



**BIBLICAL
RECORDER**

SPECIAL ISSUE

FEATURE STORY

ON MISSION TOGETHER

What's Inside:

+ SOUTHERN BAPTISTS + UNZICKER FAMILY + A LETTER +
respond to announcement *drawn to the nations* *from the candidate*



BIBLICAL RECORDER

The information & inspiration you need.

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FEATURE STORY

ON MISSION TOGETHER

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FROM THE EDITOR

A special issue for a pivotal moment

This special issue of the *Biblical Recorder* magazine was created in partnership with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's communications team. It was developed with the specific purpose of informing North Carolina Baptists about a special called convention meeting on May 22 and to introduce the board of directors' nominee for the next executive director-treasurer.

Todd Unzicker was nominated by the board of directors in a called meeting on April 16 based on the recommendation of a search committee that was formed last summer. In this issue, you will find information about Unzicker and the search process.

I spoke with search committee chairman Noah Crowe and other leaders throughout the eight-month search process. You have likely read about those conversations in news stories about the search published by the *Biblical Recorder* since last summer.

The search committee's work consistently encouraged and edified me. They covered the process

in prayer, identified biblical characteristics for the desired candidate and went above and beyond to solicit feedback from North Carolina Baptists across the state. They were godly, transparent and thorough. The search team, led by Crowe and vice chairman Allan Blume, should be applauded for their tireless work.

I pray that North Carolina Baptists will unite around the vision put forward by Unzicker (see page 6). It prioritizes local churches and spotlights the Great Commission. Unzicker's heart for making disciples of all nations is evident.

The *Biblical Recorder* staff is grateful for our partnership with North Carolina Baptists and convention staff. We are praying that Christ would be honored among us in the days ahead.



SETH BROWN
BR EXECUTIVE EDITOR

NOTICE OF

Special Called Meeting

BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OF NORTH CAROLINA

May 22, 2021

1 p.m.

Calvary Baptist Church
134 South Peace Haven Road
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104

In compliance with Baptist State Convention of North Carolina bylaws, notice is hereby given of a special meeting of the convention called by the Board of Directors at the date, time and location listed above.

The sole purpose of the meeting is to elect a person to the office of Executive Director-Treasurer. The Board of Directors will nominate Todd Unzicker as the candidate.

The meeting is open to all N.C. Baptists, but voting will be limited to registered messengers in attendance who have been elected by their respective churches.

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To comply with social distancing guidelines, online registration is requested. Churches will receive an email and letter with their church ID and PIN number. The ID, PIN and a unique email address are required for messengers to register online.

NCSpecialMeeting.org

FEATURE STORY

ON MISSION TOGETHER

Unzicker shares vision for North Carolina Baptists

The headquarters of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) isn't in Cary, says Todd Unzicker. It's in every local church across the state.

The search committee tasked with finding the BSC's next executive director-treasurer announced Unzicker as their recommended candidate March 29.

"My big vision for North Carolina Baptists is that we renew our fundamental commitment to being a movement of churches on mission together," Unzicker told the *Biblical Recorder*.

The nine-member group said Unzicker is "uniquely gifted to lead North Carolina Baptists into the uncharted waters of the present and future generations."

"His leadership skills have been demonstrated on many levels and gained wide respect across the Southern Baptist Convention," the

committee said in a statement. "The committee is impressed with Todd's people skills, administrative experience, and his ability to relate to people of all ages and all cultures."

ON MISSION TOGETHER

Unzicker, a 44-year-old native of the Washington, D.C., area, is currently chief of staff at The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, where he has worked closely with The Summit's lead pastor, J.D. Greear, during Greear's tenure as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Unzicker played a key role in mobilizing churches with recent SBC strategies such as the "Who's Your One?" evangelism initiative, the "Go2" collegiate missions initiative and the "Caring Well" initiative to help churches prevent sex abuse and care for victims.

