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BIBLICAL RECORDER

September 19, 2020 • VOLUME 186 NO. 19 • News Journal of North Carolina Baptists • BRnow.org



Winterville church provides for its community

By DIANNA L. CAGLE | BR Assistant Editor

When the shutdown happened in March, COVID-19 offered challenges to the way churches operate.

Winterville Baptist Church's new pastor had just started at the church March 3. He preached one sermon before the quarantine started.

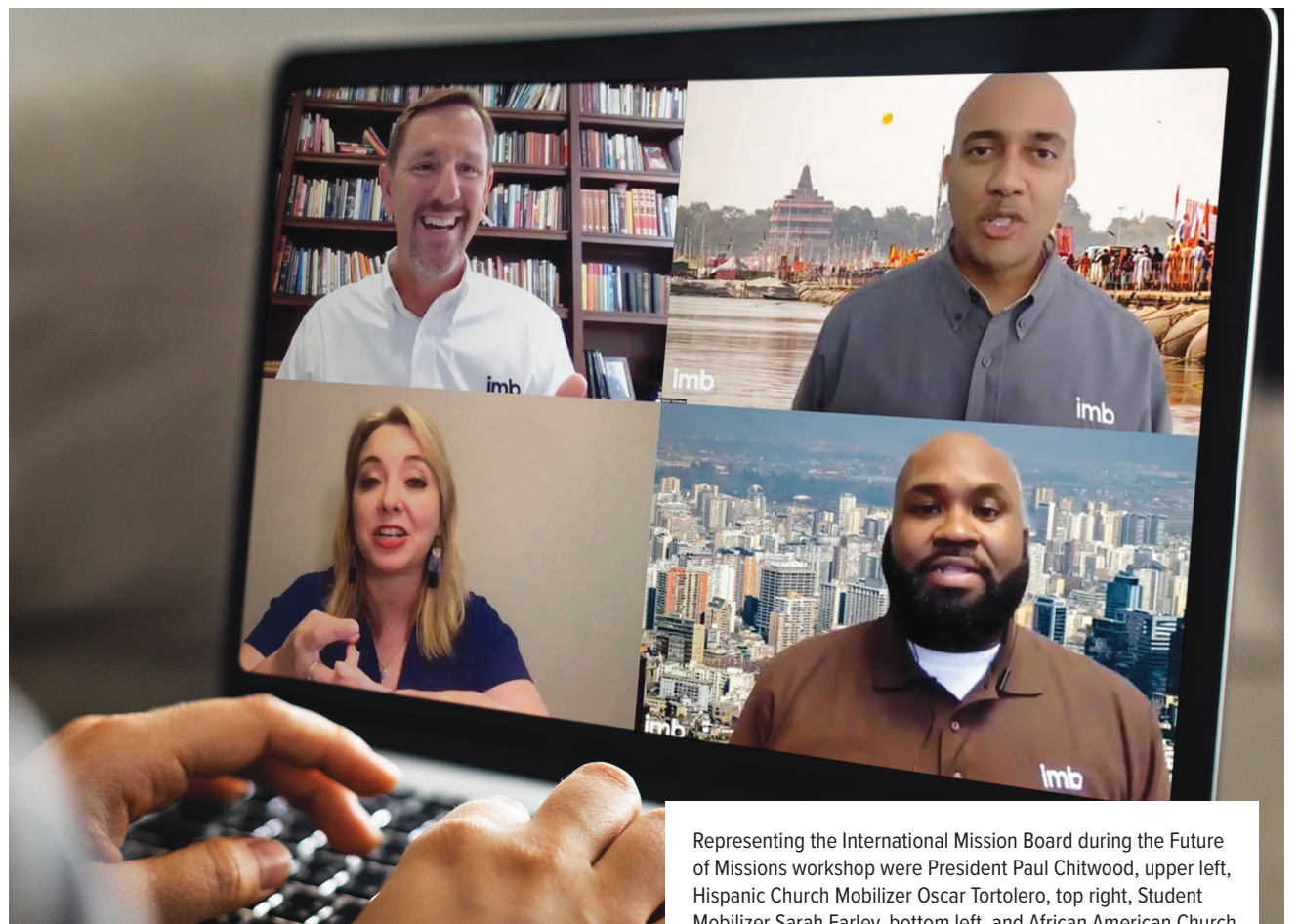
"I'm learning to do ministry in ways I have never imagined during my 30 years in the ministry," said Mike Dixon, who had previously served as senior pastor of Oakdale Baptist Church in Rocky Mount for four years.

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IMB, Barna Group discuss engagement of next generation



Representing the International Mission Board during the Future of Missions workshop were President Paul Chitwood, upper left, Hispanic Church Mobilizer Oscar Tortolero, top right, Student Mobilizer Sarah Farley, bottom left, and African American Church Mobilizer Jason Thomas, bottom right. (photo illustration from screen shot)

By LESLIE PEACOCK CALDWELL | IMB

The International Mission Board (IMB) joined with Barna Group for an online workshop titled The Future of Missions.

The workshop, hosted virtually Sept. 2, included

IMB President Paul Chitwood, IMB staff and Barna Group representatives.

See Discuss page 11

Pence featured speaker at 'Life Wins!' event in Raleigh

By SETH BROWN | BR Executive Editor

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence spoke at a "Life Wins!" pro-life event at Christ Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. on Sept. 3. The two-hour event was part of a multi-state tour organized by the Susan B. Anthony (SBA) List, a pro-life advocacy group.

SBA List President Marjorie Dannenfelser interviewed Pence in a conversation covering a range of topics: pro-life advocacy, pregnancy resource centers, the appointment of conservative judges to federal courts, the 2020 Democratic National Convention, the movement of the

See Pence page 6

NCMO helps demonstrate Christ's love in word, deed

BSC Communications

The year 2020 has been a year like no other in our lifetime. Events of this year have left many people hurting in numerous ways. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should be compelled by the love He demonstrated for us through His death on the cross to love others, serve them and point them to Christ.

"Compelled by Love" is the theme for this year's North Carolina Missions Offering (NCMO) and is based upon 2 Corinthians 5:14, which says "For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died" (HCSB).

The North Carolina Missions Offering supports a variety of ministries that declares and displays the gospel by sharing the love of Jesus in word and deed. This year's offering goal is \$2.1 million. The offering is allocated by percentage to Baptists on Mission (41%), church planting (28%), mission camps (15%), associational projects (10%) and mobilization ministry projects (6%).

One of the most visible ministries that the NCMO supports is disaster relief, which is one of the 19 different ministries of Baptists on Mission, which is also known as N.C. Baptist Men. COVID-19

has been a different type of disaster, but Baptists on Mission are still responding.

As part of a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Baptists on Mission has provided thousands of pounds of fresh produce to needy families each week during the pandemic as part of the USDA's "Farmers to Families" food box program. This is in addition to continuing to help many in eastern North Carolina who are still recovering from devastating and historic hurricanes that have struck our state in recent years.



MILTON A. HOLLIFIELD JR.
BSC executive
director-treasurer

The NCMO also goes a long way toward impacting lostness by helping establish new churches across North Carolina. Since 2009, the BSCNC has worked with more than 1,100 new churches across the state. Many of these new churches are reaching people from different nationalities and ethnicities, allowing them to hear the gospel and worship in their own heart language. Thousands of people are coming to know Christ each year through these church plants.

Getting North Carolina Baptists personally involved in missions is one of the primary goals of the NCMO. Gifts to the offering help fund mission camps in Shelby and Red Springs that offer church groups the opportunity to engage in local missions projects. Additionally, the NCMO allows N.C.

IN FOCUS

A WORD FROM OUR LEADER

Baptists to participate in short-term mission trips in the United States and around the world through several national and international partnerships.

Plus, NCMO helps support a variety of outreach and missions activities right here in North Carolina through partnerships with our local Baptist associations.

To learn more about the North Carolina Missions Offering, visit ncmissionsoffering.org. There you will find a number of testimonies, prayer points and other resources for you and your church to promote this special offering. This offering is typically emphasized in September, but contributions are accepted throughout the year.

Thank you for your prayers and gifts as we seek to once again meet our offering goal of \$2.1 million. I am grateful for what you do in your generous and faithful support of this special offering. Even amid challenging times, be encouraged that God is at work. May we be motivated and compelled by love to join Him in His mission.

