, she sensed the Holy Spirit was closing the door to the mission field. Another confirmation came after she attended a women's conference on calling. She began to see how her passion for the lost and her love for teaching in the local church could be united. This realization meant one thing: The Lord was leading Thornton back to seminary.

Keith Whitfield, acting provost at SEBTS and Thornton's major professor, sees how theological development and spiritual growth are woven together through Thornton's Ph.D. studies.

"The rigor of the process and the transformation of the mind is where spiritual growth happens," said Whitfield, noting that Thornton has thought deeply about who God is and what He is calling the church to be. "That's not just theoretical for her; that's profoundly personal." 



# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## We Stand Together in Spiritual Battle

August 30

**Focal passage: Ephesians 6:10-20**

I still remember the day we read Rainer Maria Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" in my undergraduate poetry workshop. My professor had printed two copies for each student to compare, highlighting the use of form and the nuance of translating poetry across languages. If you've read the poem, then you know.

Rilke moves slowly, paces himself, until the last line. "I remain startled by that final gesture," Mark Doty once commented. While I won't give anything away (you'll have to read the sonnet for yourself), the final line is uncompromising. It shifts the attention and implicates the reader in the most exquisite way, and

you never see it coming.

As Paul closes his letter to the believers in Ephesus, he also shifts his attention.

He's reminded them of his prayers and love, built them up in their theology, and encouraged them towards unity and obedience in Christ. Then we see the quintessential "finally" as Paul begins the end of his letter. "*Finally, be strong in the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:10).



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

You, believer, soldier on in real and menacing warfare. You have an enemy who rages, who devours, who works evil amongst you and your church.

You need what the Lord has given to protect you, to help you.

You do not battle without armor, and you cannot battle alone.

## God First

September 6

**Focal Passage: Exodus 20:1-6; Psalm 16:1-4, 9-11**

What is something you love? I love to fly fish. Fly fishing brings me great joy. I am sure you have something that you love as well.

However, there is an issue we face when it comes to something that we love.

That issue is, when do we go from "loving" something to making it an "idol?"

A simple way to think of an idol is anything that comes before God.

When looking at Exodus chapter 20, we see that we are not to have any idols before God. God is to have first place in every aspect of our lives. That means God should be first in all things.

This sounds simple, however our lives often fail to reflect this truth.

When we look at the giving of the "Ten Commandments," one of the main things God was doing was to make the nation of Israel look different than everyone else.

Almost everyone at the time worshiped many gods.

This was not going to fly with the one true God who had delivered them from the hands of the Egyptians. God is to be worshiped and He alone is worthy of our worship.

Catching a monster trout brings me joy, however that joy does not last.

The joy that comes from God being first in our lives is a joy that does not last a few days, but for all of eternity.



**MATTHEW JACOBS**  
associate pastor, First Baptist Church, Crossnore

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Relational Investment

August 30

**Focal passage: Song of Solomon 5:6-16**

My wife and I welcomed our fourth child this summer. As we relive all the sweet moments of life with a newborn, I have been reminded of the unique challenge that this season brings. Each of us is busy at every waking moment with responsibilities both inside and outside the home. It's easy to emerge from the sleep-deprived fog of the newborn phase as a well-oiled machine of parental efficiency only to discover you're functioning as co-workers in the workplace of the home.

Songs of Solomon reminds us that love takes hard work and maintenance.

Yet, this truth is not restricted to marriage alone. How many of us enter into new ministerial endeavors with the zeal of an Olympian during opening ceremonies only to later find



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

ourselves wondering why we're even doing this to begin with? For how many of us has the luster of a life in pursuit and service of Jesus faded into formulaic repetition?

It takes time to sit still and look back, and our schedules cannot bear it. Yet we are called precisely to do look back and remember. Remember our first love. Remember His

mighty deliverance through every storm. When we look back, we may recognize that the great work of love has already been done for us and now we must simply live in it.

## God Confronts

September 6

**Focal passage: Isaiah 1:10-20**

I remember our kids, when they were young, coming in with words of flattering praise – "Mom, you are so pretty."

My wife's response was often, "What did you do?"