He has been involved in missions and ministry efforts through the Yates Baptist Association for several years. In 2020, he served on a "restart team" created to help review and re-envision the association's ministry strategy.

Prior to his current role, Unzicker led The Summit's missions and church planting efforts as pastor of sending and as a campus pastor. The Summit became the top

missions-sending church in the SBC and the top Cooperative Program giving church in North Carolina during Unzicker's tenure as pastor of sending.

Before joining the Summit's staff in 2012, Unzicker was the director of missions at the Holmes Baptist Association in Bonifay, Fla., and served two years as a missionary in Central America.

When asked about his hopes for the future, Unzicker said he wants to see North Carolina Baptists leverage relationships and resources to rally around the Great Commission as "a movement of churches on mission together."

"The convention exists to serve churches as they make disciples of all nations," he said. "I want our strategy to be focused on local churches and fueled by local churches."

"This convention of churches is a Bible-believing, missions-focused network – a family, really – that works together to amplify talent and treasure for the sake of the gospel. We must do everything in our power to help strengthen those relationships and build unity across the state."

In response to news about the search committee's announcement, International Mission Board president Paul Chitwood praised the group's work and welcomed the opportunity to work alongside Unzicker.

"North Carolina Baptists have a strong legacy of cooperation for the sake of kingdom advance," Chitwood said. "As one of them, Todd Unzicker has a strong and genuine

"A MOVEMENT OF CHURCHES ON MISSION TOGETHER"

passion for mobilizing Southern Baptists for the Great Commission."

Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, said Unzicker has "a vast knowledge and understanding of the inner workings of Southern Baptist life."

"I know Todd to be a man committed to his family, one of strong faith, great conviction, integrity and generosity. I am excited about the continued days of partnership ahead," Ezell said.

Unzicker graduated from the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, Fla., and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He and his wife, Ashley, live in Wake Forest. They have three children: Georgia, JD and Trey.

Prior to his salvation and call to ministry, Unzicker worked as a sports reporter, covering the nationally ranked University of Georgia football program. He says his life was "radically changed" by the grace of Jesus Christ.

"From the moment I first trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit began directing my steps in ways I could never imagine," Unzicker said. "Within a year, I quit my dream job, sold my house and became a missionary and church planter overseas."

Steve Scoggins, pastor at First Baptist Church in Hendersonville and immediate past president of the BSC, said he “enthusiastically” endorses Unzicker for the EDT role.

“I believe we are entering times that require new and innovative strategies to help us accomplish our mission in our state. The search committee has put forward a tested, visionary leader in Todd Unzicker,” Scoggins said. “Over the past couple of years, Todd was extremely helpful to me in both counsel and actions as I served as president of N.C. Baptists. His work in assisting the president of the SBC and his ministry in North Carolina will give him great insight into how to steer our convention into the future.”

Unzicker has also been described as a “pastor to pastors.”

“He is a gospel man, a Great Commission man, a pastor to pastors, a visionary and a unifier,” said Andrew Ivester, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Durham. “I believe Todd will help us focus on the God-given task at hand while shepherding us through the challenges of our day.”

Clint Pressley, senior pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, said that as a native North Carolinian and longtime N.C.

Baptist pastor, he can think “of no better man to lead N.C. Baptist than Todd Unzicker. He has vision, he loves God and he knows how to work hard.”

The *Recorder* asked search committee chairman Noah Crowe, pastor of Peachtree Memorial Baptist Church in Murphy, last fall about the characteristics the group was looking for in a new leader. He responded at the time with several descriptors: forward-thinking, missions-sending, someone with the ability to hit the ground running and engage a diversity of cultures across the state.

When asked if Unzicker fits that profile Crowe said in an interview that Unzicker “is uniquely qualified to lead North Carolina in the days to come.”