"For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died" – 2 Corinthians 5:14 (HCSB).

Why I am Southern Baptist

Baptist Press

Many of us who are African American Southern Baptists are asked the question, "Why are you Southern Baptist?" In June 2019 in Birmingham at our National African American Fellowship meeting, I preached a sermon that attempted to address this question. I have adapted that sermon into this article.

If I can borrow from the sentiment of 1 Peter 3:15, when we are asked, "Why are you Southern Baptist?" we should all be able to give a reason and do so with gentleness and kindness.

The problem

The question we get is, "As a Black man or Black woman, why are you Southern Baptist?" Let me give you a couple of reasons why this remains a question in the community of color, and then I will share my reasons for being in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The challenges of being Southern Baptist as an African American include:

1) SBC history



MARSHAL AUSBERRY
Guest Column

The SBC was founded in May 1845 in Augusta, Ga., where 293 delegates gathered to break away from the American Baptist Home Mission Society forming a new mission society. The historical fact is that the SBC was born out "... of a commitment to preserve and defend slavery" (Matthew J. Hall, *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*). Don't think the Southern Baptists were walking this road alone – there were

similar situations among the Presbyterians and Methodists.

2) SBC heritage

The SBC heritage is that many of our white brothers and sisters were effectively born into the SBC – a heritage passed from their great, great, great Southern Baptist granddaddies. In this heritage the ideologies and symbols of a perpetuated myth include white superiority, manifest destiny and paternalism. We see this heritage on the names of buildings, revered names in the hallowed halls of agencies and institutions.

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BIBLICAL RECORDER

(ISSN 0279-8182)

Volume 186 No. 19

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News Journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

Founded 1833 by Thomas Meredith

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Editorial Aide
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Assistant

Board of Directors: Nate Jones, chair; Chris Hefner, vice chair; Cindy D. Jennings, secretary; Tony Honeycutt, treasurer; Kevin Atchley; Kelly Bullard; Joan T. Callhoun; Marty K. Childers; Ron Davis; Lesley Hildreth; Amy T. Lunceford; Dan Meyer; Frank Norwood; Jim Pennington Jr.; Donna A. Robinson; Donnie Seagle; Meredith Snoddy; Sonny W. Sweatman Jr.; Larry Whichard; and Bartley Wooten

Subscriptions

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

• Group (5+) \$14.99

• Bulk (10+) \$12.99

• Digital rates: \$7.99 (one year).

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

Publication

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

Postmaster

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

‘Seven Pillars’ a key part of EDT search process

By **SETH BROWN** | BR Executive Editor

For more than a decade the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) has expressed its core values as “Seven Pillars for Ministry.” Those statements are guiding the search committee to find the next BSC executive director-treasurer as the group begins to receive recommendations for potential candidates.

The convention describes the Seven Pillars as “biblical concepts for a Christ-centered vision.”

- Practice fervent prayer
- Promote evangelism and disciple-making

- Strengthen existing churches
- Plant new multiplication churches
- Reach North Carolina’s international community
- Embrace unreached and unengaged people groups
- Engage young church leaders

Search committee chairman Noah Crowe told the *Biblical Recorder* in a phone interview that the convention’s core values are the “foundation” upon which the group will conduct its work.

Crowe serves as interim pastor at Peachtree Memorial Baptist Church in Murphy.

The nine-member committee met on Aug. 31 via video conference.

Crowe said he is “very pleased” with the number and quality of candidate recommendations the group has received to date.

The deadline for submissions is Sept. 30.

Send recommendations to ncedt@ncbaptist.org.

Crowe noted that some recommendations had come from out of state.

“It’s exciting to know that North Carolina Baptists are so well-respected and widely honored because of our participation with the Southern Baptist Convention,” he said.

The committee continues to ask for feedback on the search process from “boots on the ground,” said Crowe.

He wants to hear from pastors, lay people, associational leaders and others about “what is needed in the next executive director-treasurer.”

The next meeting is slated for Sept. 28 at Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro, N.C., to occur in conjunction with a scheduled BSC board meeting.

Crowe recently released a video greeting on behalf of the search committee.

Watch it here: BRnow.org/news/seven-pillars. 

Southwestern, Baylor file suit, allege ‘secret coup’

By **GEORGE SCHROEDER** | Baptist Press

Southwestern Seminary and Baylor University have filed suit against a charitable foundation which was set up solely to benefit the schools.

The schools allege some members of the board of the Harold E. Riley Foundation led a “secret coup” in an “attempt to seize control of the Foundation and its assets” – altering the foundation’s purpose, stripping the schools of their rights and status as beneficiaries and misappropriating assets worth millions.

The lawsuit, filed Sept. 8, stems from an alleged meeting in June 2018 at which the schools claim the foundation’s governing documents were improperly restructured. The lawsuit also states the Riley Foundation board is attempting to “seize control” of the board of directors of Citizens Inc., a publicly held insurance company whose stock forms the primary asset of the foundation.

The Riley Foundation recently filed suit to force Citizens to seat five directors, including former Southwestern President Paige Patterson and Riley Foundation trustees Augie Boto, Charles Hott and Mike Hughes. According to the schools’ lawsuit, positions on the Citizens board of directors are compensated annually in excess of \$100,000.

Hughes, the foundation’s president, is a former Southwestern vice president under Patterson. Hott, a current member of Southwestern’s board of trustees, serves as chief investment officer for the Riley Foundation.

Boto is the former executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee (EC). He served as interim president of the EC from 2018-2019.

Patterson was terminated as Southwestern president in May 2018 by the seminary’s board of trustees over allegations he had mishandled sexual abuse claims by students at Southwestern and another seminary where he had previously been president.



Current Southwestern President Adam W. Greenway, who succeeded Patterson, described the Riley Foundation board members involved in the alleged actions as “self-appointed rogue leadership” in a statement released by the school. But in interviews with BP, Boto and Hott denied any wrongdoing. Boto called the claims “absurd.”

“The entire (foundation) board is committed to supporting the ongoing work of both (Southwestern and Baylor) for as long as possible, as well as possible,” Boto said. “That was what Harold Riley wanted. We’ll stay true to that assignment.”

Harold Riley, who died in 2017, was a major donor to both Southwestern, where his father had been a student, and Baylor, his alma mater. He set up the charitable foundation that bears his name in 2002. The foundation, headquartered on the campus at Southwestern, is funded with shares from Citizens Inc., a Texas-based insurance company Riley founded in 1969. Citizens, which is publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange, is valued at more than \$300 million.

Southwestern and Baylor were the Riley Foundation’s sole beneficiaries. The schools also were granted three members each on the foundation’s board – thus giving the schools’ combined representation of six a majority of the 11-member board.

Upon Riley’s death, assets including more than 1 million shares of Citizens were transferred to the foundation. According to the foundation’s most recent tax filings, payouts to the two schools in 2018 totaled \$298,800.

The lawsuit alleges that the meeting at which the foundation’s governing documents were restructured was conducted illegally – without a quorum and without input from either school – meaning the changes were “not validly adopted and are void.”

According to the original bylaws, a quorum requires the presence of seven trustees, including at least four trustees from Southwestern and Baylor’s combined six. Baylor claims it had no representatives at the meeting.

Additionally, both schools claim they were not provided “prior and proper notice” of the meeting, which allegedly took place June 11, 2018, less than two weeks after Patterson was removed from the presidency of Southwestern on May 30, 2018. Among the changes made, according to the lawsuit, was the elimination of the schools’ right to appoint board members. The foundation’s tax status was also changed from a public charity to a private foundation.

“We believe these individuals are attempting to undermine and overturn Mr. Riley’s expressed directives and are in violation of their fiduciary duties,” Greenway said in a statement released by the school. “Such actions are clearly contrary to his stated purposes to benefit students like his own father and this institution in our mission to provide theological education for individuals engaging in Christian ministry. Uncorrected, it is seminary students and future generations of Gospel ministers who will be the ones most harmed.”

In a statement, Baylor President Linda Livingstone described the lawsuit as “necessary to return Mr. Riley’s gift to his original donative intent.”