The kids had done something they had been told not to do and thought their flattering words of praise would keep them from discipline or accountability.

What they didn't realize is that our love for them, and responsibility as their parents, demanded that we confront them in their error and hold them accountable for their actions.

The people of Judah were walking in gross disobedience and idolatry. They tried the "flattery" of out-

ward worship activities to appease God, but He would have none of it. Their outward words and rituals of praise and worship could not hide their hearts of willful sin, illustrated through actions of disobedience.

God confronts and disciplines His children (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6).

He does this not from anger or frustration, but out of love.

He loves us too much to leave us alone in our sin. He confronts us according to the truth of His Word and calls us to repentance.

We come to Christ for salvation through repentance and faith.

We continue to walk with Him in the same way, by repentance and faith (Colossians 2:6).



**RANDY MANN**  
pastor, Central Baptist Church, Henderson



# Following Beirut explosion, Send Relief mobilizes response

By BRANDON ELROD | North American Mission Board

The death toll from the blast that shook Lebanon’s capital city of Beirut on Aug. 4 rose quickly to at least 200 people. Many were still missing after the blast, according to the city’s governor, and hundreds of thousands of residents are living in damaged homes and buildings.

Send Relief, Southern Baptists’ compassion ministry, has partners in the area who are on the ground responding to many of the immediate needs, including providing bottled water, food boxes, clothing and other supplies.

“Our Send Relief team is working with partners on the ground in Beirut to meet tremendous needs after the explosion a week ago,” said Bryant Wright, president of Send Relief. “They are helping with clearing debris in the 13-square-mile area directly affected by the blast and assisting residents to repair their homes and providing water to those who have been displaced. Our partners are providing help in the name of Jesus to those most in need. Please pray for all those affected by this horrible tragedy along with our partners who are ministering there.”

Glenn Lewis\* and his wife have been serving in the cleanup effort through their local church. He described their task of transporting debris from homes and apartments down to the street.

“Cream-colored double doors, leaning against the wall, need to be taken down to the street,” Lewis wrote. “At eye level a crimson handprint is smeared on one of the panels. In [one neighborhood], nearly every home is stained with blood.”

Lewis and the group from their church also passed out sandwiches to shell-shocked survivors as they assisted in the clean-up. Many of their neighbors continue to experience a sense of helplessness and ruin.

Reports indicate that the detonation of 2,750 metric tons of ammonium nitrate generated the blast. The material had been stored in the city’s



Send Relief has mobilized a response in Beirut through local ministry partners. Volunteers are clearing debris from homes and providing supplies to many who are in need. (Send Relief photo)

port for roughly six years. Several protests have broken out across the city in response to alleged mismanagement and corruption in the government.

Beirut had been undergoing a severe economic crisis before the explosion displaced more than 300,000 people from their homes and injured more than 4,000.

Send Relief is providing temporary housing and assistance for first aid and medical expenses. So far, 200 families have been helped through Send Relief. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief involvement is not expected.

Partners asked for prayer for grace and wisdom for the people of Beirut and the nation of Lebanon. They ask for God to comfort those who have lost

loved ones as they grieve and work through the tragedy.

The churches, relief workers and emergency personnel also need strength, courage and endurance as they continue their efforts to restore the city.

“Please pray for the despair and anger that many are feeling to be channeled into service and sacrifice for others,” one partner in Beirut said. “Pray that God will use the brokenness being felt by millions to soften hearts to receive both physical and spiritual help.”

Learn how to support the relief efforts in Beirut at [sendrelief.org/beirut/](http://sendrelief.org/beirut/). 

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Association

The churches that make up the Haywood Baptist Association are prayerfully searching for a **part-time Associational Mission Strategist**. Haywood County is located in WNC, west of Asheville. The Search Committee is seeking a biblically qualified male to provide support to the churches as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission. For more information, visit [www.haywoodbaptistassociation.org](http://www.haywoodbaptistassociation.org) or call 828-452-4746.