Crowe said Unzicker possesses a heart for North Carolina, the nations and the local church, and he is personally committed to evangelism, discipleship and the Great Commission. Crowe went on to describe Unzicker as someone who can “unify people” across different ages, races and cultures.

State convention bylaws stipulate that the executive director-treasurer must be elected at an annual meeting or special called meeting of the convention, based upon a nomination from the board for consideration.

The bylaws also state that additional nominations may be made from the floor of the convention.

**"FOCUSED ON
LOCAL CHURCHES
AND FUELED BY
LOCAL CHURCHES"**

"Todd has a heart and a vision for spreading the gospel through evangelism, church planting and missions. He knows the importance of mobilizing and investing in the next generation of Southern Baptists. I know Todd to be a man committed to his family, one of strong faith, great conviction, integrity and generosity. I am excited about the continued days of partnership ahead."

KEVIN EZELL

PRESIDENT, NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD

"I am so excited that Todd Unzicker is being presented for the role of EDT of North Carolina Baptists. He is a man of high character that truly longs to see the Great Commission accomplished around the world. I believe Todd will foster unity and rally the local churches to a global vision."

LAWRENCE YOO

PASTOR, WAYPOINT CHURCH, CHAPEL HILL, N.C.

"North Carolina Baptists have a strong legacy of cooperation for the sake of kingdom advance. As one of them, Todd Unzicker has a strong and genuine passion for mobilizing Southern Baptists for the Great Commission. He has been shaped as a cooperative missions leader who understands and values partnerships that serve local churches stewarding Christ's call to be His witness from their Jerusalem to the ends of the earth."

PAUL CHITWOOD

PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD

"Todd Unzicker is a great choice to lead North Carolina Baptists. He is a great team builder, motivator and brings a servant's heart to all his work. Todd's body of work and experience has well prepared him for the times we face."

MARSHAL AUSBERRY

PASTOR, ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH, FAIRFAX STATION, VA.

"Todd Unzicker is the ideal candidate. We are at a pivotal time in the culture, and Bible believing churches must be mobilized to reach people for Christ in North Carolina. As a native North Carolinian and a longtime N.C. Baptist pastor, I can think of no better man to lead N.C. Baptist than Todd Unzicker. He has vision, he loves God and he knows how to work hard. The thought of him leading N.C. Baptists will energize our state convention!"

CLINT PRESSLEY

SENIOR PASTOR, HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH, CHARLOTTE, N.C.

"I know few leaders who match a passion for the gospel and the Great Commission that Todd Unzicker demonstrates! Todd brings an extensive knowledge of church planting, church revitalization, church strengthening and church coaching with him in a time where pastors are struggling, churches are hurting and many are trying to rebuild community. Todd is a proven leader and a pastor of pastors. I look forward to supporting his vision and leadership for North Carolina Baptists."

RONNIE PARROTT

LEAD PASTOR, CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH, HUNTERSVILLE, N.C.

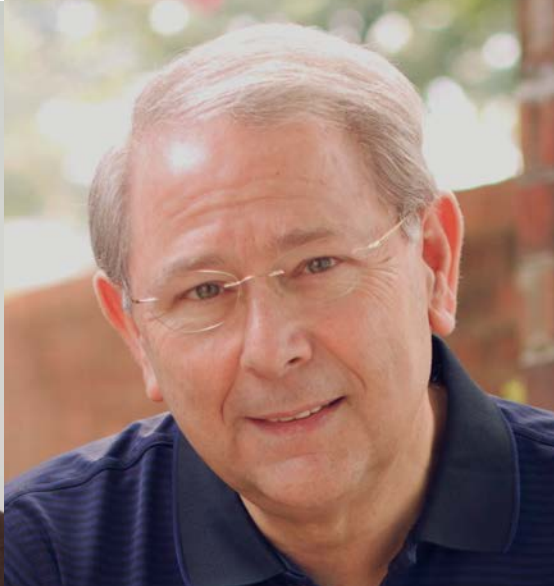
"Words fail to express my excitement for this decision. Todd Unzicker is the perfect person to follow Milton Hollifield in this critically important position. I believe there are great days ahead for North Carolina Baptists under Todd's leadership. I am all onboard!"