“It is frankly disheartening to have discovered that Mr. Riley’s legacy and the educational funding for future generations of Christian leaders appear to have been misused for purposes other than those identified by Mr. Riley,” Livingstone said, adding: “Baylor has an ethical, moral and legal

Study: Americans hold complex religious beliefs

By AARON EARLS | LifeWay Christian Resources

More than half of Americans say religious beliefs are a matter of personal opinion, not objective facts. And that's made clear by examining the varying, and sometimes contradictory, theological doctrines they hold.

The biennial State of Theology study from Nashville-based LifeWay Research explores the religious and cultural beliefs of U.S. adults.

For 54% of Americans, theological beliefs are not a matter of objective truth, but rather belong in the category of subjective personal opinion.

"Many Americans treat theology like a choose-your-own adventure book," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "It's clear from certain beliefs that some people feel truth is something people are free to define on their own, and in doing so they possess seemingly incompatible beliefs."

The survey of more than 3,000 Americans is sponsored by Orlando-based Ligonier Ministries and follows previous State of Theology studies in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

Trinity confusion

A clear majority of Americans (72%) say they believe in the classic Christian doctrine of the Trinity – one God in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet most also believe Jesus was merely a great human teacher and the Holy Spirit is a force.

"Christianity has historically started with an understanding of God as the Creator and source of reality itself," McConnell said.

"While many Americans repeat with agreement a definition of this one Triune God, a further look at their beliefs reveals a majority do not believe in each Person of the Trinity as described in the Bible."

Most Americans have no problem asserting divine perfection, as 65% say God is a perfect being and cannot make a mistake.

Half of Americans (52%) agree Jesus was a great teacher, but not God.

Slightly more than half (55%) believe Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God, which runs contrary to the historical Christian belief that Jesus is eternal as God the Son.

While many reject His deity, most Americans say Jesus physically rose from the dead. Two-thirds (66%) believe the biblical accounts of Jesus' bodily resurrection are completely accurate.

Three in 5 Americans (59%) agree the Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being. For 1 in 5 (19%), the Holy Spirit can tell them to do something that is forbidden in the Bible.

Two-thirds of the U.S. (64%) say God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Few Americans believe learning about theology is only for pastors and scholars (15%).

Sin and salvation

When it comes to sin, most Americans say just a little doesn't hurt, but a growing number believe

even the smallest sins warrant an everlasting punishment, according to the 2020 State of Theology study.

Two-thirds of Americans (65%) agree everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. Still 26% say even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation, the highest percentage in the history of the study.

"There has been a slow but steady increase in the portion of Americans believing that the deserving punishment for any sin is eternal damnation," McConnell said. "While the number believing in hell has been steady, those who believe God doesn't give any free passes for small sins has increased from 18% in 2014 to 26% today."

A majority of Americans (56%) say hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever.

More than half (56%) believe God counts a person as righteous not because of that person's good works but because of their faith in Christ.

Most Americans believe they can find salvation only through Jesus. Three in 5 (60%) believe only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.

A quarter of U.S. adults believe salvation was determined long ago, as 26% agree God chose the people He would save before He created the world, a doctrine known as predestination.

Three in 5 (62%) believe there will be a time when Jesus Christ returns to judge all the people who have lived.

For some Americans, they believe the rewards don't have to wait. A third of Americans (36%) believe God will always reward true faith with material blessings in this life, a doctrine associated with what has been called the prosperity gospel.

Muddled morality

Americans are divided on what the Bible is and what authority it has over our lives.

The 2020 State of Theology study found a third of U.S. adults (34%) believe modern science disproves the Bible.

Close to half (48%) believe the Bible is 100% accurate in all it teaches.

The same percentage (48%) say the Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true. This number has grown from 41% in 2014.

Around half (51%) say the Bible has authority to tell us what to do.

**"Christianity has historically started with an understanding of God as the Creator and source of reality itself. While many Americans repeat with agreement a definition of this one Triune God, a further look at their beliefs reveals a majority do not believe in each Person of the Trinity as described in the Bible."
– Scott McConnell**

A quarter of U.S. adults (25%) believe God is unconcerned with their day-to-day decisions.

For half of Americans (51%), sex outside of traditional marriage is a sin. By contrast, 2 in 5 (40%) believe the Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today.

Half (51%) say abortion is a sin. More than a third (38%) believe gender identity is a matter of choice.

View of the pews

Most Americans (58%) agree worshiping alone or with one's family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church. Respondents were asked these questions in March at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically blurred the lines between worshiping at home and attending church.

"Those answering had no idea what COVID-19 would do to normal patterns of worship in America. March 15 (64%) was the last week that the majority of Protestant churches met in person until June 7 (55%)," McConnell said, citing LifeWay Research surveys of Protestant pastors conducted in March and July.

"While the pandemic suspended the ability to gather as a local church for worship, a large minority of Americans recognize there is something more to this assembly that a family can't accomplish on their own."

For a third of U.S. adults (36%), churches must provide entertaining worship services if they want to be effective.

Previous LifeWay Research studies have found little support among Americans and Protestant pastors themselves for political endorsements from pastors and churches. For a quarter of Americans (24%) in the latest State of Theology study that doesn't go far enough. They believe Christians should be silent on issues of politics.

"The theological beliefs of an individual are far-reaching. They impact views of God and the Bible, but also morality, justice, authority and how to treat others," McConnell said. "A previous LifeWay Research survey found 80% of evangelicals say the Bible informs their political views. During this election year, however, Christians should be aware that not only will there be people who disagree with their perspectives, but 1 in 4 Americans will disapprove of a Christian speaking about political matters at all."

Methodology

A demographically balanced online panel was used for interviewing American adults for the 2020 State of Theology study sponsored by Ligonier Ministries. A total of 3,002 surveys were completed from March 10-18. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the online panel does not exceed plus or minus 2.0%. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Slight weights were used to balance gender, age, ethnicity, income, region and religion.

For more information, visit LifeWayResearch.com, TheStateOfTheology.com, view the white paper or the full report. 

Praying for God's mercy through spiritual awakening

BSC Communications & Biblical Recorder

For the ninth consecutive year, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) is calling on all N.C. Baptists to unite together in 30 days of focused prayer for revival and spiritual awakening during the month of October. Individuals are also invited to participate in a special "Praying on the Mountain" prayer emphasis on Nov. 1.

Chris Schofield, director of the BSC's Office of Prayer for Evangelization and Spiritual Awakening, has authored a devotional prayer guide for October's "Pray for 30 Days" emphasis. The devotional is titled, "God's Great Hope."

Individuals may download a copy of the devotional or purchase a printed copy by visiting prayfor30days.org. Many additional resources are also available at the website, including resources in Spanish.

Schofield and Fred Lunsford, a 95-year-old retired pastor, director of missions and World War II hero from western North Carolina, recently took some time to answer some questions related to prayer, spiritual awakening and this year's prayer emphasis. Their responses are below.

Hope is something many are desperate for today, yet it seems to be in low supply. What is the significance of 'God's Great Hope' in our

current world?

Schofield: We are living in significant days according to God's "kairos" or opportune time. Throughout history, God has always used seasons of darkness, crises and unrest as a way of getting people's attention and reorienting them unto Himself. The Apostle Paul's prayer in Romans 15:13 shows his belief that uncertain times can produce fertile soil for God to reveal His great hope in Jesus to believers and unbelievers alike, "Now may the God of hope fill you with peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (NKJV). Real and living hope begins with God and can only be found in the person and work of the resurrected Christ (1 Peter 1:3).

In light of this, why do you think there is such a need for revival and spiritual awakening in America?

Schofield: Because of God's scriptural mandate to return to and seek the Lord in passages like 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. No one can deny that there is a real sin problem in the American church and in the nation as a whole. In essence, we have departed from God in sin and for decades have ignored His call to return to Him in genuine repentance and holiness. The waning of the vital spiritual life of Christ in the church and continued growth of moral and spiritual darkness across America point to the real-



ity that God is judging His people and America as a whole. The good news is that God often does some of His greatest work of reviving His church and awakening the lost during times of great spiritual darkness in response to the desperate cries of His people.

Why do you have such a burden to call people to pray for revival and spiritual awakening?