### Church staff

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

Parkwood Baptist Church (Concord, NC) seeks a **full-time worship leader**. We are a multi-generational SBC church (500+ in weekly attendance) with two Sunday morning worship services with a blend of praise team, choir, hymns and gospel music. For more information, refer to <http://www.parkwoodbaptist.com/worshipleaderinfo>. Please send résumés to [info@parkwoodbaptist.com](mailto:info@parkwoodbaptist.com) or mail to Parkwood Baptist Church, ATTN: Worship Leader Search Team, 1069 Central Drive, Concord, NC 28027.

### Miscellaneous

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For more information, call the office at (919) 459-5691.

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



# Liberty University appoints acting president

Liberty University/Baptist Press

**L**iberty University trustee chairman Jerry Prevo will serve as acting president, the school announced Aug. 10, filling the role vacated Aug. 7 by Jerry Falwell Jr.

Falwell and the board of trustees agreed to an indefinite leave of absence Aug. 7. Prevo's appointment by the trustee board's executive committee was supported by all members of the board.

The announcement comes two weeks before the start of the 2020-21 academic year.

Prevo has served on the school's board of trustees since 1996, and as board chairman since 2003. He recently retired as the senior pastor of Anchorage Baptist Temple in Anchorage, Alaska, after 47 years.

During his stewardship, Anchorage Baptist Temple became one of Alaska's largest churches and had the state's largest school as well. The church's ministry also included three radio stations and one television station.

"I want to thank my fellow board members for having confidence that I could be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as the acting president during this time of Jerry Falwell Jr.'s indefi-

nite leave of absence," Prevo said. "We have a world-class leadership team at Liberty University who will support me in running our operations on a day-to-day basis and fulfilling our spiritual mission unabated: Training champions for Christ.

"Please pray for us as well as the Falwell family as we embark on our academic year and so we may continue to be united in our common purpose and our faith in Christ."

Prevo began the role immediately and expects to work from the Lynchburg campus. He has also stepped aside from his role as chairman of the board for the duration of his time as acting president.

Allen McFarland, pastor at Calvary Evangelical Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Va.,

and Liberty's board vice chairman, stepped in as acting board chairman following Prevo's transition.

Falwell had come under criticism after he posted a photo, since deleted, Aug. 2 of him on his yacht with his pants unzipped and his arm around Kathleen Stone, a Liberty employee.

He told the Morningline show on WLNI 105.9FM, a Lynchburg, Va., radio station, that "it

was a costume party ... on vacation," and "it was just in good fun. That's it."

The initial photo drew widespread criticism from media and political commentators as well as from within the Liberty community.

Falwell presided over an era of tremendous growth for the university.

Enrollment has grown from 38,000 to 100,000 under his leadership, and the school's athletics program has moved to the top level of NCAA competition.

The football team, coached by Hugh Freeze, earned its first-ever bowl berth last season. The school has also seen its endowment grow to more than \$1.7 billion under Falwell's direction, and he has overseen a billion dollars of ongoing or planned construction on the 7,000-acre campus, which now is home to more than 350 buildings.

The executive committee of the board is chaired by Harvey Gainey and includes Falwell, Prevo, Carroll Hudson, David Rhodenhizer and Bud Tinney.

Other members of the board of trustees include prominent Southern Baptists Brian Autry, Tim Lee, Gene Mims, Ike Reighard and Jerry Vines.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Biblical Recorder staff added to this report.) 



JERRY PREVO



JERRY FALWELL JR.

## FEEDING CHILDREN HAS NEVER BEEN SO IMPORTANT

The Food Roundup in April had to be postponed because of COVID-19. **As a result, pantry shelves in our children's cottages are becoming bare.**

Your church's efforts will ensure our shelves are restocked so boys and girls, many who were never fed regularly before coming to Baptist Children's Homes, have plenty to eat. As you fill their plates, your love fills their hearts.

Visit [bchfoodroundup.org](http://bchfoodroundup.org) for a needs list, resources and more information to help your church collect.



[BCHFOODROUNDUP.ORG](http://BCHFOODROUNDUP.ORG) | 336.474.1277



SHARING HOPE...CHANGING LIVES

**Baptist Children's Homes**  
of NORTH CAROLINA