DANNY AKIN

PRESIDENT, SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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Pastor, Peachtree Memorial Baptist
PEACHTREE, NC



ALLAN BLUME, Vice Chair
Interim Pastor, Pittsboro Baptist Church
PITTSBORO, NC



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Member, Salem Baptist Church
DOBSON, NC



ANDREW HOPPER
Pastor, Mercy Hill Church
GREENSBORO, NC



QUINTELL HILL
Pastor, Multiply Community Church
MONROE, NC



JARROD SCOTT
Pastor, Green Pines Baptist Church
KNIGHTDALE, NC

From the EDT Search Committee

The EDT Search Committee initially received 21 resumes from individuals recommending a candidate or from self-nominated candidates. A

few withdrew from consideration early in the process.

Through prayer and careful evaluation of each nominee, the list was narrowed to five, three and two candidates. After months of multiple interviews and much prayer, the EDT Search Committee concluded that God has led us to nominate Todd Unzicker as the next Executive Director-Treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

We believe Todd has unusual leadership skills that uniquely qualify him to serve in this role. He has a heart for all people across our state and all nations. He is convictionally committed to personal evangelism, church revitalization, church planting, and all that our state needs to fulfill the Great Commission and grow Kingdom churches.

His experience includes international missions, serving as an associational mission strategist

and pastoral ministry in churches. His leadership skills have been demonstrated on many levels and gained wide respect across the Southern Baptist Convention.

The committee is impressed with Todd's people skills, administrative experience, and his ability to relate to people of all ages and all cultures. Todd's testimony demonstrates the grace of God in a powerful way. His character is impeccable. One character reference said, "Todd is morally strong and as clean as a whistle."

Todd has represented Southern Baptists extremely well throughout his ministry. Those who work closely with him have commended his ability to pull people together from all cultures, colors and ages. He knows and understands churches of all sizes. Todd is gifted with innovation and creativity when looking for solutions to problems or dealing with needs.

We believe Todd is uniquely gifted to lead North Carolina Baptists into the uncharted waters of the present and future generations.



A 'REVELATION 5' CALLING:

Unzicker family drawn to the nations

Todd Unzicker, candidate for executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, quotes Revelation 5 as the heartbeat of his family.

"Our desire and what we long for ... we can't wait to join with every tribe, tongue, language and nation on earth and say, 'Worth is the Lamb that was slain.'"

Unzicker and his wife, Ashley, first met on the mission field more than 14 years ago. Their two

older kids have gone on international mission trips. In recent weeks their 9-year-old son, JD, has been adamant about praying for and sharing the gospel with a new friend. The boy who recently moved across the street is his "one," in reference to the "Who's Your One?" evangelism initiative Unzicker helped develop.

A native of the Washington D.C. area, Unzicker grew up going to church and even remembers making a profession of faith in his childhood. But until he was 28 years old, his life did not resemble one of faith, he says.

"I tried everything the world had to offer,"

Unzicker said. “I found the bankruptcy and emptiness of chasing after every pleasure that I could get my hands on.”

I’ll Follow You Anywhere

Unzicker was working his dream job in Georgia when his life “instantly” changed. While covering college football as a sports reporter, he met Mark Richt, the new head coach for the Georgia Bulldogs at the time. Unzicker remembers Richt speaking differently about faith than what he described as the “typical” cultural Christianity in some circles.

Richt talked about his family’s adoption experience, love for his wife and belief that God sent him there for a purpose. It made Unzicker curious.

For a year Unzicker attended Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Bogart, Ga., sitting in the balcony of the sanctuary and taking notes.

“Every invitation, I would wrestle with giving my life to Christ,” he said. He still has the notes today.