Lunsford: Some time ago, God let me know in no uncertain terms that He has extended my years to the age of 95 and beyond for a special reason. That reason is to pray for revival and spiritual awakening and to enlist as many people as I can to join me in praying for God to lavish upon us a movement of the Holy Spirit for spiritual awakening in America and the world. That's what the "Praying on the Mountain" call to prayer is about. God wants His people to seek Him for spiritual awakening, and I must do what I can to enlist others to obey Him through prayer.

How can participants prepare now for a committed, extended time of prayer?

Schofield: We must be sure that we are on praying ground as we intercede with others for God's mercy through revival and spiritual awakening. Revival, therefore, needs to start with me. This involves seeking the Lord toward personal consecration through genuine repentance, personal holiness and cleansing. David cried out in Psalm 51:1-4, "Have mercy upon me, O God ... blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my

iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin ... Against You, You only, have I sinned." Personal holiness allows believers to unite in Spirit-led, one accord prayer which unleashes God's power in our world (Acts 4:31).

What are some ways groups and churches can pray together in a time of social distancing?

Lunsford: Throughout my 95 years and 70-plus years of ministry, I have tried to be flexible and sensitive to God's leadership when leading people to gather in prayer. This January, when we planned the initial "Praying on the Mountain" prayer gathering on May 5, we had no idea the coronavirus would change our plans. But we went back to God, and He led us to challenge people to pray from their place of prayer at home. Besides praying individually or on phone and Zoom calls, churches can still gather in person to pray if they spread out in the sanctuary or use methods like prayer-walking, prayer groups and the concept of the "Solemn Assembly" type of prayer gatherings where people do not interact with others but gather at a location and get alone with God.

(EDITOR'S NOTE - Join with North Carolina Baptists to pray for 30 days toward spiritual awakening during the month of October. Free daily prayer texts are available by texting the phrase "Pray30Days" to 313131. Visit prayfor30days.org or praync.org to download the "God's Great Hope" devotional prayer guide and sign up for daily devotionals by email.)

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Pence Continued from page 1

American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and Pence's own conversion to the pro-life cause.

Other speakers and conservative politicians were featured as well, including North Carolina's Sen. Thom Tillis, Lt. Gov. Dan Forest and Congress members Mark Walker, Dan Bishop, Richard Hudson, Greg Murphy and Ted Budd.


The meeting was punctuated with praise for U.S. President Donald Trump and his efforts to forward a number of pro-life efforts. "To know President Trump is to know someone whose word is his bond," said Pence.

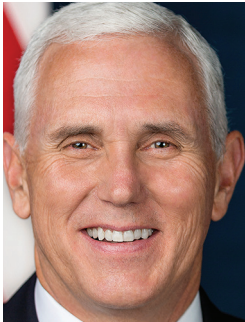
Dannenfelser said the current administration's commitment to the pro-life cause was the "central organizing principle of our campaign to elect you and the president. And we're doing that again."

When asked for his advice to young pro-life advocates, Pence said "have faith in the American people" that a "rising generation" can be persuaded to adopt pro-life values. Pence also recommended "that other kind of faith too," adding that when people advocate for the pro-life cause "we make [God's] cause on this earth our own."

Dannenfelser recalled her "conversion" to the pro-life cause and asked Pence about his own.

"I actually started out in politics as a Democrat," Pence said. "... As I came of age in college and understood the principles and values on which I was raised, I joined the Republican party. I heard in the voice of my second-favorite president, Ronald Reagan, an unapologetic commitment to a strong national defense, free-market economics and an unapologetic commitment to the right to life. ... That's what drew me to this party."

Christ Baptist Church is affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. 



MIKE PENCE

Conventions redesign, cancel annual meetings

By DIANA CHANDLER | Baptist Press

Most Southern Baptist state conventions are either redesigning or canceling their 2020 annual meeting to prevent spread of COVID-19. As of Sept. 1, only 13 intend to proceed with in-person gatherings.

In Mississippi, where COVID-19 test results show a 14.51% positivity rate, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board has postponed its annual meeting until further notice. The meeting was previously scheduled Oct. 27. According to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, 2,526 people have died in the state from the virus.

Mississippi board leaders and meeting planners "will continue to monitor the pandemic in an effort to determine an appropriate time and place to conduct the annual meeting," convention president Ken Hester said after the board's Aug. 25 postponement. Hester, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pontotoc, said only the Civil War had prevented the convention from convening previously, in 1862 and 1863.

As allowed by the Mississippi convention constitution, the board will supervise all convention interests in the interim, including missions, education, social services and benevolent giving, and will appoint persons to fill any committee vacancies. Current convention officers will remain in place until the next annual meeting.

Mississippi is among six state conventions either postponing or canceling their annual meetings. The others are Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Maryland/Delaware and Nevada.

The Dakota Baptist Convention, serving churches in both North and South Dakota, is

among 13 currently scheduled to hold in-person gatherings, according to state reports to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC). The SBC has 41 state or regional conventions.

"I've discovered that the two biggest enemies of wisdom are paralyzing fear and stubbornness," said Fred MacDonald, the Dakota Baptist Convention's executive director, in explaining their decision to meet Oct. 8-9 in Rapid City, S.D.

"The leaders of North and South Dakota have done a good job of trying to avoid these two extremes, encouraging safe practices without creating an atmosphere of fear and shutting down the ability to live life," MacDonald said. "This has enabled people to make wise personal decisions, and it has put us in a position to make the decision to move forward with our plans for our annual Dakota Baptist Gathering."

Other state conventions meeting in person are: Alaska, California, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Utah/Idaho, SBC Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Ten conventions – Arizona, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Hawaii, Kansas/Nebraska, New England, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania/South Jersey and Tennessee – have opted for virtual meetings. Some conventions – Georgia, Illinois, Ohio and Montana – have chosen to shorten their meetings. Puerto Rico has rescheduled until February 2021. Four – Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, Northwest Baptist Convention – are undecided, and Michigan will hold a hybrid gathering. 

Suit Continued from page 3

obligation to ensure that Mr. Riley's wishes are carried out to their fullest intent. ...

"We stand beside our colleagues at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as Baylor seeks to remedy this unfortunate and ill-timed sequence of events."

Attempts Sept. 9 to reach Hughes were unsuccessful.

But Hott told BP "virtually every allegation in the complaint by Southwestern and Baylor are completely false, without merit."

In a statement provided to BP through a spokesperson, Patterson denied wrongdoing, writing:

"To the many friends of the Pattersons, my wife and I have been loyal and answered questions where we could.

"We are not a part of any plan to usurp anyone's power or authority, no matter what allegations may arise. To the contrary, we have actually sought to assist Southwestern in a helpful and Christlike way, without regard to their treatment of us. We rest our case with the Lord God."

The schools allege that a March 2017 email exchange between Boto and Patterson, included in the lawsuit's supporting documents, indicates the two had discussed Hott's

nomination as a Southwestern trustee "as part of a coordinated 'plan.'"

"I don't know anything about that," Hott told BP.

Boto, who was on staff at the EC from 1998-2019, told BP he had never meddled in any nomination of a trustee.

"I would never do that," he said.

"I would never help someone get nominated. My role was not to act in that way."


In the statement released by Southwestern, Greenway said both schools hope to resolve the situation without a trial.

"It is our further hope that we can

settle this issue in the spirit of Christian charity by returning direction and control of the foundation to its beneficiaries and restoring the (board member) status of both Southwestern and Baylor," Greenway said.

"Absent such action, we are left with no other alternative than to pursue our legal remedies."

Boto called the situation "unfortunate."

"We're in support of Baylor," he said. "We're in support of Southwestern. I'm sorry that for the moment they have come to this conclusion. Both sides of this story have yet to be told." 

Church

Continued from page 1

“Immediately so much changed, including how we are able to do ministry. The church ... went into action with livestream Bible study services, a CD ministry, and a drive-in Sunday morning worship service in the parking lot using an FM transmitter.”

The members wanted to stay active and connected with their community. They began a food distribution ministry, which has served more than 100 families with groceries so far.

A layman in the church, Willard Joyner, built a roadside food pantry and free library lending box “just to be a blessing,” Dixon said. “There are currently over 200 food items being picked up every week from the pantry. In these unusual days we must seek new, and sometimes unusual ways, to continue being the hands and feet of Jesus.”

The church placed the boxes on the church property May 3 facing the main street in Winterville.

“The pantry is designed for non-perishable food items only,” he said. “Plexiglass on the doors are weather sealed to keep out moisture. The wood construction is salt-treated lumber to withstand the elements.”

He said the food pantry is utilized daily.

The church’s food distribution responds to local families in need by contacting the family, shopping at the store for items needed and delivering those to the homes of those who have requested help.

The drive-in service each Sunday has taken some adjustment. In April, the service was at 10 a.m. but as the temperature got hotter, the service moved to an hour earlier.

Volunteers built a wooden staging area in the parking lot; the audio-visual team added software to “polish up our live streaming abilities,” Dixon said.

Musicians and singers are back to weekly practice for the service.

Early on, Dixon said they realized not everyone has access to the services they were live streaming. The church set up a hotline for people to call to listen to the service at any time.

Members are also making CDs of the service for people to pick up from the church office.

“I would stand in an empty sanctuary, with my two-man audio-visual team in the sound booth, and I would preach and teach as if the sanctuary



Winterville Baptist Church, led by Pastor Mike Dixon, second from left, has had to make some adjustments with the onset of COVID-19. The church offers a drive-in service (above) and transmits it via a radio signal. The church offers food assistance through its new box (front page) as well as distribution. A layman also built a lending library (left). (WBC photos)

was full,” he said. “That took some getting used to for me.”

Dixon has not been the only one stepping out of his comfort zone. Sunday School teachers are regularly recording their lessons and posting them online, and one teacher, Carolyn Tyndall, has learned how to livestream and “has been faithful each week to produce a Bible study for everyone to enjoy online,” Dixon said.

The church purchased an FM transmitter so the audio is not only transmitted through an outdoor system, but also through car stereos.

“It has been amazing how God has blessed these services,” Dixon said.

More people are tuning in than the number that attended church before. Winterville Baptist recently added a couple to its membership as a direct result of the drive-in services.

“They saw us having outdoor services, decided to spontaneously join us, and have been in every service since,” he said.

The church plans to continue its services as long as they are needed.

“We are past the hottest months of the year now so there is no rush (weather-related anyway) to return into the building,” he said.

“We have several medical professionals in our congregation who are excellent resources for the church leadership as we look at returning to inside services.”

A limited number of people are allowed inside on Wednesday nights for Bible study.

The church added a Wednesday morning study to accommodate more people.

Even though COVID-19 has changed ministry for churches, Dixon said “we are reaching more people with the gospel right now than we ever have before.

“God is moving, fulfilling prophecy, giving the world a chance to come to Him in faith. I have seen God move His people out from behind the walls of the church building.”

Dixon said it’s not about the beauty of the building, special lighting or expensive audio equipment, “it’s about being the hands and feet of Christ, being the church. I believe God has been pushing the church to change, whether they have wanted to or not; there has been little choice during this pandemic.”

The choice has been to either get online with technology for the sake of

the gospel or allow your ministry to cease.

“I have seen God move people to pull over beside the road in order to check out our Sunday services,” he said. “I have seen God moving in drawing guests into our services every week. I have seen God moving as God’s people have stepped up to serve.

Now that Dixon and his wife, Melissa, have been with Winterville six months now, the couple is having to find new ways to meet and love church members. Dixon has led churches for almost 30 years. He has learned how to Zoom, how to teleconference, how to livestream over several different social media sites at once, how to do video and audio editing, “how to stay cooler standing on a wooden stage in an asphalt parking lot in the middle of the summer to preach,” and how to visit people at a distance. He has been on the phone with members more than ever before in his ministry.

Because he is on social media, “there are many more people who know us than we know them,” he said.

“We have learned other ways to love on our church family instead of a hug or a handshake,” Dixon said. “I have learned that no matter what changes, God remains the same. I have learned that nothing can stop the church from moving forward unless we allow it to.”

Baptist

Continued from page 2

This revered heritage is a perpetual inference of a mindset that those of a darker hue (Black and Brown) may not be equal and are an infringement upon the heritage for some.

3) SBC hiring

Recently, an unprecedented number of agency head positions were vacant, along with a couple of other lesser appointments of note. Now, first let me say that all of the selections were filled by men of good reputations, good character and good qualifications – I know a couple of them personally and they are all good Christian men. But that is not the issue!

The issue is that in a Convention that promotes its diversity and at a time when there were five agency heads vacant, if not one Black, Brown, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian or Islander is selected, we have a problem in our hiring processes.

I worked in hiring and HR in one of my previous jobs. There is an inherent bias in hiring – in general we tend to hire people like ourselves, because we are comfortable hiring people like ourselves. Unconscious bias toward people who are of the same race, education level, or economic status, and have the same personality, fears or values, influences who you hire much more than you think.

We need to bring this to the attention of those who have hiring authority. We must be intentional in hiring people who we may not be “racially” comfortable with. Don’t be afraid to hire someone to head an agency who is racially or culturally different! Otherwise, optically, it looks like we are protecting the history and heritage in our hiring.

Again, all the men who were selected are fine and qualified people. We want them to do well, so I take nothing from them. They are all brothers in Christ! But, hear me now: In the SBC, we need Black and Brown faces in high places!

And yet, even with the history, the heritage, and the hiring, I am still unashamedly Southern Baptist!

The answer

So let me share why I am Southern Baptist:

1) I am Southern Baptist because I am a Christian.

First of all and most of all, I am unashamedly, unabashedly Christian! I

am a born-again, baptized believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am redeemed and Jesus Christ is my redeemer. I am blood-bought and Christ-sanctified, declared righteous by God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day, and through Christ and Christ alone, I have eternal life. I believe that He chose me in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world!

So before I am Southern Baptist, I am a follower of Jesus Christ. Before I am Black, I am a Christian. At my core and at my center is Christ! He is the reason for the hope that I have.

Let’s not get it confused – being Southern Baptist won’t save you. There is not a Southern Baptist heaven, and there is not a Southern Baptist hell. The SBC is a tool in the mighty hand of God – don’t get it twisted. We bring glory to God, as a Christian movement, in the hands of Almighty God.

God will shake us to make us, to take us to where He wants us. We are in His hands, and the best place to be in the whole wide world is in the hands of Almighty God! I am Southern Baptist because I am a Christian.

2) I am Southern Baptist because of my choice.

Second, I am Southern Baptist because I choose to be Southern Baptist. This is one area where I am pro-choice! Some of my friends may never understand why I have chosen to be Southern Baptist.

In 1865 previously enslaved Blacks left the SBC in droves, and not until 1953 did the first Black congregation return. Yes, I choose to be Southern Baptist. The SBC is not a plantation – I can go or stay as I please, but I choose to stay, and I choose to be Southern Baptist.

Yes, despite the history, despite the heritage, despite the hirings, despite all of that and more – I still choose to be Southern Baptist. By the way, there is no perfect denomination or convention. If you happen to think you have found one, please by all means don’t join it. Because once you join it, it will not be perfect!

I choose to be Southern Baptist, because we as a Convention have come a mighty, mighty long way! Not that we as a Convention have arrived – we are still becoming – but when I look at the history of the SBC, we’ve come a mighty long way! We’ve got

a ways to go, but sure enough you’ve got to say, we’ve come a mighty long way.

I look back at the founding in 1845 by slaveholders and slave promoters, promoting white superiority, and from that foundation to the milestone election of Fred Luter as the SBC president in 2012, some 167 years later – God has brought us a mighty long way.

Though change might be slow, it shows that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it is bent toward justice. We can sit down at the table of brotherhood and sisterhood as one through Jesus Christ.

I choose to be Southern Baptist because of the work in missions; the synergy in missions; the disaster relief efforts; the exaltation of Jesus Christ; the gospel-centeredness; the belief in Christ alone for salvation; the clear presentation of the gospel; the pro-life beliefs; the belief that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God; the repentance for past sins as a group; and the fact that we are better than when we first began.

I choose to be Southern Baptist because of the high view of scripture, that we come under the authority of the scripture that governs our lives. We are not biblically liberal, we are not the prosperity gospel, and we are not heretical in our hermeneutic. Christ is the only way – not one way among many ways, but the only way to salvation.