Then on Sept. 25, 2004, early on a Saturday morning, “in total desperation,” Unzicker fell to his knees and cried out to God, “I need You to save me, and I’ll follow You anywhere.”

“It was like scales fell from my eyes,” Unzicker remembers.

Richt, who now serves as spokesperson for the North American Mission Board’s Send Relief,

discipled Unzicker and later covered the costs of their daughter’s adoption. Her name, Georgia, is a nod to those acts of kindness.

A few weeks after that Saturday, Unzicker knew of some pastors going on a disaster relief trip with Georgia Baptists. He had no training, but he “snuck a yellow shirt, threw it on just to join.” While there, a pastor invited him to go on an international mission trip. Unzicker agreed to go without hesitation.

“I just thought that’s what every Christian did,” he said.

Toward the end of the international trip, a ministry director asked him to consider staying. “What do you have to go back to?” Unzicker remembers him saying.

“That simple question wrecked me. All of a sudden my dream job didn’t seem like what it was before I left.”

He was on a plane back to Central America as a missionary just weeks later.

“

**It was like scales
fell from my eyes.”**

Missions, Marriage & Providence

While serving in Central America, Unzicker hosted short-term teams from the United States. There was one couple, Brian and Lee Sullivan, who regularly asked him to pray for their daughter. Having never met her, he prayed when they said she started attending church, and he prayed when they said she would be joining them on their next trip.

Their daughter, however, had no idea what a mission trip was. When her parents said they'd be sharing the gospel, she didn't quite understand the gospel herself.

The day before leaving for Honduras, she attended a conference on how to share one's faith, where she received a Bible and a tract.

At 25 years old, sitting on a plane, she read through the tract and Isaiah 59 and realized, "I have a huge problem."

In her seat on that flight, she surrendered her life to Christ.

When she got off the plane, Todd was the first person Ashley met. They married less than six months later.

In 2007, one week after their wedding, Todd and Ashley moved to the Florida panhandle, where Todd served as an associational mission strategist (formerly called director of missions) at the Holmes Baptist Association for four years. Ashley served as a children's minister at First Baptist Church of Bonifay.

In Florida, they adopted their oldest daughter, Georgia, and had their second child, JD. Then they met Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), who invited Todd to finish his degree at SEBTS.

Serving a Global God

The family relocated to North Carolina in January 2012 and moved into family housing at SEBTS with their 16-month-old and three-month-old. Todd served as a campus pastor with The Summit Church for four years and then as pastor of sending for another six. For the past three years, he has served as chief of staff, working with J.D. Greear throughout his terms as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 2014, their youngest son, Trey, was born. Trey, now 6, is the family's comedian. He loves sports and is known as their "little linebacker." JD, 9, is the "wild man" and is almost always found outdoors. He was baptized last year. So was Georgia, now 10. She's empathetic and "extremely funny," her parents say. She plays soccer and softball and participates in a middle school small group.

When the Unzickers lived in Durham before moving to Wake Forest, Ashley started an initiative reaching refugee families at an apartment complex near their home. The kids remember the visits as their "weekly mission trips" – befriending migrant children as Ashley and a growing set of volunteers led games and Bible stories.



We want to reach all peoples because our God is a global God.”

Although she no longer heads the initiative, the work there continues through The Summit Church, Waypoint Church, First Baptist Church of Durham and other N.C. Baptist churches.

Ashley, who holds a master’s degree from SEBTS, currently disciples teen girls. She’s still involved in children’s ministry, leading kids’ worship at The Summit. She serves on the development team at Hope Reins, a horse ranching ministry that helps children in crisis find hope and healing, and previously served as part of the leadership network of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

She hopes to connect with pastors’ wives and associational missionaries’ wives – a desire that has increased even more in recent months.

“I just have a burden for them, that there’s a heavy weight on them,” Ashley said. “How do we get that lifted off?”