I choose to be Southern Baptist because I believe that God has His hand on this Convention for such a time as this. He is bringing together white, Black, Asian, Hispanic, African and Native American, along with people of every tongue, tribe and nation to be a picture of heaven, to exalt the name of Jesus Christ, and to share the gospel around the world! We learn from our past and strive to reach higher ground in Christ Jesus.

Admittedly, some days being Southern Baptist is a lot like being married. In marriage not every day is a bowl of cherries – some days it feels like the pits.

But you hang in the marriage because that woman or man you married is worth the trouble. My friends, our SBC is worth the difficult moments. We can do more together than we can by ourselves.

I believe we are America’s best last hope, and we ought to be able to get it together because we’ve got King Jesus on our side! And even when I look back over the last 25 years that I’ve been in this Convention and attending the annual meetings, I’ve just got

to say, “God has brought us a mighty long way!” Therefore, I am Southern Baptist by choice.

3) I am Southern Baptist because I am called.

The third reason that I am Southern Baptist is because I am called. And this is probably the most compelling reason that I am Southern Baptist.

I am Southern Baptist because I feel led by the Lord Jesus Christ to be Southern Baptist – I am Southern Baptist because I have an unshakable, undeniable and unequivocal sense of being called to be Southern Baptist. I have felt that this is where God wants us, every spectrum of the color wheel. My friends, I hope that all of us in the SBC feel that this is where the Lord wants us. It may not make sense to some of our friends or family – it will not make sense to our critics – but in the depth of our soul there is something that is the movement of God.


My friends, God is up to something with the SBC. I believe that God has been shaking and shaping our Convention since 1845, to get us to where He wants us and to be all that He wants us to be. We must work cooperatively to reach the world for Jesus Christ – that more men, women, boys and girls of every hue and every nationality would come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

We have got to strive to be one in Christ – loving God and loving one another. We are many different members, but one body in Christ Jesus.

When we are one, one body under God, we can sure enough make hell shudder and heaven shout! Despite our history, heritage and hiring, I am Southern Baptist because I am Christian, because I choose to be, and because I feel called to be.

As part of the Convention I have seven actions that may help all of us as we move forward together. Let us:

Pray for the further advancement of the gospel; pray for our SBC leaders and entity leaders; give thanks to God for how far He has brought the SBC; refuse to attack our brothers and sisters through social media; look for opportunities to share and resolve our issues within the SBC family; do all we can do for the sake of the unity in the Body; understand that we are better together than by ourselves

(EDITOR’S NOTE – Marshal Ausberry is first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, Fairfax, Va. He is also president of the National African American Fellowship of the SBC.) 

AROUND THE STATE

Obituaries

JOHN “JOHNNY” LEWIS ENLOE JR., 83, died May 30 in Winston-Salem.

He served in the U.S. Army before becoming a minister.

He graduated from Wingate College (now university) with an associate's degree and Carson-Newman College (now university) with a bachelor's degree. He attended Southeastern Seminary.

Enloe worked as recreational director for Tuckaseegee Baptist Church, Mount Holly, N.C., and as assistant director of South Mountain Baptist Camp in Morganton, N.C.

He pastored Stoney Ridge Baptist Church, Westfield; Flat Rock Baptist Church, Hamptonville, N.C.; Scotts Creek Baptist Church, Sylva, N.C.; Turrentine Baptist Church, Mocksville, N.C.; Sandy Plains Baptist Church, Shelby, N.C.; New Life Baptist Church, Stanley, N.C.; and Wilkies Grove Baptist Church, Hickory, N.C.

He then served as director of missions for Elkin Baptist Association, where he started the toy store ministry.

At the state level, he previously served on the board for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. He filled many positions through the years for camps, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, missions, evangelism and more.

His wife of 40 years, Sherry Kay Lyda Enloe, died in 2001.



JOHNNY ENLOE

He is survived by two daughters, Dawn Thomas of Oak Ridge, N.C., and Johnna Phillips of Summerfield, N.C.; one sister; Kay Robinson of Belmont, N.C.; and three grandchildren

Memorial to toy store at Elkin Baptist Association, 147 Carter Mill Road, Elkin, NC 28621.

GENE ALLEN PHILLIPS, 85, of Huntersville, N.C., and formerly High Point, N.C., died Sept. 3.

A Kentucky native, Phillips served as a college minister at Meredith College in Raleigh and at several churches: associate pastor, Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh; pastor of Guilford Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; and Hebron Baptist Church, Ky.

He and his late wife Jackie spent 25 years in France as missionaries. Phillips also worked with senior adults at Green Street Baptist Church, High Point, N.C., and Huntersville Baptist Church.

He also worked on the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina staff.

Survivors include sons, Steve Phillips of Alexandria, Va., Stan Phillips of Davidson, N.C., and Getachew Giorgis of Raleigh; his brother, David Phillips of Gulf Shores, Ala.; and two grandchildren.

Memorials to: First Baptist Church of Huntersville (in the name of the Jackie and Gene Phillips Youth Scholarship Fund), 119 N. Old Statesville Rd., Huntersville, NC 28078; or to the Alzheimer's Association, 38000 Shamrock Dr., Charlotte, NC 28215.

WILLIAM “BILL” RALPH SMITH, 50, of Burgaw, died Sept. 5 after a five-month battle with liver cancer.

He is a graduate of Moody Bible

Institute with a bachelor's degree in biblical studies.

A Detroit, Mich., native, Smith began his ministry as a youth minister at Bear Creek Baptist Church, Hubert, and went on to pastor Midville Baptist Church, Jacksonville, N.C.; Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Fayetteville, N.C.; and, most recently at Burgaw Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife of 18 years Betty Strain Smith; son, Isaiah Smith; brother, Donald Curtis Smith Jr. of Hubert; and sister, Pam Luna of Jacksonville.

Memorials to: Lower Cape Fear LifeCare, 1414 Physicians Drive, Wilmington, NC 28401, or Burgaw Baptist Church Operation In As Much (OIAM), P.O. Box 385, Burgaw, NC 28425.



BILL SMITH

Staff changes

KELLY BULLARD has been called as senior pastor to First Baptist Church, Summerfield. He previously served as senior pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Fayetteville. He and his wife Lindsey, have two sons. He has served on the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Board of Directors and currently serves the *Biblical Recorder* board. He has his bachelor's, master's and doctor of ministry degrees from Southeastern Seminary.

Antioch Baptist Church, Lumberton, has called **BLAKE DODD** as senior pastor. A Georgia native, Dodd is pursuing a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as senior pastor of Young's Grove Baptist Church, Cedartown, Ga. He and his wife Tiffani have one son.

Please send items to editor@BRnow.org.

Charles Stanley transitions to pastor emeritus

Baptist Press

In a video announcement following the online service Sept. 13 at First Baptist Church in Atlanta, longtime pastor Charles Stanley announced his transition to pastor *emeritus*.


Stanley, who came to First Baptist as an associate pastor in 1969 before being named pastor two years later, informed the church's board earlier this month of the decision.

"I'm so grateful [God] saw fit to allow me to serve as your pastor for more than 50 years," he said. "As much as I love being your pastor, I

know in my heart this season has come to an end."

Stanley explained he isn't retiring, but will focus his energies on In Touch Ministries, which he founded in 1977.

Anthony George will transition from his position of associate pastor, which he accepted in 2012, to senior pastor. In 2017 the church announced a succession plan for Stanley, George, and First Baptist's pastorate.

Stanley will turn 88 later this month. Last year, the church held a celebration of Stanley's 50 years at First Baptist. 

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY VIRTUAL State Leadership Conference THE NEW NORMAL

For seniors living in isolation and loneliness, things haven't been "normal" for a long time. Join the livestream to explore a more inclusive model of ministry that offers greater connectedness and fosters spiritual growth while maintaining and growing relationships even from home.

September 29, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Livestreamed from Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church, Charlotte.
Speakers: Rev. Stan Heiser, Dr. Sandy Gregory, Dr. Michael C. Blackwell, Whitney Brooks, Dr. Don Gilbert.

To attend in person, register at ncbam.org/events. For more info, call **877.506.2226**



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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Honor Life

September 27

**Focal Passages: Exodus 20:13;
1 Samuel 26:7-11, 22-25**

Oct. 6, 2015, is a day I will never forget. It is the day I saw my daughter for the first time. She was only a little dot in that ultrasound picture, yet I knew she was a human. I knew she was created in God's image and that she was precious to God.

Why did all of these things come to my mind? We know as believers that all of human life from the moment of conception until the moment we breathe our last is valuable to God. We are called to respect human life as God does.

In Exodus 20:13 we see the commandment, "*You shall not murder.*" It is a tragedy that in our culture today it is largely acceptable to take the lives of innocent people in certain scenarios, whether they be in the

womb or through euthanasia. We need to see life is precious to God – all of it.

We respect life by acknowledging God's authority over it. In 1 Samuel 26 we see where David approaches Saul while he is sleeping. If you remember what was going on at this time, Saul was seeking out David to kill him. Yet David approaches Saul while he is asleep and takes his spear. Instead of killing him with it, David goes a good distance away and calls to Saul.

Why would David not take the chance to kill the man who has been hunting him down? David respected life by acknowledging God's authority over it. We need to see that all of life is valuable to God, even those who may seek to do us wrong.



MATTHEW JACOBS
associate pastor, First Baptist Church, Crossnore

Honor Marriage

October 4

**Focal Passages: Exodus 20:14;
2 Samuel 11:1-5**

Fairytale endings are common in popular books and movies. "And they lived happily ever after" is often repeated or implied near the conclusion of a story, especially those that end in marriage.

As a result, many people view the wedding as the focal point of marriage. But does that align with what the Bible teaches? A biblical definition of marriage is a divine, lifelong covenant between one man and one woman instituted by God.

Exodus 20:14 says "*you shall not commit adultery.*" Physical intimacy is reserved for one man and woman within the covenant of marriage.

When looking at 2 Samuel 11 we see the story of David and Bathsheba. In the spring when kings are away at war, David was still at home. One day he walked out onto his roof and saw a woman taking a bath. He thought she was beautiful and wanted her. So, he asked about her and was told she was married – the wife of a general. That didn't stop David from acting in an evil manner.

David ordered Bathsheba to come over and slept with her. David tried to cover his sin and ultimately had her husband killed. It reminds me of what a pastor used to say: "Sin takes you further than you wanted to go, costs you more than you wanted to pay, and keeps you longer than you wanted to stay."

Marriage is hard, but it is also beautiful and something that is worth fighting for. We are called to honor marriage as we honor God.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

God Reigns

September 27

Focal passage: Isaiah 23:8-18

"Why does it matter what I do, or even if I pray? God is going to do whatever He wants anyway!" Maybe you have heard such a statement or made it yourself. Such a statement illustrates a view known as "determinism," meaning that God has foreordained every thought, action and outcome by His sovereign decree. An opposing view, that of process theology or "open theism," holds that everything in the future is "open," that even God doesn't know the future.

Obviously, both of these views are problematic because they contradict the clear teachings of scripture. The Bible certainly teaches the sovereign rule and reign of God over all things, and yet, at the same time, affirms that man both can and will make decisions for which He is responsible and

for which God will hold him accountable.

Rival nations have come against and oppressed the people of God, and they will not stop the judgment of God against them. And yet, God, by His sovereign power can both bring down nations and raise them up again – just as we see Him promise to do with Tyre.

Isaiah didn't say there was a "really good chance" that Tyre would fall and would make a comeback. He announced that God would bring her down and raise her up again.

Because He is sovereign and we are accountable to Him, it should compel us, by His grace, not to live as we want, but as He wants, for the glory our reigning King!



RANDY MANN
pastor, Central Baptist Church, Henderson

God Saves

October 4

Focal passage: Isaiah 25:1-10a

Staying at my grandparents' house in the summer was sometimes tough. Oh, there were certainly the fun times of playing in the yard, fishing with PawPaw, special snacks and all the rest. It was not, however, all fun and games.

Sometimes there was working in the garden – tilling, planting, weeding and harvesting. There were also the challenges of fire ants, yellow jackets or skinned knees from bicycle crashes. But there was always one thing we looked forward to – being called to the dinner table!

No matter what the day had been like, we knew the day was going to end around the table with a great feast. There would be love, accep-

tance, feasting and fellowship. It was a joyous time.

The people of Israel in Isaiah's day were facing daily tribulations and trials. They were facing, and would face, God's punishment for their disobedience. They were facing harassment and subjugation by bully nations around the region. They were longing for relief. They desired God's rescue. While many had forsaken God, there was always a remnant that knew the God in whom they had believed.

As much as I enjoyed dinner time at PawPaws, the joy didn't last forever. We would be back to work the next day. Further, over time, there were empty chairs around the table – first MaMaw's, then PawPaw's.

We can labor faithfully amid the suffering today, knowing that our day of ultimate deliverance is coming. Our God saves!

Discuss Continued from page 1

Close to 1,000 people joined the online event from around the world.

The workshop followed a joint report produced this year to help those guiding the next generation toward a commitment to global missions.

Recognizing the continuing decline in the U.S. of church attendance and in Americans who identify as Christian, IMB commissioned Barna Group for a report on younger Christians' perspective of missions.

"As the largest missionary-sending agency of our kind, we're compelled to search for solutions to the challenges of a declining missionary candidate pipeline and a plateaued giving stream," Chitwood said in the report.

"We're obliged to ask the hard questions: How do we bridge the gap between shrinking church attendance and a burgeoning world population that doesn't have access to the gospel? How does the next generation contribute to fulfilling this spectacular vision so beautifully revealed in Revelation? In essence: What is the future of missions?"

During the workshop, Savannah Kimberlin, director of published research for Barna Group, shared highlights from the report that included perceptions that young adults have of historic and



current missions and how "supportive skeptics" view their role in missions.

Speaking to the reservations that young adults have of unethical mission practices in the past and the perceived association with colonialism, Chitwood responded that the findings "help us understand our need to walk in humility and repentance."

Jason Thomas, IMB's African American church mobilizer, spoke to the hopeful statistic that Black churchgoers are eager to engage in missions. When speaking to churches, Thomas says he wants to "unearth the rich history of African Americans in missions so they actually see themselves there."

"We need to dispel the myth that all generations and all ethnic groups aren't called to global missions," Thomas said.

Sarah Farley from IMB's student team said that young adults may hesitate to be involved in long-

term missions because of financial, educational and lifestyle concerns. But she emphasized the potential of this generation and what they offer to the spread of the gospel.

She encouraged churches, leaders and parents to "engage them with accountability when it comes to investing in missions, engage them with relationships with missionaries, and equip them and disciple them so they can go."

Oscar Tortolero, IMB's Hispanic church mobilizer, also shared his hope in the younger generation's interest in missional living. He mentioned the unique giftedness of Hispanics growing up in the U.S. who are often multilingual and culturally prepared to reach others in the U.S. and take the gospel overseas.

"We have a huge potential to take Hispanics to the nations. Let us not miss it, because now is the time. We are ready to go."

IMB and Barna Group will continue the discussion of the future of missions as part of IMB's Every Church, Every Nation Summit, Oct. 29 at 7 p.m. Learn more and register at imb.org/futureofmissions.

The full report, *The Future of Missions*, is available through barna.com/missions.

CLASSIFIEDS

Denomination

North Carolina EDT Candidate Search. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) is looking for the best person to lead the convention after the retirement of the current Executive Director-Treasurer (EDT), Milton Hollifield, on February 28, 2021. The EDT Search Committee welcomes the résumés of candidates by email. Recommendations must be submitted to ncedt@ncbaptist.org no later than September 30, 2020. The ideal EDT candidate demonstrates faithful commitment to the absolute authority of the Bible, as well as a faithful walk with God that is reflected in his character, integrity, wisdom and prayer habits. His ministry values must exemplify a clear vision for the Great Commission and a record of leadership that will motivate North Carolina Baptists to reach all generations and all ethnicities represented in the state. His commitment to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the Cooperative Program and the mission offerings of the SBC and BSCNC must be unquestionable.