From COVID-19 to a changing culture, Todd senses “at best, there’s uncertainty, at worst, there’s fear” among pastors and their families.

He says Ashley, whose friends affectionately call the “minister of merrymaking,” “is uniquely equipped to bring the joy of the Lord.”

“Jesus said that the world would know us by our love for one another, and certainly Ashley exudes that.”

The Unzickers continue to build relationships with those in their community. When they first moved to their neighborhood a couple years ago, they invited all 27 households over for a cookout. It was the first time many of the families ever met.

“We want to reach all peoples because our God is a global God,” Todd said. “Evangelism, church planting, missions – Acts 1:8 is all that Ashley and I have really known.”



LIZ TABLAZON
BR ASSISTANT EDITOR

Past leaders of the *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*

Corresponding Secretaries

1830-1836	John Armstrong
1837-1843	William H. Jordan
1844	S.J. Wheeler
1845-1847	J.J. Finch
1848	J.J. James
1849	William A. Shaw
1850-1852	John H. Lacey
1853	A. McDowell
1854	T.S. Yarborough
1855-1856	W.M. Wingate
1857	T.E. Skinner
1858-1859	A.J. Emerson
1860	B.F. Marable
1861	Vacant
1862-1865	N.B. Cobb
1866-1869	W.T. Walters
1870-1873	J.D. Hufham
1874-1877	J.B. Richardson
1878-1887	John E. Ray
1888-1894	Columbus Durham
1895-1899	John E. White
1900-1914	Livingston Johnson
1915-1919	Walter N. Johnson

General Secretary

1920-1931	Charles E. Maddry
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General Secretary-Treasurers

1932-1959	Maloy A. "M.A." Huggins
1959-1963	Douglas M. Branch
1963	Claude F. Gaddy
1964-1975	W. Perry Crouch
1976-1983	Cecil A. Ray

Executive Director-Treasurers

1984-1997	Roy Smith
1998-2005	James H. Royston
2006-2021	Milton A. Hollifield Jr.

Notes: In 1926, the title of Corresponding Secretary changed to General Secretary. In 1932, the state convention's constitution provided that the General Secretary may be elected as Treasurer at the discretion of the convention. In 1986, the title of General Secretary-Treasurer was changed to Executive Director-Treasurer.

Sources: "A History of North Carolina Baptists 1727-1932" by M.A. Huggins. Baptist State Convention of North Carolina & Biblical Recorder archives.

A LETTER FROM THE CANDIDATE

Dear North Carolina Baptists,

I vividly remember my first N.C. Baptist annual meeting. Brother Milton Hollifield preached about how fervent prayer leads to a radical reorganization of God's people to reach the nations with the gospel. That powerful message inspired me.

Is God leading N.C. Baptists to renew that bold commitment? I believe so.

From the moment I first trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit began directing my steps in ways I could never imagine. Within a year, I quit my dream job, sold my home and became a missionary and church planter overseas.

Two years later, the Lord took me to Florida where I served as an associational mission strategist, helping small churches and bi-vocational pastors reach the unreached peoples next door. God showed me the local church is His "Plan A" for planting healthy churches through bold proclamation rooted in the absolute authority of His inerrant and all-sufficient Word.

God then brought me to one of the largest churches in North Carolina. Here the Holy Spirit showed me the value of engaging the next generation of missionaries and church leaders. Challenging all Christians to live for the glory of God and do it strategically for the mission of God became my heartbeat.

The gospel should be our highest priority and the center of our unity, above all our preferences and programs.

While the possibility of being considered for executive director-treasurer never occurred to me originally, I sense a clear leading of the Holy Spirit to help strengthen our churches so they become the strongest gospel-sending force in the history of our convention.

I commit to pray with you about the opportunities before us. The grace of God is not just for my past, nor for the past of the state convention. His grace is sufficient for our present and our future.

**In Christ,
Todd Unzicker**



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