Pastor

Cashie Baptist Church, Windsor, North Carolina, is searching for a **full-time pastor**. We are a small-town church located in northeastern NC and are affiliated with the SBC, BSCNC and the West Chowan Baptist Association. You can find a description of our church and the job requirements under the Pastor Search heading at [Cashie Baptist.org](http://CashieBaptist.org). Send résumés to Ron Miller, Search Committee Chair, at miller@embarqmail.com.

Mt Zion Baptist Church, Alexis, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a conservative body of believers who enjoy a traditional style of worship and have a 150-year church history. Applicants should have at least a bachelor's degree. Send résumés: Mt. Zion Baptist Church, c/o Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 70, Alexis, NC 28006, or mtzionpastorsearchnc@gmail.com.

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

Hallsville Baptist Church, Beulaville, NC, is prayerfully seeking a **pastor** to faithfully preach and teach the Word of God and lead our congregation. We are a mission-minded Southern Baptist church located in rural Duplin County. We have traditional Sunday School and worship services with average attendance of 50-70 with expectation to grow. The pastor will lead three services each week (Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday evening). Please send résumés to: Hallsville Baptist Church, c/o Pastors Search Committee, 1291 Hallsville Rd., Beulaville, NC 28518.

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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.

Church staff

Mount Nelson Missionary Baptist Church of Eureka, NC, is seeking a **full- or part-time Youth Pastor**. We are a Southern Baptist church that affirms the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. We are looking for an enthusiastic, innovative, passionate leader that can relate well with students and their families. Please send a résumé and cover letter to youthpastorsearchmnmbsc@gmail.com.

Worship Leader. Tar Heel Baptist Church in Tar Heel, NC, is seeking a PT Worship Leader. This position will be responsible for leading the praise team, picking out music, teaching parts and the overall flow of the Sunday morning worship service. The candidate must be able to read music and know what keys work for a variety of instruments and vocals. THBC subscribes to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. See the full job description at tarheelbaptistchurch.org. Please send résumé to ldtaylor@intrstar.net or mail to THBC, PO Box 98, Tar Heel, NC 28392.

Oakhurst Baptist Church, Asheboro, NC, is seeking a **PT Youth Dir/Pastor** with the purpose to minister to the students in the church and community in grades 6-12 and to administer, develop and implement youth ministry programs designed to meet the spiritual, social and emotional needs of the youth, leading them to spiritual commitment and disciplines. Related experience required. Send résumé and cover letter to personnel@oakhurstbaptist.com.

Union Grove adapts to the times

By KAREN WILLOUGHBY | Baptist Press

“There’s no future in the past,” says Kenny Gooden, pastor for the last 30 years of Union Grove Baptist Church. “We have to look forward.”

Change is essential, even though change in a rural area like Yadkin County is difficult and takes time, Gooden said.

“The message never changes,” he said. “But sometimes we need to adapt the way we’re accomplishing what we’re supposed to accomplish for the sake of the Great Commission.”

One thing that doesn’t change at Union Grove Baptist is its commitment to missions through the Cooperative Program (CP), the way Southern Baptists cooperate together to reach out with the Gospel message of God’s unconditional love for each person in the world.

The church, which had a pre-pandemic weekly attendance of about 225, was giving 10% of its offerings to missions through the CP when Gooden and his family arrived in 1990. He has led the congregation in incremental increases. This year, the congregation voted to allocate 14.5% to the CP, plus another 5.5% to other missions.

“I think our people understand giving is a ministry,” Gooden said. “Anything we call ministry we don’t do for repayment, for gain, because ministry of any type requires sacrifice.

“As you give to CP, there is the joy you receive from knowing you, along with other Southern Baptist churches, are supporting the gospel 24/7/365. Together we’re doing something none of us could individually.”

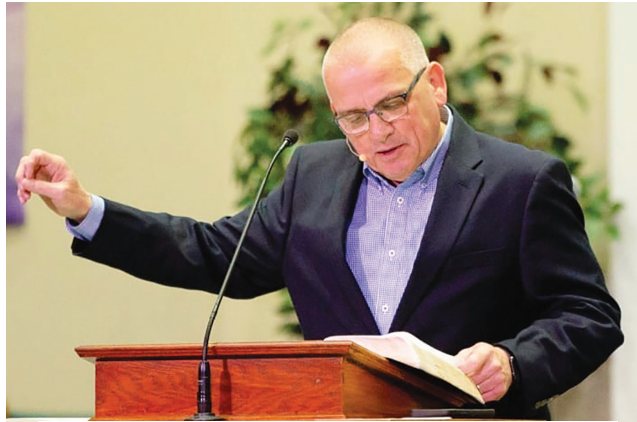
Gooden said he realizes the benefit of being part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and has been impressed by the help available to churches through the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. The state convention forwards 42% of CP income it receives to national and international SBC causes while retaining 58% for use in the state.

“There’s always someone there who can help me, to assist us in various projects,” Gooden said. “Also, being a part of something bigger than ourselves, being part of something global, that’s important. And to me, the greatest part of giving to missions through the CP is you’re part of reaching the world for Christ.”

Union Grove Baptist surrounds its ever-growing CP giving with ever-adapting church programming. The church changed its mission statement two years ago to “Reaching the lost, teaching the saved, loving one another.”

It is moving away from a Sunday School format to home-based Bible studies. The goal for these RTL – Reaching Teaching Loving – groups is that each multiplies after growing to 12 or 15. One group has been added to the initial three so far.

“We’re taking baby steps but they’re big steps for us,” Gooden said. “Over the last number of years we’ve tried our best to go out into our community and our local schools and do service projects. We discovered people need to know we care about them, to be there in crisis or need.”



“The message never changes,” Pastor Kenny Gooden said, “but sometimes we need to adapt the way we’re accomplishing what we’re supposed to accomplish for the sake of the Great Commission.” (Union Grove photos)

The church has such a well-established food pantry that when county and school officials run out of resources, they send people to Union Grove Baptist.

“We’ve found that’s one way we have of reaching people, by being the church in the community,” the pastor said. “We try to be there to help people. That’s been as important as anything to us.”

In addition to mission trips across the nation and to Peru, the church for years sent its youth to repair homes each summer through World Changers. Eight years ago church leaders discussed leading in a similar ministry locally, and two other churches from Yadkin Baptist Association joined in what has become an every-other-year ministry effort.

It’s every other year because organization, logistics and fundraising take time, the pastor said.

Last year’s “Impact Yadkin” week-long ministry involved 800 teens from 40 churches of several denominations. They completed 65 home repair projects at no cost for needy community residents.



Union Grove Baptist Church had to move to online services during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, like many North Carolina churches. They did that for two months before adding outdoor services and now offer indoor and outdoor options.

“At night we have a worship time with a band and speaker,” Gooden said. “The gym typically is full. We put a great deal of emphasis on that; not just for the churches but for the cause of Christ. It’s been very fruitful in what we’ve seen happen.”

Gooden said he’s watched as the church – once the heartbeat of the community – has been sidelined by other pursuits: outdoor recreation, family time, school sports and more.


“We try to stay out there and stay relevant, where people can see us, and hopefully they’ll give us an opportunity to minister to them,” the pastor said. “This pandemic of course has been something that has forced the church to change even more. It forced us to step back and say, ‘How are we going to reach people – our people and new people?’”

When the church started live streaming services on Facebook, the number of viewers quickly grew to more than 500, more than double its previous Sunday morning worship attendance.

“I think the Lord used this pandemic to help the church realize we need to make changes in our methods and budgets because so many people now, that’s what they do, they sit in front of their computer,” Gooden said.

After two months of online-only services, Union Grove Baptist started with outdoor services, where people brought their own chairs to a large grassy area on the church grounds. In mid-July, services moved indoors, with two services so people could socially distance. By mid-August, one service was outdoors and one indoors.

The pastor shook his head at the thought of all the unrest in America this summer.

“So many people are hurting and afraid and looking for something,” Gooden said. “I’m tired of bad news, and what we have is Good News. We have the opportunity to share Good News with a world in desperate need of it. That’s something that doesn’t change.” 



“Over the last number of years we’ve tried our best to go out into our community and our local schools and do service projects. We discovered people need to know we care about them, to be there in crisis or need. ... We try to stay out there and stay relevant, where people can see us, and hopefully they’ll give us an opportunity to minister to them.”

– Kenny Gooden